

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF  
*Erotic  
Literature*

Gaëtan Brulotte  
John Phillips

EDITORS

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## INTRODUCTION

'I authorize the publication and sale of all libertine books and immoral works; for I esteem them most essential to human felicity and welfare, instrumental to the progress of philosophy, indispensable to the eradication of prejudices, and in every sense conducive to the increase of human knowledge and understanding.' (Marquis de Sade, *Juliette*)

Erotic literature is a global cultural expression represented in nearly all literary forms from the ancient world to the present. Recognizing its rich scope and cultural importance, scholars from around the world are drawn to the genre and the study of erotic literature is now a vast and emerging field. In these two volumes, the *Encyclopedia of Erotic Literature* invites the reader to embark on the scholarly exploration of a genre that traverses the horizon of human sexual experience, transforming our understanding of such experience and the experience of literature as well.

In an interview in 2002, the late French philosopher, Jacques Derrida was asked, if he were to watch a documentary about a philosopher—Heidegger, Kant, or Hegel—what would he wish to see in it. He replied 'Their sex-lives... because it is not something they talk about.'<sup>1</sup> The intellectual tradition of the Judeo-Christian West has repressed its sex-life in much the same way as the philosophers Derrida had in mind, and yet, the poets and story-tellers of West and East alike have never stopped talking about sex. This encyclopedia is the first of its kind: a comprehensive discussion and scholarly analysis of those innumerable works, written in many different languages throughout our known history, in which 'sex-talk' is the dominant discourse. The history of this discourse is as old as the history of writing itself.

During the six years since its inception, this project has attracted considerable intellectual

interest from all over the globe. Leading scholars in the world's most renowned universities have acted as advisors from an early stage, as well as contributing many of the 546 entries that make up the two volumes of the work. The total number of contributors exceeds 400.

The conceptual framework determining the general organization of contents prior to its distribution in alphabetical order was divided into four categories: Historical Overviews, Topics and Themes, Literary Surveys, Writers and Works. Historical Overviews are categorized by language/geographical or cultural area and ideally include all literary genres (e.g. the Ancient World or French Canadian Literature); Topics and Themes focus on a predominant or general subject in the field (e.g. Libertinism or Necrophilia) or a critical approach (such as Feminism or Queer Theory); Literary Surveys address genres, or publication issues (Pulp Fiction or Bibliographies, for instance), Writers and Works include individual entries on authors or works—whether attributed or anonymous—(D.H. Lawrence or *Jin Ping Mei*, for example), which address their relation to the history of the genre as a whole, and evaluate their contribution to it. Each entry offers a set of bibliographical references and suggested further readings. With very few exceptions, the length of entries varies from a minimum of 1000 words to a maximum of 8000 words, according to the relative importance of the subject-matter.

We have tried to be as inclusive as possible, but as with all undertakings of this size and scope, there are inevitable omissions. Limitations of space regrettably dictate that lines have constantly to be drawn. Audio-visual works (paintings, photos, films), for example, have not been included, since this is an encyclopedia of the erotic *in literature*. On the other hand, if

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there are a larger number of entries relating to literature in French, it is because French and Francophone writers have contributed more than any other linguistic culture to the development of the erotic genre. The eminent author and publisher, Jean-Jacques Pauvert has called this phenomenon 'l'exception française'<sup>2</sup>, the French exception.

Nonetheless, the *Encyclopedia of Erotic Literature* aims to be universal in scope, both geographically and historically, and to reflect current research in the field. The work is principally intended as a valuable resource for all those studying, researching, or teaching any aspect of erotic literature and/or the history of sexuality. Eschewing technical language wherever possible, it will also appeal to the general reader with an interest in exploring this subject.

## QUESTIONS OF DEFINITION

Our definition of erotic literature is a universal one, not a judgmental one, encompassing all fictional genres (the novel, poetry, the short-story, drama and some Eastern forms) but also essays, autobiographies, treatises, and sex manuals from a wide range of cultures. Erotic literature is defined here as works in which sexuality and/or sexual desire has a dominant presence. All types of sexuality are included in this definition. When consulting existing reference works and dictionaries on the subject, and the very few specialized histories of the genre, one is struck by the difficulty scholars have encountered in differentiating erotic literature from pornography or from love stories containing sexually explicit passages. Neither of the existing terms, erotic or pornographic, is neutral. But generally speaking the former is usually taken to refer to an acceptable form of sexual representation, while the latter designates a form that is socially or politically unacceptable. Both terms are therefore infected with a degree of judgmentalism that we sought to avoid in an attempt to provide the richest and widest range of literatures to the reader that reflect the abundant diversity within the genre. The distinction between the erotic and the pornographic depends on arguments and stereotypes that are fundamentally subjective, and that are psychological, ethical, feminist, or aesthetic in nature. Legal rulings are themselves influenced and

determined by such arguments which are always culturally and temporally relative.

**The psychological point of view** is wholly related to reader response. According to this point of view, erotica arouses the individual reader, while pornography does not. This distinction is clearly confusing, since pornography can arouse a reader as much as so-called erotica. Webster's English Dictionary defines 'pornography' as 'a portrayal of erotic behavior designed to cause sexual excitement.' Homosexual literature will not arouse everyone but is part of what we call erotic literature. Literary depictions of necrophilia may not arouse most readers but belong to the erotic tradition. The consensus of scholarship during the last quarter century is that such a literary genre cannot be defined according to the individual reader's desire, since each person has his/her own 'sexual template' as modern psychology calls it. Indeed, many erotic texts do not seek to arouse at all.

**From an ethical viewpoint**, pornography is what other people find erotic, presupposing the existence of a sexual norm according to which one group of persons judge and reject what they dislike. This argument raises the delicate question of 'perversion', since pornography has frequently been associated with 'perverted' sexuality, i.e. with a sexuality or sexual orientation that is different from one's own. The psychoanalytical concept of 'perversion' tends to construct a sexual norm from the standpoint of which there are deviations. Freud defined 'perversion' as any sexual activity that is not intercourse: hence oral sex is 'perverted', so is masturbation, and so forth. In this view most human sexual habits and erotic inclinations turn out to be 'perverted'. However, the notion of 'perversion' has been revisited by modern anthropologists and historians who have demonstrated the temporal and cultural relativity of the concept. When Pierre Klossowski in twentieth century France writes of a husband who enjoys giving his wife to other men, some may consider this gesture 'perverted'. For the Inuit, on the other hand, such behavior is simply the expression of conventions of hospitality.

**The sociological perspective** defines eroticism as the pornography of the dominant social class. In this view, eroticism has aristocratic associations, while pornography is a lower-class activity. Thus, pornography but not eroticism may

represent a threat to the status quo. Yet, as numerous entries demonstrate, the eroticism of 'high literature' is just as capable of subversion as more popular forms of writing about sex. Erotic works by philosophers during the French Enlightenment, for example, arguably helped to pave the way for the French Revolution. Throughout history, in fact, erotic writings generally can be said to have had a socially leveling influence.

**The gender of the author** is another spurious yardstick, by which the pornography/eroticism distinction is sometimes measured. In this perspective, men produce pornography while women 'write the erotic'. This argument falters when confronted with anonymity, or the extensive use of pseudonyms. Moreover, some authors employ strategies to make believe that the narrator is male or female, creating confusion as to the author's sex or gender. And what are we to think of the many novels by women in contemporary France that are as explicit or as sexually violent as anything authored by a man? Pro-censorship feminists regard any depiction of sexual behavior which degrades and abuses women as pornographic. Such views are highly subjective, and beg the question of what constitutes degradation or abuse, but if the author of the text or image is male, his gender is itself grounds to condemn him in their eyes. Andrea Dworkin, for example, suggests that 'Male power is the *raison d'être* of pornography: the degradation of the female is the means of achieving this power.'<sup>3</sup> A recent ruling by the Canadian Supreme Court, masterminded by Dworkin and her fellow anti-pornographer campaigner, Catherine MacKinnon, defines the related concept of obscenity according to the harm it does to women's pursuit of equality.<sup>4</sup> Yet, much extreme sexual material, such as gay male 'porn', does not represent women at all.

**Legal definitions** are no more helpful, as they tend to depend on aesthetic norms which vary from culture to culture, and from period to period. In particular, the way in which obscenity is defined has changed considerably over the centuries. Concepts of obscenity are central to anti-pornography legislation in Britain and the USA, as well as in France. In Britain, the law currently defines obscenity as 'anything that may deprave or corrupt persons who are likely to read, see or hear the matter contained or embodied in it'<sup>5</sup>. In the USA, the so-called 'Miller Test' is still the

predominant legal definition of obscenity. According to this test, which originated in a 1973 case tried before the American Supreme Court, *Miller v. California*, there are three criteria: 1) does a work as a whole appeal to 'prurient interest'?; 2) does it depict or describe sexual conduct in a 'patently offensive way'?; 3) does it lack serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value?<sup>6</sup>

These definitions of obscenity are dangerously vague, since they all depend upon the inescapable subjectivity and cultural relativity of other terms, such as 'indecent', 'deprave', 'corrupt', 'prurient', 'offensive', 'value', 'harm', 'equality', embedded in them. In the French law of the last two centuries, the concept of 'bonnes moeurs' (which roughly translates as 'public decency') is equally vague and culturally relative, as the history of censorship clearly shows — how many of us would consider Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* or the racier pieces in Baudelaire's best known collection of poems, *Les fleurs du mal* (*The Flowers of Evil*), a threat to public morals now?

All of the above arguments fail to produce a satisfactory distinction between the erotic and the pornographic. In antiquity, the word 'pornographos' bore little relation to our contemporary notion of pornography as writing or images that aim to arouse sexually, since it merely denoted a type of biography, 'the lives of the courtesans', which was not necessarily obscene in content.<sup>7</sup> In fact, it was not until the nineteenth century that the dictionary definition of the word was widened to include 'the expression or suggestion of obscene or unchaste subjects in literature or art'<sup>8</sup>, and began, therefore, to assume a pejorative meaning.

The etymology of the word, 'obscenity', by contrast, is dubious. Its modern definition of 'indecent' or 'lewd' is preceded by the archaic meaning of 'repulsive' or 'filthy' (OED). Some recent commentators have suggested that the word originally meant 'off the scene', referring, in other words, to actions in the classical theatre that were too shocking to take place 'on stage' in full view of the audience.<sup>9</sup> What all of these definitions have in common is their subjective basis, for what is 'repulsive' or 'shocking' to some will not be so to others. When used in a sexual context, moreover, the word reveals a profoundly negative attitude to the sexual functions and to sexual pleasure. For Susan Sontag,

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'It's just these assumptions that are challenged by the French tradition represented by Sade, La Fontaine, Bataille, and the authors of *Story of O* and *The Image*. Their assumption seems to be that 'the obscene' is a primal notion of human consciousness, something much more profound than the backwash of a sick society's aversion to the body.'<sup>10</sup>

Like 'pornography', then, 'obscenity' has acquired a negative charge in a Western culture, conditioned by the puritanism of Christianity, a negativity which legal definitions have reinforced. For Jacques Derrida, each term of such binaries as 'eroticism' and 'pornography', or 'eroticism' and 'obscenity' is already infected with its opposite, and so becomes ultimately undecidable, a signifier whose signified cannot be finally fixed. In view of these linguistic and conceptual slippages, then, and while accepting that even the word 'eroticism' can never be entirely neutral, the decision was taken at an early stage to discourage the use of 'pornography' and 'obscenity' as terms most likely to convey negative impressions. Thus, they are employed sparingly, and always within a clear historical and cultural context. The term 'erotic literature' also benefits from a more stable meaning throughout history and is more inclusive of the variety of works this encyclopedia covers.

One last point on this issue of definition: the dangers of too broad a definition of eroticism were apparent from the outset, and it was thought that to define any work containing sexual scenes as erotic would be to invite entries on practically the whole of World literature.

## CORPUS AND CONTENT

Our selected corpus reveals above all a remarkable diversity in the types of sexuality represented (heterosexuality, homosexuality, sado-masochism, fetishism, incest, etc). This sexual diversity is equally matched by the diversity of literary forms in which these sexualities are represented, from pure dialogue to classical narrative, from the epistolary novel to prose poetry. Style too ranges from the highly metaphorical to the extremely crude. Thus, eroticism is found as much in literary masterpieces as in pulp fiction. This diversity may surprise some readers, since it has often been argued that erotic texts are mediocre in quality and repetitive in form and subject-matter. On the contrary, readers will discover here that erotic literature is far more diverse

than generally believed. Indeed, much erotic writing belongs to the literary avant-garde, thanks to a readiness to experiment and innovate on formal levels. Many of the works discussed are also of considerable philosophical and socio-historical interest, conveying a wealth of fascinating information about the history and evolution of intimacy and the social mores surrounding it, offering insights on rites and taboos, on the history of attitudes to the body, and many other cultural practices.

As for the familiar charge that this is a literature aimed only at the male voyeur, erotic texts frequently appeal to all of the senses, from the evocation of the sensation of bodily touch, taste and smells to the screams, whispers and silences that can accompany the sex-act. Such descriptions speak as much to women as to men. This is a literature that is more likely to undermine than to reinforce conventional thinking and social stereotypes. The traditional unity of the person and the body that our western culture has constructed over the centuries is, for example, repeatedly put into question by a writing that foregrounds bodily pleasure.<sup>11</sup> Erotic writing constantly renews itself, finding new ways of staging and figuring desire. Differences of race or ethnicity tend to be effaced in pursuit of the solitary goal of sexual satisfaction.

Erotic works do sometimes project a utopian vision of the world, which they picture as liberated from all its current limitations. But in doing so, they point to the difficulties associated with such idealism, and raise important philosophical questions in relation to concepts of freedom and the other.

It will have become clear by now that the aims of erotic literature cannot be reduced to sexual arousal alone. Indeed, these texts are inspired by a multiplicity of objectives, social, political, and moral, embracing themes and forms that are just as diverse as those of any other literary genre. The literary depiction of sexuality offers essential insights into every aspect of the human condition. Although eroticism is ostensibly linked to materialist views of life, the body has served throughout history as the central focus of a search that ever seeks to transcend it, reaching out to mythical, metaphysical and spiritual dimensions. In this sense, all erotic texts address issues of both life and death—orgasm in French is popularly described as 'la petite mort'—since, as Freud demonstrated, Eros (the life force) and

Thanatos (the death drive) are inextricably bound up with each other... which amounts to saying that the sexual impulse is a fundamental expression of the human story in all its facets.

The twentieth century authors and thinkers, Georges Bataille and Michel Foucault both believed that sexuality was *the* major problem facing mankind, and yet, for mainly political and religious reasons, the study of erotic expression has largely been suppressed, as much in the academy as in society generally. It is true that the recent rise of 'Sexuality and Gender Studies' in universities has given academics permission to read and teach erotic works, but only within the politically correct context of feminism or queer theory. The two volumes of this encyclopedia represent a much wider critical interest on the part of the hundreds of scholars, men and women, of all ethnicities, genders, and sexualities, teaching and researching in universities on every continent, and under every kind of political regime. Others will hopefully follow the lead that they have taken here.

### How to Use This Book

The *Encyclopedia of Erotic Literature* is composed of over 500 signed scholarly essays of 1000 to 8000 words in length. Researchers will find the encyclopedia's **A to Z format** easily navigable. Scholars seeking multiple entries within a specific area of inquiry will find the **thematic table of contents** of great value. There one can browse all of the entries concerning authors and works employing a specific *language* (i.e. Indian languages), *historical overviews* of specific nations, regions and periods (i.e. German: twentieth and twenty-first centuries), *literary surveys* of specific genres and trends (i.e. science fiction and fantasy) and entries exploring discrete concepts (i.e. prostitution) grouped as **topics and themes**. Nearly all of the entries concerning individual works or an entire body of work will be followed by a **capsule biography** of the author. Major articles contain a list of **References and Further Reading**, including sources used by the writer and editor as well as additional items that may be of interest to the reader. And a thorough, **analytical index** will instantly open the work up to every reader.

Gaëtan Brulotte  
John Phillips

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Gaëtan Brulotte is Distinguished University Professor of French and Francophone Literature at the University of South Florida in Tampa, U.S.A. He has published extensively on the subject of erotic literature, including a critically acclaimed book *Oeuvres de chair. Figures du discours érotique*.

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### Notes

- 1 *Derrida*, a documentary by Kirby Dick and Ziering Kofman (Jane Doe Films Inc, 2002)
- 2 Pauvert, Jean-Jacques. *L'Amour à la française ou l'exception étrange*. Editions du Rocher, 1997.
- 3 *Pornography: Men Possessing Women*. New York: Perigee Books, 1981, p. 32.
- 4 See *ibid.*, p. 54.
- 5 The Obscene Publications Act, 1959.
- 6 See Linda Williams, 'Second Thoughts on Hard Core. American Obscenity Law and the Scapegoating of Deviance' in *Dirty Looks. Women, Pornography, Power* (BFI Publishing, 1993), pp. 46–61; this reference, pp. 48–9.
- 7 See Linda Williams, 'A Provoking Agent. The Pornography and Performance Art of Annie Sprinkle' in Gibson & Gibson (eds), *Dirty Looks. Women, Pornography, Power* (BFI Publishing, 1993), pp. 176–91; this ref., pp. 181–2.
- 8 Quoted by Stephen Heath, *The Sexual Fix* (London & Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1982), pp. 105–6.
- 9 See Linda Williams, 'Second Thoughts on Hard Core. American Obscenity Law and the Scapegoating of Deviance' in Roma Gibson & Pamela Church Gibson (eds), *Dirty Looks. Women, Pornography, Power* (BFI Publishing, 1993), pp. 46–61; this ref., p. 47, n. 1.
- 10 Susan Sontag, 'The Pornographic Imagination' in Douglas A. Hughes (ed.), *Perspectives on Pornography* (New York: MacMillan, St. Martin's Press, 1970), pp. 131–69; this ref., pp. 153–54.
- 11 This unity is typically cerebral rather than physical, as Descartes's famous 'Cogito ergo sum' illustrates. The modern French critic and semiologist, Roland Barthes has drawn attention to the relative lack of philosophers of pleasure in the Western tradition and dreamed of writing a history of all the pleasures that societies have resisted, as well as of a history of desire (*Oeuvres complètes*. Paris, Seuil, 1995–2002: IV, 244, 255; V, 555)



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## ABÉLARD AND HÉLOÏSE

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### **Abélard**

1079–1142

Dialectician, theologian, and philosopher

### **Héloïse**

1101–1164

Abbess, epistolarian

Most of what is known about Abélard's life, and to a lesser extent about that of Héloïse, was written around 1133 by Abélard in his *Historia calamitatum* [*The Story of My Calamities*]. From it we learn that he was born in the small village of Le Pallet near Nantes in southern Brittany in 1079. He studied under scholastic theologians such as Guillaume de Champeaux (?–1121) and Anselme de Laon (c. 1050–1117), then taught rhetoric and dialectics in Paris and at the cathedral school of Notre Dame, where he obtained a chair in 1113. While in Paris, he met Héloïse and became her teacher at the request of her uncle, Canon Fulbert. Their clandestine and passionate love affair soon developed. Abélard was not able to maintain the quality of his teaching and, after Fulbert became aware of the relationship, the lovers were sepa-

rated. When Héloïse found out that she was pregnant, she fled with Abélard to his sister's house, where their son, Astrolabe, was born. Abélard then convinced Fulbert to let him marry his niece. At first, Héloïse refused marriage, considering this to be both dangerous and disgraceful for Abélard. But they returned to Paris and were married secretly. Eventually their wedding became public knowledge and Abélard was forced to take Héloïse to an abbey in Argenteuil, where she had been raised and educated. He settled in the nearby Saint-Denis monastery.

Thinking that Abélard had turned Héloïse into a nun to get rid of her, Fulbert ordered his kinsmen to have him castrated. At Saint-Denis, Abélard fell into a conflict with the abbot and other members of the congregation over their lack of monastic discipline. When students requested that he start teaching again, he decided to teach both the Holy Scriptures and philosophy. The study of secular books added to the attacks against Abélard. He wrote a controversial essay that insisted on understanding the meaning of words rather than accepting their superfluous mention, adding that this was necessary because nothing could be believed unless

## ABELARD AND HELOÏSE

it was understood. A council convened against him ruled in favor of burning of the book and his persecution by his abbot and brethren. Abélard decided to retire to a remote area outside of Troyes, where soon students sought him out again. When Héloïse and her nuns were expelled from Argenteuil by a vengeful Suger (1081–1155), the abbot at Saint-Denis, Abélard gave her the land for a convent of the Paraclete order.

Abélard was charged with heresy for his comments concerning the Holy Trinity and the unity of God in 1121 and in 1140, the latter at a council headed by Bernard de Clairvaux (1090–1153). Peter the Venerable (c. 1092–1156) sided with Abélard and offered to welcome him at Cluny afterward. Upon the death of Abélard at Chalon-sur-Saône, Peter wrote Héloïse a long letter that described his last few days. Peter also had Abélard's body transferred, as he had expressly wished in a letter to Héloïse, to the convent where she lived until her death in 1163 or 1164. They were buried in the same tomb. Their remains were reburied inside the Père-Lachaise cemetery in 1817.

Abélard's seeming aloofness limited the influence he had over his contemporaries, except for Pierre Lombard (1100–1160) and his student, who contributed greatly to his impact on thirteenth-century theologians and philosophers.

### Writings

The *Historia calamitatum* was not meant to start a dialogue between Abélard and Héloïse, as it was addressed to an unknown recipient. It may indicate that Abélard was trying to avoid rekindling the passionate Héloïse by contacting her. Indeed, he recalls what took place between them while they were supposed to be studying, including the sweetness he felt when he struck Héloïse with blows to hide any suspicions outsiders may have had. However, Héloïse saw the *Historia* and responded to Abélard. Her correspondence to Abélard consists of three letters. In the first, she asks Abélard to write to her as he did when they were lovers; she recalls the many songs he wrote that made her name familiar to everyone. In her second letter, she takes upon herself full responsibility for what happened to Abélard. She admits also that she cannot forget the pleasures of love that are still vibrant in her mind even at times when she should be focused on a religious service. She thinks of their

lovmaking during the day. In her third letter, she asks Abélard to teach her about the origins of her nuns' order and to write rules for it. Her letters seem to follow a pattern in which she attempts to gauge his feelings toward her—going as far as to recall a surreptitious instance of lovemaking in a dark corner of her convent's refectory; and upon Abélard's lack of like response, she then seems to decide to limit the dialogue overwhelmingly to church matters. Héloïse's openness and explicitness make her the more vibrant character. Unfortunately, the letters that Abélard and Héloïse wrote in the early part of their relationship have not survived, and what is available of the songs written by Abélard—while recalling the precepts of courtly love—are not sufficient to confirm a discourse that in the *Historia calamitatum* is only marginally erotic.

### Theological Writings

These writings include *Sic et non*, a series of excerpts arranged in favor of or against theological opinions; *Tractatus de unitate et trinitate divina* (condemned at the Council of Sens); *Introductio in theologia*; and *Dialogus inter philosophum, judaeum, et christianum*.

### Philosophical Writings

Abelard's major philosophical writings are *Dialectica*, a logical treatise in four books; *Liber divisionum et definitionum*; and a moral treatise, *Scito Teipsum, seu ethica*.

CLAUDE J. FOUILLADE

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# ABU NUWAS, AL-HASAN

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c. 747–815  
Arab poet

Abu Nuwas is not only one of the most important writers in Arabic literature, but also a major figure in the history of Arabic-language erotic writing. Part of a great flowering of culture in the early Abbasid period (749–945), Abu Nuwas used and built on traditional poetic forms to create an extraordinarily elegant, allusive, and vivid body of poetry. The forthright eroticism of Abu Nuwas's poems, with their frank celebration of the drinking of wine and the love of young men, captured the imaginations of much of the pleasure-loving elites of Baghdad, including the Abbasid caliph, al-Amin. Because they dealt with pleasures forbidden to strict Muslims, Abu Nuwas's poems shocked and scandalized the devout, who considered the works blasphemous. Abu Nuwas knew his Qur'an and other religious literature, though, and interwove religious allusions throughout his writings, as if to confound his critics. His writings also contain much that is self-mocking, morose, and even repentant, as if to show the range of experiences through which pursuit of pleasure can take a person.

The different accounts of Abu Nuwas's death show something of his reputation in life: He is variously described as dying in prison (incarcerated for a blasphemous poem), in the home of a tavern keeper, and in the house of a notable Shi'ite family that later assisted in the collection of his poems. Abu Nuwas enjoyed a considerable afterlife as a character in Arabic popular literature, most notably in the *Thousand and One Nights*, where he frequently appears as a court jester to Harun al-Rashid. But it was as an author of erotic verse that he was primarily remembered. Alternately held up and reviled by later writers as the poet par excellence of homoerotic desire in Arabic, Abu Nuwas's poems were widely cited and quoted long after his death. He inspired later writers of erotic poetry in Arabic, the popularity of his work fluctuating

both with changing poetic fashions and with changing sexual mores. Abu Nuwas's erotic writings are currently enjoying a revival of interest among modern readers.

## The *Diwan* of Abu Nuwas

Abu Nuwas's poetry is known primarily from a posthumous compilation known as the *Diwan*. The most reliable versions of the *Diwan* were compiled by al-Suli and Hamza al-Isbahani; the latter is the most extensive collection, containing almost 1,500 poems. The *Diwan* covers a wide variety of subjects, including hunting, panegyrics, lamentations, and satires—but the two major categories for which Abu Nuwas is best known can be classed as erotic: the love poems and the wine poems. Indeed, the categories often overlap, for wine and love are most often mixed in Abu Nuwas's poetry: Wine is shown as an aid to seduction, and the young men who bring the wine are quite often the objects of sexual advances (not always successful). This juxtaposition has the effect also of bringing together two forbidden pleasures into one situation. Although much of Abu Nuwas's erotic verse is addressed to young men, there are also a number of erotic poems in the *Diwan* addressed to women, which may have been even more shocking to Abu Nuwas's contemporaries. Wine itself in the poems is often personified as a woman, although in this capacity she acts more often than not simply as a facilitator of sexual activity between men; female musicians function in similar roles in the poems. Abu Nuwas's work is forthright and even self-deprecating about the hazards of both wine and seduction, and his accounts of rejection and the aftereffects of too much drinking are given with wry humor.

Typically, Abu Nuwas's erotic poems are narratives; the beginning of the poem often sets up a situation in which a narrator will encounter a handsome youth. The narrator brings the reader

into this situation—in effect we sit next to him at a drinking party; for example, seeing what he sees as he admires the young man serving the wine, the youth's beauties being described at great length. This is often followed by an account of the seduction of the young man, sometimes with a considerable contrast in tone: In some poems the narrator goes from gentle admiration to clearly forcing himself on a young man of inferior status or strength, while there is sometimes outright payment for sexual favors. Such poems sometimes conclude on a note of regret—at the hangover of the following morning or the narrator's sexual impetuosity. Shorter poems in the *Diwan* are often less narratives than homages to desirable young men, enumerating their beauties and good qualities and planning how to win their favors. Each of the poems is unique, however, and fitting them too closely into a pattern detracts from the author's considerable inventiveness.

Abu Nuwas's language in his erotic poems is often veiled and allusive: the desired young men are described as fawns or gazelles, and sexual activity is frequently described metaphorically rather than explicitly. In one account of the seduction of a cupbearer, the narrator uses the metaphors of a military campaign to describe his sexual conquest—the young man is hit by a battering ram and fixed with a spear, and concedes the narrator's victory over him, but then asks for restitution. Yet Abu Nuwas is also sometimes quite frank in his descriptions of sexual activity between men, and these explicit accounts scandalized his more prudish contemporaries.

Abu Nuwas's poetic seductions were often unsuccessful or inconclusive; indeed, unachieved desire seems to spur on his poetic efforts. So, in a poem to a Christian cupbearer—many of Abu Nuwas's cupbearers are Christians, since they have no religious restrictions on the serving of wine—the speaker wants to be the young man's priest, his Bible, his eucharist, and the bubbles in his sacramental wine in order to get closer to him. Throughout his entire body of work, Abu Nuwas is concerned with style and effect; at its best, his poetry is highly evocative of moods, emotions, and passions, and nowhere is this more evident than in his erotic verse.

## Biography

Abu Nuwas was born Hani' al-Hakami in al-Ahwaz (in the Iranian province of Khuzistan) between 747 and 762. His early education was in Basra, then later in Kufa. He studied poetry first with the poet Waliba b. al-Hubab (who may have also been his first lover), and later with the poet Khalaf al-Ahmar; he also studied Qur'an and *hadith*, as well as grammar. He moved to Baghdad, initially failed to get caliphal support, and was briefly exiled to Egypt. Eventually, he found favor with the caliph al-Amin, who was his patron and friend until Abu Nuwas's death in Baghdad between 813 and 815.

T.G. WILFONG

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# ACKER, KATHY

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1947–1997

American novelist

Most of Kathy Acker's novels are written in the first person in a style of an abject dis-autobiographical plagiarism. In *Kathy Goes to Haiti*, for example, she invents an "I" that is a multiplicity of individuals from her life and from literary history and then uses her own "I" to travel through shocking explorations of sex in a deliberately arousing and, at times, disgusting manner. In *The Black Tarantula*, the inverse happens. Here the narrator becomes the main character in the porn books that she is copying. In *The Adult Life of Toulouse Lautrec by Henri Toulouse Lautrec*, the narrator is male for one page, then abruptly becomes female. It is in this book that Acker plagiarizes a passage from Harold Robbins' *The Pirate*. She includes it in a section called "I Want to Be Raped Every Night. Story of a Rich Woman." Acker transforms Robbins' soft-core, nearly romantic porn and recontextualizes it through intensifying the sexuality of the language, thus revealing the hidden structures of oppression in Robbins' novel. Later she does a similar shifting of text in *Great Expectations*, where she reimagines Dickens' tale and where again her protagonist, Peter, changes sex in order to experience fucking differently. Repeatedly Acker masks her I/eye in order to push past established limitations of sex. She becomes Pier Pasolini as Romeo in order to critique a woman's loss of subjectivity for experiencing sex. By tearing away at and reconstructing her autobiographical identities, which come through reading as well as experiencing the wor(l)d directly, Acker casts into doubt the image men have constructed for women to obey. Her strippers, her whores, her mothers, her stepdaughters seek new choices and act on them. The myth of romantic love is repeatedly dismantled in order to transform the lives of her characters and her readers alike. In *Memoriam to Identity* most clearly challenges this myth. Here, as in her other works, fucking is the only way to know that you are alive.

Throughout her writing Acker explodes the Bush-era notion of family values. "DOWN WITH THE FAMILY," Acker writes in *Politics*, "THE FAMILY IS THE WORST EVIL IN THIS COUNTRY." Her characters are haunted by ruptured desires in the family. In *I Dreamt I Was a Nymphomaniac Imagining*, the narrator recounts a "repulsively hetero" dream four times. While going crazy restraining herself, she seeks always to "do something wilder." She moves rapidly from one intense sex scene to another. In one she is fucking her sister when her sister's boyfriend walks in and tells them to do it in the bedroom, out of sight. Mothers reject daughters, fathers abandon daughters, and step-fathers attempt to rape.

But Acker never denies her characters' desires. She does not simplify the dynamics of desires, and her adolescent female characters have as much desire as the older men who seem to be only using these adolescents. Such a violent dynamic is most clearly created in *Blood and Guts in High School*. In the opening scene Janey begs her father not to leave her for another woman. Through the rest of the book, Janey battles other institutions that deny her access to power. *Don Quixote* begins with an abortion, a loss of body and self, but also a renaming of old myths and a staking claim to other desires. The misogyny of male texts is silenced from the outset, and Kathy, the narrator, embarks on a series of sexual escapades that eventually brings her to a feminine poetics of image and language. In this book, Acker literally fucks the writing of the past that had denied her a point of entry.

In her later works, Acker's main intention is to destroy the Great Tradition of the literary past. She does so in order to make other means of travel possible. In *Memoriam to Identity*, *Empire of the Senseless*, and *Pussy, King of Pirates* all wander across strange nomadic territories that cannot contain desire and language. Much of this is done to escape being caged by phallogocentric languages of denial. Even as the assaults on the female body continue in these



## ACKER, KATHY

narratives, Acker makes liberation possible through a language that means something to the female characters.

Acker's narrators look directly into and through bodies of desire in ways that shock traditions of reading and invent political realities that rage against the law of genre. Her novels, thus, create trouble for traditional approaches. Feminists who want to celebrate her for calling into question patriarchy and its violence against women are disturbed by her "vulgar" language. Postmodern academics blush when referring to her obsessive use of the words "cock" and "cunt" or of her intimate descriptions of perverse sex acts. Readers outside the academy want to celebrate Acker's riot grrrl punk attitude, which unfortunately allows for a misrecognition of the more profound and provocative nature of Acker's novels. Still, Acker's greatest importance as a political philosopher is that her work is read in so many places. Academics write dissertations, punk bands (most importantly The Mekons and Tribe 8) collaborated with her in live and recorded performances, bands of pirate girls publish 'zines, and gender fuck-ups write in minor languages that Acker's work made possible. Acker needs to be read as our modern-day de Sade, as a philosopher of the boudoir, who has made books dangerous once again—dangerous not because this is a woman writing explicit sex in obscene language, but because her writing breaks apart the infrastructure of capitalism and patriarchy.

### Biography

Kathy Acker was born in 1947 in New York City where she was tutored at a private all-girls' school. After college, Acker worked in the sex industry. Later she taught at a number of art schools. She wrote several novels, three plays, a screenplay, and many theoretical essays on culture, politics, and sexuality. Acker's writing changed dramatically in the mid-1970s when she was introduced to contemporary French critical theory (especially the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze, Julia Kristeva, and Michel Foucault). Her influences include the writing of Gertrude Stein, William S. Burroughs, Georges Bataille, Marquis de Sade, Antonin Artaud, and Jean Genet.

DOUG RICE

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## ADMIRABLE DISCOURSES OF THE PLAIN GIRL

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Classical Chinese sex manual  
c. 1566

There is some disagreement about the translation of the Chinese title *Sunü miaohun*. It was rendered as *The Admirable Discourses of the Plain Girl* by Robert van Gulik and as *The Wondrous Discourse of Su Nü* by Douglas Wile. The text in Chinese, preserved in a unique Japanese manuscript written around 1880, is copied among the ten “secret books” in van Gulik’s *Erotic Prints of the Ming Period*, where the work is described and partially translated. Ten years later, with passages discreetly translated into Latin, it was included in *Sexual Life in Ancient China*. Van Gulik had also discovered a woodblock print from the Genroku era (1592–1596) of a Japanese translation by Manase Dōson (1507–1594). The Chinese preface offers no key to who the author might be, though we know it could not have been written later than 1566. Akira Ishihara suggested that the handbook could be linked to a much earlier tradition going back to the Song period (960–1279).

Whatever the case, the *Discourse* cannot be said to be simply a patchwork of extracts from the selections of sexual classics copied into the *Ishimpō* [*Essence of Medical Prescriptions*] compiled by Tamba Yasuyori between 982 and 984. Though belonging to the same tradition of

Chinese sexological thought, the handbook differs from other texts by its excess of details. Both concise and comprehensive, the work belongs to a later state of Chinese society, when Confucian ideology weighed more heavily. Whether or not readers consider it a practical treatise of sexual hygiene for the married male, it offers a wide range of wise advice for both partners. However serious the intent may have been, its use in Japan seems to have had a playful side.

### Content

The text is made up of rather short questions put by the mythical Yellow Emperor to the Plain Girl, who answers at length and with irrefutable authority on how to satisfy feminine sexual urges. Altogether the volume contains nearly ten thousand characters divided into the following eight chapters, or *pian*:

1. “Basic Principles,” reminding that *yin* and *yang* are present in both sexes. “Indeed! Union of man and woman pertains to the Way made of a *yin* and a *yang*. Therefore there is a *yang* within a *yin* and the reverse. *Yin* and *yang*, man and woman: So is the way of heaven and earth.”
2. “Nine Postures,” each related to different animals and described more fully than

in earlier books, though the eighth requires two women. The names of the postures are: (1) Dragon Flying, (2) Tiger Approaching, (3) Monkey Attacking, (4) Cicada Clinging, (5) Turtle Rising, (6) Phoenix Soaring, (7) Rabbit Licking, (8) Fishes Nibbling, (9) Cranes Entwining.

3. "Shallow and Deep (Thrusts)," in which it is advised that "one must not be too hasty nor too slow. . . . It is of critical import to avoid too deep penetration or it may injure the five viscera. If penetration reaches the "valley seed," it injures the liver and one will suffer from clouded vision, caked ears, and discomfort in the four limbs." The *valley seed* is some five inches inside, as described on the preceding page.
4. "Five Desires and Five Injuries"—*five desires* means the signs of the five stages of mounting desire in women; *five injuries*, the five untimely or faulty ways a man can injure his partner's lungs, heart, liver, kidneys, spleen; in addition are described the ten feminine movements accompanying the different stage of her arousal and complete satisfaction.
5. "The Most Important Relationship," which deals with how to maintain conjugal harmony and obtain children.
6. "Thickness and Length"—of the male organ, which is irrelevant because "deriving pleasure from intercourse is a matter of inner feeling."
7. "Nourishing Longevity," in which it is advised to beware of too frequent ejaculation; nothing is said about a battle of sexes for each partner's longevity.
8. "The Four Stages [for man] and the Nine Arrivals [for woman]," in which it is said: "If the man wishes to fathom the woman's inner feelings, he must start to excite her interest by cracking jokes and stimulate her feelings by moving hands and feet. . . . To have intercourse when the four stages have not yet been reached nor the nine arrivals achieved is sure to bring disaster."

Thus well instructed and properly prepared for sexual harmony, the Yellow Emperor ascended to Heaven at the age of one hundred twenty, "together with the Plain Girl."

## Impact

It is difficult to assess the impact in China of a work that had vanished without a trace until its discovery in Japan in the mid-twentieth century. Still its tenor fits well within the trends of thought in sixteenth-century China, where the claims of "feelings" were asserted by a growing number of Confucian scholars rejecting any attempt to extinguish them. The stronger drive was love. In 1598 Tang Xianzu (1550–1616) wrote in introducing his play *The Peony Pavilion* [*Mudan ting*]: "Love is of source unknown, yet it grows ever deeper. The living may die of it, by its power the dead live again."

Though handbooks of sexual import disappeared from China, they may have left an underground tradition of practical knowledge which may surface in the future.

ANDRÉ LÉVY

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## AFRICAN LANGUAGES: ALGERIA (MAGHREB)

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Different ethnicities, religions, and cultures have shaped Algeria since antiquity. This has deeply influenced the interaction between sexes, and as a consequence, writings about them. According to Rachid Boudjedra, “there are very strong pagan residues” in present-day Algeria. The polemic of eroticism versus religion is nothing new: The Berbers rebelled time after time against what they saw as sexual repression in both Christianity and Islam. After becoming a Christian and a Church father, the first world-famous Berber writer, Augustine of Hippo Regius (today Annaba), 354–430, relentlessly chastised local pagan promiscuity. His fellow Berbers mostly ignored his sermons and epistles and quickly reverted to polytheism and free love. Three centuries later, the Arab historian Ibn Khaldun recorded the continued existence of sexual freedom. In the twelfth century, Sufism, a mystical form of Islam dominated by ecstatic manifestations expressed in the physical language of trance and open to both men and women, helped shape Algerian views of the body. In the Sufi tradition, physical love is an essential component of the alliance with God, as stated by its grand master, Ibn Arabi (1165–1240) in his *Treatise on Love*.

When French colonization took up its *mission civilisatrice*, it did not apply it only to the natives. It also aimed at enforcing moral codes of conduct in poor and uneducated immigrants, which would turn Algeria into a Mediterranean mainstay of the “New France” that nineteenth-century puritanical society wanted to create. Yet the “pied noir” (Algerian immigrant) proletariat quickly delighted in the adventures of their picaresque antihero Cagayous, a character very much in the tradition of the Roman comedies decried by the Augustinian Berber church (Musette, alias Auguste Robinet). Later on, the Algerian-born Albert Camus was attacked for the pagan sensuality of his texts, and especially for the sexual narrative in his short story “The

Adulterous Woman,” in which a French woman escapes her hotel room and has a passionate “adulterous” encounter with the desert. During the recent bloody years of Algerian turmoil at the end of the twentieth century, several writers, such as Rachid Boudjedra and Anouar Benmalek, have chosen to pit eroticism against Islamic terrorism. As a result, Boudjedra has been facing the death sentence of a religious *fatwa* for pornography, among other accusations, since 1983.

Only in the context of this recurrent struggle between puritanical and relaxed tendencies in Algeria can one decipher the complex interplay of religious taboos and iconoclastic rebellion in contemporary literature, and in particular the use of eroticism by francophone Algerian authors. If, according to Hédi Abdel-Jaouad, sexuality is a frequently treated subject in Algerian literature, Algerian francophone writers have always struggled to find their voice between tradition and transgression. The choice of writing in French might have provided a bracketed space where one could challenge the puritanical rigidity of society.

Facing social and religious taboos, narratives about the body have changed over time, passing from self-censorship to overt rebellion. Several trends stand out: Authors who started their literary careers before the beginning of the war for independence, such as Mouloud Ferraoun, Mouloud Mammeri, Mohamed Dib, and Kateb Yacine, denounced the oppression of Algerian society by French colonization, but also the sexual divorce between genders and the dreadful consequences of sexual repression enforced by Algerian families themselves. Sex in the narrative works of this first period often has two faces: light and darkness. Dark themes of rape—of the country/sexual rape/incest/arranged marriages treated as “legal rapes”—are counterbalanced by luminous, poetic descriptions of female beauty. For Mohamed Dib and Kateb Yacine, the female body is the

center of sensuality and beauty, as well as a metaphor for the new country to come. Eroticism is an antidote for national and sexual repression. At that point in Algerian francophone literature, female characters were rarely in charge of their own sexuality, as they are in Mouloud Ferraoun's and Malek Haddad's novels. The pagan Berber heritage is represented in this generation by Jean Sénac, a gay poet who fought for Algerian independence and wrote lyrical poetic paens to sexual freedom.

Writers who started their careers during the war of liberation, such as Assia Djebar and Mourad Bourboune, represent a more heterogeneous group of writers. Djebar also counterposes the dark side of rape (colonization and "legal rape") to a luminous one, represented by eroticism as both a union and a voyage. Her female characters often transgress taboos of traditional marital and sexual relations. Mourad Bourboune represents the pagan sensuality in this generation; in his *Pagan Pilgrimage* he evokes his personal version of Genesis: In the beginning was the body and God is the creation of man.

Algerian independence was marked by a strong desire for the relaxing of traditional codes of conduct. Writers who started their careers in the aftermath of independence, such as Nabile Fares, Rabah Belamri, Rachid Mimouni, Rachid Boudjedra, and Tahar Djaout, have chosen to continue the fight for freedom in the individual realm. Like Djebar, Fares describes eroticism as a complete union and a voyage. He also openly denounces the hegemony of religious morals in a society still permeated by paganism. Belamri shows desire as transcendence. Mimouni condemns Algerian society for the damage done to love and sex by the rapid return to a puritanical order. Boudjedra claims the heritage of heresy and eroticism in pre-Islamic poetry, and opts for iconoclastic

and paroxysmic transgression of social and sexual codes. In his novels, sex is often treated as vengeance against the tyranny of patriarchal fathers and of religion. Djaout was assassinated for relentlessly using his pen to fight for freedom.

More recently, female novelists, such as Zoulika Boukourt, Nina Bouraoui, Aïcha Lemsine, Leïla Marouane, Yamina Mechakra, and Leïla Sebbar, have written, often with lyric exuberance, about female innermost feelings and desire. For many of them, writing and eroticism are intertwined. Franco-Algerian writer Nina Bouraoui, born five years after independence, who has written about her own homosexuality, seems to sum up the fascination for eroticism found in francophone Algerian writing when she notes that "words make love on the page."

BERNADETTE GINESTET

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## AFRICAN LANGUAGES: TUNISIA (MAGHREB)

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Eroticism in Tunisian literature—indeed, in Maghrebian literature in general—can be traced back to Mouhammad al-Nafzâwî in the fifteenth century, around the time of the Tunisian founder of modern sociology, Ibn Khaldun (b. 1332) and of Chaucer in England. Al-Nafzâwî's work is entitled *La Prairie parfumée où s'ébattent les plaisirs* [*The Perfumed Garden*], composed between 1410 and 1434. A Berber from the south, around Tozeur, al-Nafzâwî lived and composed his work in Tunis, at the request or command of the vizier of the sultan of Tunis. A work of erotology, when it reached Europe in the nineteenth century, it was characterized as pornographic. For the Arabs, on the other hand, as Khawan writes, erotology was viewed as a science, *'ilm al-bâh* (40). They were, in fact, practicing a form of psychoanalysis.

*La Prairie parfumée* offers its readers a kind of earthly Paradise where the reader's pleasure and imagination are given free rein, as defined by the Arabic word *al-khâtir* (45). Body and soul act in harmony. Khawan insists on the distinction between eroticism and pornography, which is its exact opposite, since the former is above all rupture and disharmony (45). Al-Nafzâwî stresses the physical harmony between man and woman, adding a "thousand and one" medical hints (46–7). The work stresses the pleasure of the woman, who will feel naturally drawn to the sexual act, to coitus. Al-Nafzâwî's style is poetic, and by that very fact, pure. Khawan calls the text a "fine-cut jewel" (*joyau finement ciselé*) (49). Sexuality becomes an art, a "poetic transfiguration" leading to wonder (48).

In his seminal work, *L'Amour et l'Occident* [*Love in the Western World*]. Denis de Rougemont contrasts Eastern and Western attitudes toward love and sexuality. Although by "East" he specifies the Far East, many readers apply his theories to the Middle East and North Africa as well. In the East, he writes, "human love has usually been regarded as mere pleasure and

physical enjoyment" (63). In the West, on the other hand (as the result of a perversion of Christianity), the courtly, or romantic, love tradition has dominated the imagination since the Middle Ages, which was the time of al-Nafzâwî in the Maghreb. For the Westerner, romantic love/passion is exclusive of marriage. It demands total consummation, or fusion, which can occur only through death (e.g., Tristan and Isolde, Romeo and Juliet, Cathy and Heathcliff). De Rougemont advocates Christian love, or agape, which indicates an equal partnership, as opposed to eros, or passion.

Henry de Montherlant's antihero, Costals, in *Les Lépreuses*, in part 4 of *Les Jeunes filles*, embroiders on the East-West antithesis. He claims that the history of Judeo-Christian civilization is "that of efforts made by woman so that man be diminished and suffer, so that he becomes her equal" (237). The Orient, on the other hand, bases its view of women on biological realities that are deemed to make them subservient to masculine wisdom: "In the Occident, dominated by women, the cult of suffering. In the Orient, where man is the master, the cult of wisdom" (237). The Occidental male thus sees the Oriental notions of sexual *plaisir* and *jouissance* as based on female inferiority—a view not borne out by the works of al-Nafzâwî or of contemporary Tunisian writers like Abdelwahab Meddeb and Hédi Bouraoui.

In 1986 Meddeb's *Phantasia* offered a striking example of eroticism in Tunisian fiction. The Maghrebian protagonist/narrator, seeking his identity in Paris, the former colonizer, embarks on a quest for the ideal woman, embodied in one Aya. A prolonged, detailed ten-page description elaborates on the consummation of their love. Tahar ben Jelloun notes that for the narrator, total love and death are inextricably intertwined: "a violent eroticism linked to bodily agony, as Georges Bataille has said of eroticism" (*Le Monde*, September 12, 1986)—and as de

## AFRICAN LANGUAGES: TUNISIA (MAGHREB)

Rougemont has written of the love-death theme in the Occident.

Meddeb's description attempts to blur the line between sexuality and poetry. The lovemaking is Dionysiac, drawing on the wine forbidden to a strict Muslim. The narrator enumerates Aya's erogenous zones as if he were writing a poem on a body-text. Amidst all the sexual acrobatics, at times readers feel as they were reading Henry Miller, without the sense of humor. But the detailed description is supposed to result in the reader's pleasure. Meddeb dedicates this scene to Ibn Arabi, who saw coitus as "a spiritual realization embodied by the most accomplished of prophets, Mohammed" (181).

A postmodernist variation on the theme of eroticism appears in the novels of the Tunisian Hédi Bouraoui, who makes his home in Canada and has experienced and absorbed the cultures of three continents. *La Pharaone* is a quest for origins, Egypt being in many ways the cradle of Western civilization. A modern Maghrebian scholar, Barka Bousiris, visits Egypt in search of—he knows not what. Obsessed with the female pharaoh Hatchepsut, who succeeded her husband, took upon herself male attributes, and has been called the Queen Who Would Be King, Barka fulfills his own destiny. He is more and more drawn to the ancient world, to the dismay of his former lover, the Occidental Francine from France. Finally, he is apparently crushed under a statue of Hatchepsut, but the body disappears. Then, the pharaone takes over the narrative when her tablets, her "scriberies" in hieroglyphics, are discovered in Barka's hotel room after his death (236). The tablets introduce the thematic word *amourir* and the love-death motif which dominates the text. Francine begins to identify with her ancient rival and to recognize that Barka and Hatchepsut have achieved total fusion, through death and throughout eternity (229).

Barka may be the reincarnation of the scribe Kabar, who was Hatchepsut's love but whom she could not marry because he was a commoner. She created the values of Western civilization, before Akhnaten, before the Greeks and Romans. This same "goddess" of humanism nonetheless fell madly in love with her scribe, "the other half of her being" (244). But all too human, she succumbs to sexual jealousy, without real foundation, and orders Kabar killed, only to repent immediately and to await death

anxiously in order to rejoin Kabar. There are no sexual acrobatics here, but an eroticism contingent on memory and creativity. Hatchepsut, whose motto, "Make love, not war" (242), anticipates modern times, dreams of having Kabar return to earth, presumably as Barka, unconscious of his fate, to be reunited with her in love-death (*amourir*).

But the most explicitly erotic scene in the novel is that describing the wedding night of Ayman, the Copt, and Imane, the Muslim, who seems to be a latter-day Hatchepsut. Her defloration is presented poetically, metaphorically: "Penetration dissolves anguish verging on immortality, a pearl of blood in glorious pyrotechnics" (170). These two represent the future on earth, not an otherworldly fusion. As Francine points out, Barka led them all to the past in order to prepare the future (239).

In *La Femme d'entre les lignes*, it becomes very clear that coitus is being used as a metaphor for poetry. *Amourir* becomes *migramour* in the later novel. The wandering narrator, Tunisian in origin, a latter-day Ulysses, has attracted a reader, the Italian journalist Lisa, sight unseen. Finally they meet when he attends a conference in Rome. He imagines Lisa slipping between the sheets, and there is an embedded pun on *entre les lignes* and *entre les draps* [between the lines/between the sheets]. The metaphor becomes explicit when the protagonist senses that Lisa slips between the sheets "pour bien être dans tes pages" [to be in your pages] (22). They find pleasure "between the lines," in the euphoria of blanks (62). As in the *nouveau roman*, the reader does not know if the whole love affair is real or a phantasm, for the body always blends into the "body-text" (64). Lisa disappears finally, in reaction to the narrator, who has tried to create her in his own image (84), and is transformed into Palimpseste (on whom much has been written). But not only does Palimpseste supplant Lisa, she turns the tables on the narrator, causing him to metamorphose into his own fictional personage, Virebaroud. *La Femme d'entre les lignes* is a love story, but the erotic charge is between writer and reader, personified by the protagonists but reflecting the author and ourselves as readers.

In the next novel, *Sept portes pour une brûlance*, which is probably the most erotic of them all, the female protagonist once again, like Palimpseste, turns the tables by narrating her own tale of passion for a man whom we never

see and who never answers her letters. The tale takes the form of poetry found when an outside narrator (who is Tunisian) is presented with a bag of letters, unsigned, undated, chaotic, fragmented, but burning, unified by ardor and lyricism. The heroine expresses herself unrestrainedly, in a language both erotic and poetic, with frequent references to the biblical, Solomon Song of Songs. The physical sex act is described viscerally in direct, simple language, without shame or rational control. The very anonymity and dislocation of the text makes it into a love story stripped to essences and generalized. The letters could have been addressed to any man by any woman. Therefore, the tale could have been lived by all of us, the readers, male and female alike (16).

From the Middle Ages to postmodernism, Tunisian writers have challenged stereotypes about the male/female dynamic in the Maghreb, have shown empathy with the female point of

view—it is no accident that Tunisia has a long history of support for women’s issues—and have moved comfortably from the realistically erotic to the poetic and metaphorical.

ELIZABETH SABISTON

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## AGUSTINI, DELMIRA

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1866–1914  
Uruguayan poet

### *Los cálices vacíos*

An anomaly within Spanish-American letters and often misunderstood, Delmira Agustini’s lyric poetry has nevertheless become canonical in Spanish. In universities her erotic poems are taught, and in editions and reviews they are praised by the critics. But her nonerotic works are separated from the erotic ones and only the former are taught in the schools. Some titles of her erotic poetry make plain the decadent themes and aesthetic imagery of her eroticism: “Amor” [Love], “El intruso” [The Intruder], “El vampiro” [The Vampire], “La serpentina” [Serpentine], “Fiera de amor” [Beast of Love, my own translation], “Mis amores” [My Loves], and “Rebelión” [Rebellion]. Agustini’s less well

known erotic poems include her prayer to Blind Father Eros, “Plegaria” [Entreaty]; “A Eros” [To Eros]; “Boca a boca” [Mouth to Mouth]; and her series called the “El rosario de Eros” [The Rosary of Eros]. Despite her inclusion in the school curriculum and her wide name recognition in Spanish-American literary circles, Delmira Agustini has only recently been analyzed seriously and at length. These new in-depth studies have concluded that her uniqueness consists of a consistently female, sometimes gender-bending, perspective on heterosexual love.

The poems’ erotic subject matter (and occasionally, their complexity) contributed to the greatness of the Uruguayan’s legacy, but undoubtedly also to the paucity of translations and interpretations. An additional obstruction to Agustini’s renown has been her place within Latin American literary history. Like other women writers from near her time, such as



Alfonsina Storni, Juana de Ibarbourou, and Gabriela Mistral, Agustini expresses more social concerns and employs greater simplicity of language than had been typical in Spanish-American *modernismo*, an international poetic style similar to French symbolism. Yet her poetry did not differ radically enough from *modernismo* in style and subject matter for it to be called *vanguardista* [avant-garde], in the manner of one of the series of splinter movements that followed *modernismo*. Hence Agustini has been deemed a *posmodernista*, an unhappy term that does not recognize her or her group's special qualities or innovations. In contrast to these difficulties for the studious, her late-modernist phraseology and decadent, even Gothic, imagery early attracted a steadily increasing international attention. Some evidence of this growing popularity transcending Spanish is that a volume of her verse has recently become available in English for the first time (2003, Southern Illinois University Press).

Agustini's eroticism—emanating from the strengths of a physically enjoyed, female body—appears alongside countervailing forces of feminine weakness, both in her life and in her poetry. Born among Montevideo's moneyed elite, she managed to have both a bohemian intellectual life, where the erotic was seen as fashionable, and a life constrained by chaperones and other sexist strategies of traditional bourgeois society. Doted on by her parents—who arguably overprotected their gifted daughter—the poet wrote scandalous verses they loved. Agustini's lyric was unceasingly promoted by her father, who, evidence suggests, wanted his daughter to conform to the standards of her day by going to her wedding day a virgin. Her parallel, radical life of the mind presented difficulties to her after she left her parents' home and married. After only one month of marriage, the young Delmira returned to her parents' home, decrying her new groom's "vulgarity." Family connections arranged for her one of the first legal divorces in Uruguay. However, she continued to see her ex-husband sporadically, unbeknownst to her family, apparently for sex. During one of these clandestine meetings, her ex-spouse shot and killed her and then himself. Accounts of the circumstances of her death at age 28 were published in newspapers, sometimes with the picture of her bleeding body, all over the continent.

More than a half century of poor editions, including an "official edition" published by the Uruguayan government that had to be recalled due to its numerous errors, has also inhibited the study of Delmira Agustini's erotic poems. In 1993 Magdalena García Pinto's Cátedra edition of the *Poesías completas*, appeared the first edition truly worthy of the adjective "complete." It includes an introduction which painstakingly traces the brutal history of the production and reception of her lyric, from the murder that ended her creative activity and prevented the author's own re-editing of her works, to the metaphorically violent, patriarchal discourse that continues to deny that she could have known what she was doing. The editor reminds readers how some historians of literature have insisted that Agustini was some sort of idiot savant who wrote intuitively and beyond her own capabilities. García Pinto's fine republishing of the originals and her feminist perspective signal that perhaps the disarray of the author's manuscripts, the neglect by interpreters and translators, and even the masculinist prejudice of some scholars may finally be coming to an end. In 1999 Alejandro Cáceres published an even more thoroughly edited critical edition within Uruguay (Editorial de la Plaza) that has had limited distribution. In 2003 Cáceres published the above-mentioned English translation. Although prior to the 1990s several book-length studies had been devoted to her life and works, this number has doubled within the last ten years and seems to be only increasing.

Regarding the meaning of her erotic poems, opinions diverge. One critic, writing in an underground newspaper in Montevideo, exemplified the stance of most outside and many inside Uruguay: that Agustini's poetry espouses a radical sexual liberation. On the other hand, traditional and conservative readers in Uruguay suggest that Agustini was writing about the soul's ecstasy in God rather than the body's pleasures. Her Catholic and religious imagery (in poems like "Plegaria" or those in the "El rosario de Eros" series) feeds both sides of the debate. It is clear to most readers, however, that Agustini's spiritual themes do not overwhelm the erotic in her poems and that the often contrasted elements feed one another. Her poetry may thematize corporeal sexuality more than spiritual love, but it is characterized by the mixing of the two. Scholars whose writings contain

examples of measured evaluation, such as Sylvia Molloy and Angel Rama, have recognized Agustini's alternation of the pose of sexual assertiveness with that of a shrinking violet as one of the "tretas del débil," that is, a strategy of resistance used by those with little else to combat the power that others wield over them. While a strict Manichaean interpretation of her physicality and spirituality and of her passion and restraint satisfies few, the gaps, contradictions, oppositions, and paradoxes that appear when one examines Agustini's eroticism encourage tentative pronouncements on its overall nature.

To evaluate Agustini's importance as an erotic poet, it has always been necessary to pay attention to her life—true even for critics whose theoretical apparatus aims to be strictly formal and textual. Despite recent progress in critical analysis, it is still generally true that the best evidence for Agustini's popularity in Uruguay, and therefore evidence for how she has been read, can be found in the fascination with her life, in large part because her books were unavailable or only partially extant. It is paradoxical that the popular tendency to know details of Agustini's biography but few of her poems, while unfortunate in nearly every other way, has privileged Agustini as a subject for feminists. For instance, Molloy and Rama, each in distinct ways, speak of Agustini's need to produce performances of extreme behaviors in her writings because she was an intelligent woman taught to obey the constraints placed on wealthy women in Montevideo at the beginning of the twentieth century. A fiery expression of rebellion in one poem becomes a decadent obsequiousness in another. Here is the first stanza of "Otra estirpe" [Another Lineage], slightly modified from Cáceres' translation:

Eros, quiero guiarte, Padre ciego . . .  
 Pido a tus manos todopoderosas,  
 Su cuerpo excelso derramado en fuego  
 Sobre mi cuerpo desmayado en rosas!

[Eros, I want to guide you, blind Father . . .  
 From your almighty hand I ask for  
 His sublime body {spilling over with} fire  
 Upon my body faint in roses! ]

The poetic voice's extraordinary strength of resolution at one moment is betrayed by her body. The voice first presumes to have the particular

knowledge and control to guide the god of love, but then it falls weak at the moment her body is covered by her lover's.

Agustini's eroticism expresses an idealism and an antibourgeois morality, tinged with overtones of social criticism. Her female voice replays myths and literary topoi from the woman's point of view. She is the swan who rapes like Zeus and yet is female; she is the swan poet of the Decadents, but clearly a female esthete. Furthermore, her poems tell of accessing special, spiritual, and esoteric knowledge through the physicality of her female body. Her language partakes of a poetic vocabulary also rich in sonority, allusion, and rhyme; at the same time, she leads her generation with free verse. The poet's eroticism imbues her voice with a singular tone and spirit because its strength is always female, and what she might have called her "superiority of spirit" never imitates the masculine so much as it seems uniquely inspired by the experience of repression and oppression as a woman. The female voice is not feminist for having comprehended the struggles of other women and men to live in freedom or with justice—we do not know the extent to which she did understand the suffering of others—but she did claim the rights of pleasure and desire for women. This accomplishment alone makes her oeuvre worthy of greater recognition.

### Biography

Delmira Agustini was born in Montevideo, Uruguay, in 1886. She published her first book of poems, *El libro blanco (frágil)*, in 1907. She died in 1914, at the age of 28, shot in the head by her husband of two months. They were in the process of divorce.

DIANE E. MARTING

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# ALAS, LEOPOLDO

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1852–1901  
Spanish novelist and short story writer

### *La regenta*

*La regenta* [*The Judge's or Magistrate's Wife*] is the principal novel by Leopoldo Alas (also known as "Clarín"), himself one of the major authors and critics of late-nineteenth-century Spanish prose. Ana Ozores, the *regenta* of the title, is a desperately bored and sexually frustrated married woman living in Vetusta (a fictional re-creation of Oviedo in the Spanish province of Asturias). Ana becomes the subject of adulterous desires on the part of her confessor, Fermín de Pas, a high-ranking priest, and the local Don Juan, Alvaro Mesía. Mesía proposes to seduce Ana; the designs of de Pas are less clear but are certainly sexual in intent. At the end of the novel, Mesía succeeds in his plans and de Pas

finds out and subsequently spurns Ana when she returns to him for confession.

Although the motivation for the plot lies in the possibility of adulterous sex, the culminating seduction actually occurs "offstage" between chapters Twenty-Eight and Twenty-Nine. This structure offers the reader a sense of elongated foreplay before the sexual event itself that mirrors the general sense of eroticism, which in turn forms a backdrop for the novel's main action. Vetustan high society shows for the most part a prurient interest in the sexual lives of its members, including the three main characters, and treats the seduction of Ana as a spectator sport. The eroticism of the Vetustans is unhealthy and jaded, as characters continually seek sexual novelty—Mesía himself pursues Ana as a sop to his sated but fading sexual prowess. As Noël Valis has observed, Alas draws strong parallels between lust and greed: Banquets and dinners are occasions for flirting and the parade of lascivious

desires, as with, for example, the meal held in honor of the atheist don Pompeyo Guimarán, where Mesía holds forth on his past seductions while his male audience listens greedily. Ana's friend Visitación's sticky habit of munching on sweets comes to reflect the high level of salivation that occurs when confronted with either food or sex—as also with Ana's aunts, who fatten her up while drooling over her sexual potential. The dinners held by Vegallana and his wife provide further opportunities for erotic romping and games, flirting and touching.

In this unhealthily prurient society, Ana, as the pure (in fact, virginal) wife with religious leanings, acts throughout as the focus for vicarious eroticism and voyeurism. Many of the characters look to Ana as a means of fulfilling vicarious sexual desires. This attitude toward her obtains from her very birth, the result of a love match between her father, a gentleman, and her mother, a seamstress—Vetustan society frequently equates the profession of seamstress with that of a dancer, and thus by implication a kept woman or prostitute. Ana's very origins are thus tainted with sexuality, and the taint persists during her childhood: An early and innocent incident when she runs away with a young boy, Germán, is perverted by her elders into a sign of precocious sexuality, as emphasized by her governess Camila and her lover, who looks forward to enjoying the benefits of Ana's developing sexuality. Ana's aunts not only salivate over her but act as procuresses, displaying Ana in the hope of making her a good marriage but in the process laying her open to the lascivious commentaries of others. Ana also becomes the object of voyeurism not only for the reader but for the Vetustans when she walks barefoot before everyone in the Easter procession. Even the town vamp Obdulia finds Ana's feet sexually attractive, hinting at Obdulia's homoerotic tendencies. This voyeuristic atmosphere encompasses the reader: Ana herself is on occasion displayed for the reader as an object of erotic desire, as she lies naked on her tiger skin rug like an artist's model. Her tactile pleasure in both the rug and the cool sheets of her bed suggests autoeroticism.

Much of the novel's action focuses on Vetusta's cathedral, and its priests and acolytes are not immune to the pervasive atmosphere of rotten eroticism. In particular Alas stresses de Pas as a sensual man, in contrast to Mesía, where the

emphasis is placed on the Vetustan Don Juan's waning sexual reserves. De Pas's mother Paula keeps him supplied with a series of maids to attend to his needs, including, it is implied, his sexual desires. Alas hints broadly at this in the scene where de Pas and his current maid Teresa share a biscuit dipped in chocolate for breakfast: De Pas bites off one half of the biscuit and then presents the other half to Teresa, who bites in her turn. De Pas later has a sexual liaison with Petra, Ana's maid, who schemes to replace Teresa in de Pas's household and allows herself to be seduced by both de Pas and later Mesía as part of her scheme (which proves successful). Alas also offers a vignette of de Pas as he bites into a rosebud, and subsequently develops the motif in unhealthy directions as de Pas perceives girls at their catechism class in terms of roses in various stages of growth, some of them ripe for picking. Most of the priests do not share de Pas's sensuousness any more than they share in his excellent physique (Alas at one point describes him looking at his own powerful naked torso in the mirror), but they do comment maliciously and lasciviously on his relationship with Ana.

The novel's final scene sums up the sordid nature of eroticism in Vetustan society. As Ana lies unconscious in the cathedral after de Pas's final rejection of her, the acolyte Celedonio takes the opportunity to kiss her. This restores her consciousness, and she is aware of a sensation of a toadlike clamminess on her lips. Celedonio's effeminate nature and thus dubious sexuality, coupled with the sheer unpleasantness of the toad image, comes to represent the overall unhealthy attitude to sexual matters displayed by Vetustan society, an attitude of which Ana appears to become conscious only with this final insult. Alas offers us an eroticism designed to disgust as well as titillate.

### Biography

Leopoldo Alas was born in Zamora, Spain, on April 25, 1852. He studied law in Oviedo and became a law professor there in 1883. His novels include *La regenta* (1884) and *Su único hijo* (1890). His collections of stories include *Pipá* (1886), *Doña Berta, cuervo, superchería* (1892), *El señor* (1893), *Cuentos morales* (1896), *El gallo de Sócrates* (1901), and *Doctor Sutilis* (1916). He died in Oviedo on June 13, 1901.

ANN DAVIES

ALBERT-BIROT, PIERRE

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## ALBERT-BIROT, PIERRE

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1876–1967

French poet and dramatist

Albert-Birot's vast, six-volume *Les six livres de Grabinoulor* is an unpunctuated prose epic that cannot be classified in its entirety as a work of erotic literature, but there are several episodes amongst the many adventures and encounters of its eponymous hero, Grabinoulor, that engage him in scenes of an erotic nature, particularly in the early volumes. These volumes, begun toward the end of the First World War and continued in the 1920s, share much of the sensuality and exuberant love of life of Albert-Birot's poetry of the period (notably *La Joie des sept couleurs* and *La Lune, ou le livre des poèmes*).

From the opening words, when Grabinoulor awakes to find that "it wasn't only his mind that was reaching out to life in virile expectation," the main protagonist exhibits a healthy sexual appetite both as participant and as observer. Indeed: "Every morning Grabinoulor was in the habit of honouring his wife and that was why the street when he belonged to him when he walked so his hands his eyes his lips took her

breast her belly her hips and all her curves" (I,3). The eroticism of the female body is celebrated further in this volume with the visual "Poems to the Flesh" (I,8) in the shapes of lips, breast, and bellies engraved on the Tower of Life that Grabinoulor "the pagan" built in the preceding chapter. The curved lines that represent these forms are associated throughout Albert-Birot's work (in prose, poetry, and painting) with the life force. The Tower also has a poem in the shape of a large phallus, "The poet salutes the divine ejaculator," and one representing the female sexual organs, "Everything disappears when the black triangle appears." These visual poems are interspersed throughout the chapter with a lyrical celebration of the sexual act: "In the morning the male opens his eyes his gaze expands to encompass the breasts of the sleeping female life is blonde white and pink and the male's vigour rises in the lower part of his beautiful belly." Grabinoulor's marital status does not preclude sudden sexual encounters, including those with the young girls on bicycles in the first volume (I,2), and in the second book with

the little girl Paulette, whose naked body he has been admiring in the park and whom he introduces to sexual pleasure (II,29); nor is it any barrier to the enjoyment of a long episode of lovemaking with Mademoiselle Irène (II,25).

In the first book *Grabinoulor* is also an indulgent observer of the sexual activity of others, from passing moments including a queen and a cowherd, a marchioness and a “luxury hotel negro” to a king and a shepherdess (I,6) to a more extended episode in which he intervenes to find a lover for Eugénie, his voluptuous childhood friend (I,26). In the second book, *Grabinoulor* is a courteous host when the Angel Gabriel spends twelve hours in Paris, largely comprised of eating, drinking, and sex (II,20). In a later volume, *Grabinoulor* is able to witness the deflowering of Eve by Adam, whom he finds in an Eden characterized by rampant disorder (IV,15). Adam and Eve are recurring characters in Albert-Birot’s work, and Eve often stimulates sexual desire. In these later volumes the sexual allusions are often recounted with humor, such as in the fifth book, where *Grabinoulor* notes the two young lovers who “take each other” as they photograph themselves (V,13), or the young bride who is embarrassed by the presence of God if he is really everywhere (*idem.*); or in the fourth book, where *Furibar*, the hero’s frequent companion (and antithesis in many ways) carries off *Virginity*, who falls in love with *Grabi* (IV,7). Tellingly perhaps, *Grabi* eventually invents “pure coitus” through the eyes, since sex is only a simulacrum of possession (V,8). Nonetheless, throughout the whole text *Eros* forms part of the system of excess that ensures the constant generation of the narrative. This economy of excess represents the ethical and political stance of the text’s hero, who takes a position against all the inhibiting forces that oppress human nature and prevent pleasure. In his transgression of all laws, *Grabinoulor* upholds the sovereignty of desire against any threat, notably that of *Monsieur Oscar Thanatou*.

### Biography

Albert-Birot was born in Angoulême, France, April 22, 1876. He attended the lycée there (now called Guez-de-Balzac) and the art school in Bordeaux. In Paris he worked in the sculptor Falguière’s studio and was successful in the Paris salons in the early part of the century. He

fathered four children with Suzanne Bottini, whom he never married and who left him in 1909. He later married twice: Germaine de Surville, a musician, in 1913 (died 1931) and Arlette Lafont in 1962. During the First World War Albert-Birot came to the forefront of the French avant-garde with the founding and editing of the literary journal *SIC* (1916–1919), in which he published, amongst others, the Italian Futurist poets and artists and the future Surrealists, André Breton, Louis Aragon, and Philippe Soupault. It was, however, the meeting with Guillaume Apollinaire that was to prove crucial, and the staging of *Les Mamelles de Tirésias* in 1917 came to fruition under the auspices of *SIC*. In this period Albert-Birot turned his attention from the visual arts (figurative, cubist and abstract painting, and sculpture) to poetry and to his masterpiece *Grabinoulor* (begun in 1918), both of which would occupy him for the rest of his life. His interest in theater led him to write several plays, and he was involved in dramatic productions in the 1920s. His withdrawal from the Parisian artistic scene led to a long period of neglect by the literary establishment, although he continued to publish poetry and to write *Grabinoulor* until the end of his long life. The full six volumes of *Grabinoulor* were finally published in 1991, nearly 35 years after a peaceful death in Paris, July 25, 1967.

DEBRA KELLY

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# ALCRIPE, PHILIPPE D'

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1530/1–1581

French Benedictine monk and satirist

*La nouvelle fabrique des excellents traicts de verité* [*The New Factory of Excellent Traits of Truth*] is Philippe d'Alcricpe's only surviving work, probably first published in 1579. Alcricpe spared time from his vocation to write this comical set of tall tales numbering ninety-nine (perhaps in deliberate parody of the *Decameron* or the *Cent nouvelles nouvelles*). The ironic title implies fabrication, and the insistence on truth amounts to deliberate antiphrase. Such patterns extend a tradition of fables and liars' accounts whose classical antecedents include Aesop and more especially Lucian. Using written but also oral sources, and owing much to Rabelais, the collection lacks virtually all the didactic and spiritual dimensions of *Pantagruel and Gargantua*, concentrating instead on thematic variety and amusement for their own sake. This is not to say that the author was uneducated—borrowings from Pliny alone bear witness to his classical erudition; however, his avowed aim is to divert rather than instruct or inspire, a point perhaps held against him by his contemporaries and fellow monks.

The collection's erotic themes reflect medieval antifeminism in recounting the discomfiture and humiliation of women: A peasant relieving herself is frozen into a duck pond by her own urine; two whores are blown by the wind to the top of Rouen Cathedral, where they hang upside down, so revealing their *y gregeois*; a young wife, sick with constipation, is so ashamed at the prospect

of an enema that she farts, so alleviating her condition, but also knocking over and befouling the apothecary in attendance. Acts of comic violence against men include the tale of a cut-purse pickpocket who inadvertently removes a victim's scrotum rather than his money bag and is executed by strangulation within the day. Meanwhile, the standard motif of cuckoldry returns at least once, in the story of a townsman's wife who offers her favors to an army captain. The husband's vengeance is brutal: He impales the lovers on a spit, then carries them through the streets to the chambers of a judge who had refused to intervene in the affair. In other tales, lusty cockerels and bitches in heat recall the importance of sex in the animal kingdom, while a swineherd who has lost a sow down a hole finds that cavity with the alacrity of a newly wed husband.

Alcricpe's erotic themes are not always vulgar, however. The tale of three young men who dance the night away with a trio of fairies met by chance in a forest avoids explicit references to sex ("I dare not tell you what they did . . ."), focusing instead on the unfortunate consequences of the three wishes granted them by their magical partners. Moreover, the longest story (eight pages in the critical edition) recounts the seemingly chaste desire of a scholar for the daughter of the Sultan of Babylon. Enamored of her portrait, he sends her a message tied to a swallow, then receives in return, and via the same messenger, a ring which renders him invisible, so gaining him access to her bedchamber. No further details of the liaison follow. Hence,

alongside a coarse and indelicate eroticism, Rabelaisian in the popular sense, we find various themes relating to courtly love, as well as the moral admonitions which traditionally accompany them: “Youth wastes itself daily on the kisses of *folamour*”; “a *folamour* blinds all humanity,” etc. One cannot determine how seriously meant these morals are, nor yet how truly deferential or how critical are the various rhymes on womanhood with which other tales conclude. “Were woman’s power the equal of her will, the world would be a violent place indeed”; “She is the hardest beast to master, if not to mount!”

### Biography

Born Philippe le Picard in Lyons, Normandy, he received a monastic education and spent his adult life as one of the 20 or so monks manning the Cistercian Abbey of Mortemer (near Lisors, in the Eure) during a particularly dangerous

period of the French Religious Wars. Pious and intellectually unambitious, he can in no way be reliably confirmed as that drunken vulgarian which tradition formerly described. His latter years were vitiated by a paralysis brought to an end by his death.

JOHN PARKIN

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# AMARU

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Eighth century Indian author

The *Amaruçataka* is a collection of one hundred or so detached Sanskrit erotic verses from sometime before the ninth century CE. This *terminus ante quem* is established by its citation in the ninth-century *Dhvanyâlôka* of Ānandavardhana, but beyond this we know virtually nothing of its date, provenance, or authorship, as is the case with so many Sanskrit poems of any antiquity. It was composed in perhaps the seventh or eighth century, and quite possibly represents the work of more than one author. The *Amaruçataka* has been one of the most popular and widely circulated collections of Sanskrit court poetry. Its representation of courtly erotic life is quintessentially evocative and haunting. The verses are so many crystallizations of the games and wars of love, the torments and transports offered by the polygamous and promiscuous world of the early Indian court.

The verses of the *Amaruçataka* are characteristically dense. Each stanza presents an entire world of intrigue for whose decoding a commentary is almost always indispensable. The stanzas are monuments to the power of the detached Sanskrit verse (what in Sanskrit is termed *muktaka* or *subhâṣita*) to compress content. A well-known example of an entire narrative woven into a few lines of poetry is verse sixteen of the western recension:

The pet parrot listened to the words the husband and wife were whispering last night. In the morning, the wife heard them being repeated before her in-laws in shrill tones. Agonized with shame, she invents a muzzle for his speech: Pretending to feed the creature a pomegranate fruit, she stuffs a ruby from her ear in his beak.

The numerous commentaries on the work testify to its density, but also to its popularity. Likewise bearing testimony to its popularity and



## AMARU

traffic are the several regional versions of the collection: Bengali, Southern, Western, and Mixed. Only about half the verses are common to all the versions (Lienhard, 1983). The poem has been amply illustrated, and species of tantalizing illuminated manuscripts abound. Notable are the Oriya miniatures published by the Orissa Lalit Kala Akademi (see Further Reading below).

Romantic love in Sanskrit poetry is a dark and morbid thing. The emphasis in description is on anger and anguish; on separation (*viraha*), as opposed to enjoyment in union (*sambhoga*). Fantasized joys take precedence over real ones; feigned emotions over true feelings. Though the picture of love is dark, with endless descriptions of abandoned lovers wasting away in states of near hallucinatory psychosis, there is ample room for comedy and wit. Much of the humor revolves around the young wife (*navodhā* or *mughdhā*) stumbling as she learns the tricks for manipulating her beloved, or around the attempts of the slighted and estranged beloved (*kalahāntarītā*) to torture her lover back into her arms:

Somehow, girlfriend, in play anger, I told him "get lost." No sooner had the stonehearted fellow got up from the bed and left in fury. Now my heart, its shame annihilated, longs for that cruel man whose love was rashly cast off. What can I do? (15)

Conversely, much of the poetry asks, what would a man not do for love? It depicts seemingly endless scenes of men groveling at the feet of ladies enraged at their adulterous escapades (sometimes even having been accidentally called by the name of another woman). In this verse the angry beloved finally relents:

Her anger somewhat abated, she held her moonlike face in her hand, while I, all my stratagems abandoned, took only to groveling at her feet. Suddenly from the pouch in the corner of her eye, which held the glorious banner of her eyelash, a tear long retained was let go, tumbling on her breast and telling her mercy. (25)

Whether conducing to joy or sorrow, the *Amaruśataka* represents a world of multiple passions, where monogamy seems almost a noncategory:

"Bowling at my feet, you try to conceal the mark on your chest from hugging her breasts smeared with

thick sandal-paste!" As soon as she said this, I replied "What?!" and suddenly embraced her passionately so as to rub it off. In a rush of pleasure, she forgot the whole thing. (26)

There are many fantastic tales of Amaru's life, though as is the case with most Sanskrit works of any antiquity, knowledge of the historical Amaru, if indeed there was one, is lost to us. According to one legend, he slept with a hundred women and transmitted the experiences into a hundred verses. According to another tradition, the great exponent of nondualist metaphysics (*advaitavedānta*) *Śaṅkarācārya* entered the body of the king Amaru and thus studied the lore of eroticism without defiling himself. A number of manuscript colophons thus treat *Śaṅkarācārya* as the true author of the text, and on this basis the commentator Ravicandra attempted to interpret the verses of the *Amaruśataka* in terms of metaphysical theory (Lienhard, 93).

Whatever one makes of these traditions, the centrality of the *Amaruśataka* to the history of Sanskrit literature is beyond dispute. The text marks one of the first such collections of independent erotic stanzas known to us. This genre of poetic miniature etching took off in Sanskrit. Amaru's notable interlocutors and successors include *Bhartṛhari* of the *Śatakātrayī* (c. fourth century?), *Bilhana* of *CaurapāñcāŚikā* fame (c. eleventh century), and Govardhana of the *AryāsaptaŚatī* (c. twelfth-thirteenth centuries). The list seems endless. Echoes of Amaru's haunting stanzas flood the works of all his predecessors. The tradition of Sanskrit erotic poetry marks one of the greatest contributions of Sanskrit to world literature and world reflection on the joy and horror of amorous attachment and detachment. In a significant sense, the early Indian theory of love was elaborated in the verses of poets and not in the pedantic discussions of scholars. Sanskrit poets delineated for the world a perfect neurosis with a capacity to transport and entrap in a way that offered continuous perspective on what it meant to be a human being. Thus the eroticism of this tradition came in a later period to represent and allegorize the highest spiritual and metaphysical dynamics open to conceptualization.

JESSE ROSS KNUTSON

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## AMIS, MARTIN

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1949–

British novelist and essayist

Martin Amis is the author of satirical novels, short stories, and essays that unflinchingly document the devaluation of love and eroticism in the postmodern West. “Modern life . . . is so mediated that authentic experience is much harder to find,” Amis told an interviewer in 1991. “We’ve all got this idea of what [life] should be like—from movies, from pornography.” Amis’s male characters ferociously pursue what a character in *Success* calls “socio-sexual self-betterment,” but fulfillment is always beyond their reach. Trapped in the echo chamber of self-consciousness, they instead testify to the ways in which the cultural logic of capitalism militates against intimacy. Describing his seduction of Rachel Noyes in *The Rachel Papers*, Charles Highway strikes a chord that echoes throughout Amis’s fiction:

Only her little brown head was visible. I kissed that for a while, knowing from a variety of sources that this will do more for you than any occult caress. The result was satisfactory. My hands, however, were still behaving like prototype hands, marketed before certain snags had been dealt with. So when I introduced one beneath the blankets, I gave it time to warm and settle before sending it down her stomach. Panties? Panties. I threw back the top sheet, my head a whirlpool of notes, directives, memos, hints, pointers, random scribblings. (p.158)

Charles’s reference to “prototype hands,” like his subsequent use of “marketed,” “directives,”

and “memos,” demonstrates that his most intimate thoughts and actions are conditioned by a commodity fetishism that penetrates even the unconscious. Amis’s most memorable characters are similarly driven and deformed by mass-mediated desire. John Self, the protagonist and narrator of *Money: A Suicide Note*, is “addicted to the twentieth century,” and wallows in the consumerist vices of alcohol, cigarettes, and pornography (“Pornography isn’t really erotic,” Amis said in a 1984 interview, “it’s carnal; it’s a frippery for the jaded, and jadedness is . . . an enemy of eroticism”). Keith Talent, the small-time cheat and big-time adulterer of *London Fields*, whose libido is “all factoid and tabloid,” represents a *reductio ad absurdum* of such addictions. His onanistic pursuits illustrate the observation of another character in the novel that “if love was dead or gone then the self was just self, and had nothing to do all day but work on sex. Oh, and hate. And death.”

In addition to fiction, Amis has written a series of reviews, essays, and profiles exploring the social implications of sexual liberation and shifting gender relations. These include columns on strip clubs and pornographic magazines published in the *New Statesman* under the pseudonym “Bruno Holbrook”; reviews of novels that have expanded the boundaries of sexual representation (William Burroughs’s *Queer*, Vladimir Nabokov’s *Lolita*, Philip Roth’s *The Dying Animal*); and a series of essays on such topics as AIDS, masculinity, *Playboy* founder Hugh Hefner, the singer Madonna, and the

pornographic film industry. "Making Sense of AIDS," a detailed and sensitive essay on the AIDS crisis written for *The Observer* in 1985, was one of the first such articles to appear in the mainstream British press. "The Return of the Male" (1991), an essay on the poet Robert Bly's *Iron John: A Book About Men*, skewers Bly's mythopoeic machismo, mocks the cult of male privilege and embraces feminism as one important manifestation of a movement toward greater gender equity, "intensified by the contemporary search for role and guise and form." Like all of Amis's nonfiction, these essays demonstrate that behind the frenzied, cruel, self-obsessed, and often misogynist males that dominate his novels stands an author possessing a far wider range of emotional and moral responses.

In a 1996 interview, Amis compared his own "moral scheme" to that of his father, the noted author Kingsley Amis, observing that while his father prized decency, the positive values in his own books "are always represented by innocence, by a child." *Experience: A Memoir* (2000), an extended rumination on the complex relationship between innocence and experience, illuminates the sources of this outlook, as well as the reasons why innocence is typically conspicuous by its absence in Amis's fiction. In 1973, the same year his first novel appeared, Amis's beloved cousin Lucy Partington went missing; it was later discovered that she had been sexually tortured and killed by the serial murderer Frederick West. In 1975 Amis entered into an affair with a married woman which produced a daughter whose paternity Amis did not publicly acknowledge for nearly 20 years. As Amis writes in *Experience*, these facts help account for the "stream of lost or wandering daughters" who begin appearing in his fiction from *Success* onward. Amis eventually established a close relationship with this first daughter, and *Experience* itself is ultimately a narrative of affirmation, including the joys of romantic love and erotic passion. But as he has filtered these experiences through the genre of satire, which requires and thrives on negative emotion, they have generated fiction in which characters are agents or objects of perverse desires and designs, and sexuality is the enemy of innocence. This often produces wickedly funny comedy: Marmaduke in *London Fields* is a grotesque representation of Oedipal rivalry, a sexually precocious child determined to displace his father in his mother's affections.

But it seldom produces life-affirming representations of eroticism. Instead, sexuality typically appears in Amis's satirical fiction as another name for narcissism, for domination, for the corruption of innocence.

## Biography

Martin Amis was born in 1949 in Oxford, England, the son of Kingsley Amis. His first novel, *The Rachel Papers*, was published in 1973 to wide critical acclaim (it won the Somerset Maugham Award in 1974). He has written nine novels, one screenplay (for *Saturn 3*), two collections of stories, and six works of nonfiction. His nonfiction has appeared in leading newspapers and magazines on both sides of the Atlantic, and he has served as fiction and poetry editor of the *Times Literary Supplement* and literary editor of the *New Statesman*.

JAMES DIEDRICK

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# ANDREEV, LEONID

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1871-1919

Russian story writer and dramatist

### Major Works: "The Abyss" and "In the Fog"

Andreev's involvement in erotic or "pornographic" literature occupied only a small part of his literary oeuvre. However, his two stories "The Abyss" (*Bezdna*) and "In the Fog" (*V tumane*) can be read as a transition between high-brow literature dealing with sexual topics (Lev Tolstoi's *Kreutzer Sonata* [*Kreitserova sonata*], 1889) and the "boulevard" or so-called pornographic literature of Mikhail Artsybashiev's *Sanin* (1907), Anastasiia Verbitskaia's *Keys to Happiness* [*Kliuchi shchast'ia*, 1909–13] and many others.

Andreev published "The Abyss" in the January 10, 1902, issue of *Courier*. The story begins with young Nemovetskii accompanying Zindaida Nikolaevna on a walk on the outskirts of town. With the approach of evening, the two adolescents begin their return home but have trouble finding the way. Eventually, they come upon a group of men who attack Nemovetskii and rape Zina. Upon gaining consciousness, Nemovetskii finds Zina, who is alive but comatose, and then proceeds to rape her.

"In the Fog" was published in the December 1902 issue of *A Journal for Everyone* [*Zhurnal dlia vsekh*] and tells the story of the young schoolboy Pavel, who has contracted a venereal disease from a prostitute. Pavel is ashamed and feels that he is unworthy of human contact, though tortured by his desire for lofty love with his sister's friend. Further tension is created

by the inability of Pavel and his father to connect personally, denying Pavel an emotional catharsis and driving him out onto the street late one evening. Here he is propositioned by a prostitute, and the two return to her room. Pavel's guilt and the prostitute's drunkenness cloud their interaction, which leads to a fight in which Pavel stabs and kills the prostitute and then himself.

These two stories created a storm of protest among the reading public. Andreev wanted to portray the complexity of the ego, which contains brutal elements that can unexpectedly emerge and influence the individual. However, this demonstration of evil was interpreted as advocacy of it, and many argued that Andreev was slandering the noble, idealistic Russian youth. Andreev and his stories became the focal point for a larger debate that raged in the popular press. Even the wife of Tolstoi, Sophia Andreevna, wrote a letter to the editor of the *New Time* [*Novoe Vremia*] in which she thanked the paper for characterizing Andreev as an erotomaniac and claimed that the author infected the reading public and Russian youth with baseness. This attack from Sophia Andreevna seemed particularly unfair to Andreev, as he felt that "The Abyss" had followed in the tradition of Tolstoi's *Kreutzer Sonata*, going so far as to call his story the illegitimate daughter of Tolstoi's text.

However harsh the critics, Andreev found defenders as well, especially among the younger generation. Many university students wrote to newspapers suggesting that Andreev benefited the reader by showing without adornment the brute which exists in mankind. Andreev was also defended by such literary giants as Chekhov and

Gor'kii, who congratulated the author on presenting the moral agonies of sexual life to the reading public. This seemed all the more relevant, as "In the Fog" had been inspired by a news brief about a young man who had killed two prostitutes. It was Andreev's desire to understand the motivation for such actions that had led to his writing the story.

Andreev had written other works dealing with brutal crimes of passion ("The Lie" [*Lozh*], 1901, and "The Thought" [*Mysl'*], 1902), but it was "The Abyss" and "In the Fog" that acted as lightning rods in the ongoing debate concerning literary distinctions between high-brow erotic literature, as exemplified by Tolstoi and Mikhail Kuzmin (*Wings* [*Kryl'ia*], 1907), and pornographic boulevard literature by Artsybashiev, Verbitskaia, and many others. Since Tolstoi was beyond moral reproach, it fell to Andreev to be classified as a transitional writer for erotic literary trends in Russia at the turn of the century.

### Biography

Son of a provincial land surveyor, Leonid Nikolaevich Andreev lost his father at an early age and spent his youth in difficult material conditions, supporting his mother and siblings. For his entire life, he displayed chaotic behavior, in the form of drinking binges, suicidal tendencies, and scandalous comportment. Although he held a law degree from Moscow University (1897), Andreev concentrated on writing court reports, topical satire, and short stories for the Moscow newspaper *Courier* (*Kur'er*). Andreev's first real literary success came with the story "Once It Was" (*Zhili-byli*), published in 1901 in the journal *Life* (*Zhizn'*). By this time, Maksim Gor'kii had befriended the young writer and introduced him into the *Wednesday* (*Sreda*) literary circle, whose members offered valuable literary and personal support and guidance. It was at this time that Andreev achieved incredible financial and literary success, mainly for his short stories. Andreev's participation in the *Wednesday* circle

diminished after going abroad at the end of 1905, and his friendship with Gor'kii degenerated into open hostility after 1907. Andreev moved from Gor'kii's publishing house Knowledge (*Znanie*) to Sweetbriar (*Shipovnik*) at this time and edited several of their literary almanacs, drawing himself closer to the writers of the Russian Symbolist movement.

In 1907–08, Andreev relocated to St. Petersburg and then to a house north of the capital—a region which was captured by Finnish forces after the revolution. At this time, Andreev directed his literary energies toward the stage. He was able to maintain his popular success with audiences, although literary critics received his works less and less favorably.

During World War I, Andreev's anti-German patriotism and his financial problems led to work on the pro-war newspaper *Russian Will* (*Russkaia volia*). He actively opposed the Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917 and even wrote a passionate plea to the Western world to save Russia from the tyranny of Bolshevism. Andreev died in 1919 of a stroke without enough money for burial expenses, leaving behind a wife and five children.

FREDERICK H. WHITE

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## ANGEL, ALBALUCÍA

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1939–  
Colombian novelist

Angel is considered by critics to be one of the most important Latin American feminist writers of the second half of the twentieth century. Her work is best known for the exploration of the repression of female sexuality in patriarchal societies. Her fiction is known for the frankness of its depiction of male violence against women and the analysis of female homosexuality as a path to women's control over their bodies. Angel was still in her twenties, in 1968, when she published her first novel, *Los girasoles en invierno* [Sunflowers in Winter], an episodic, disjointed tale set in the cafés and streets of Paris, in which she explores the ways in which her heroine, Alejandra, is forced to suppress her own beliefs and accept the limitations placed on women in a patriarchal society. Angel's heart-rending portrait of women trapped in the tedium of traditional roles and her heroine's search for an escape from the thrall of womanhood marks this first experimental novel as one of the earliest avowedly feminist novels in Latin America. The novel also opened a space for Angel among the writers of the Latin American literary "Boom" of the 1960s and 70s.

Angel's second novel, *Dos veces Alicia*, published in 1972 and set in London, offers a feminist rewriting of the traditional detective novel, in which the ambivalent situation of the female protagonist/detective recalls the duality of the figure of Alice in Lewis Carroll's *Alice in Wonderland*, a book that Angel acknowledges as having had a profound impact on her writing. Through an acutely self-conscious narrative, filled with commentary on the process of the text's creation, Alicia, the protagonist, challenges the doctor who has determined that Mrs. Wilson died of natural causes and embarks on her own investigation, in what critics have called a metaphor for the deconstruction of masculine authority.

In 1976, Angel published her third novel, *Estaba la pájara pinta sentada en el verde limón*

[The Spotted Bird Was Sitting on the Green Lemon Tree], a semiautobiographical tale set during the period known as La Violencia in Colombia (1947–1958), when civil war left about 400,000 dead. In this complex tale, where the reader must make sense of various intertwined plot lines, the character of Ana emerges as a clear protagonist, a girl living with the experience of having been brutally raped as a child by one of her father's laborers, a rape that prefigures the rape of hundreds of women as a political act during La Violencia. As a result of this assault, Ana experiences her society as a space of powerlessness for women, whose bodies are prey to sexual violence as an expression of the political and economic power enjoyed by men of all classes. Her rape by a laborer, a peasant working for her father, erases the illusion of any protection that class may offer a young girl like herself, the daughter of a landlord, from the sexual aggression of any man. Since Ana's plight ultimately has its roots in a political system that fails to protect women from male sexual aggression, Angel offers a political solution, as Ana joins a guerrilla movement that offers a possibility of a political transformation and a path to a different kind of sexual experience. *Estaba la pájara pinta* has been described as Angel's "most profound confrontation with Colombian reality," an accurate description for a novel that incorporates historical documentation, testimony, and an attempt to bring forth aspects of the country's history that have long been censored.

Angel's fourth novel, *Misiá señora* (1982), addresses fully the topic of female homosexuality that had hovered like a dark cloud over her young protagonist in *Estaba la pájara pinta*, where it was identified with sin and guilt. *Misiá señora* follows the heroine, Mariana, from childhood through an oppressive marriage and then to madness, focusing on her struggles against the homosexual desires that she seeks unsuccessfully to repress. The exploration of these desires supplies the erotic component of the novel.

Told through stream of consciousness by a narrator who finds in a descent into madness the only possibility of escape from an oppressive patriarchal system, the novel explores a woman's struggle for the right to control her own body.

Angel's fifth novel, *Las andariegas*, was published in 1984. Conceived as fragmented narratives written in a style close to that of concrete poetry, and inspired by Monique Wittig's *Les Guerrillères*, the novel recounts the lives of women throughout history who have battled against the established order. Angel's female warriors are presented as travelers through whom she seeks to elaborate a new history for women, rooted in a homosocial female society. The novel can be read as a celebration of the liberating potential of lesbian love.

In addition to her novels, Angel has published one collection of tales, *¡Oh, Gloria inmarcesible!* (1979), an interesting experimental text that takes the reader on a voyage of discovery of Colombia's natural geography and multicultural and multiracial society and of the problems of drug trafficking and traditional gender roles. She is also the author of two unpublished plays, *La manzana de piedra* (1983) and *Siete lunas y un espejo* (1991). In 2004, Albalucía Angel published a book of poems, *Cantos y encantamiento de la lluvia*. She lectures frequently on feminist topics in international venues.

### Biography

Albalucía Angel was born in Pereira, Colombia, in 1939, the daughter of a well-to-do family from the coffee-producing region of Quindío. She studied literature and art at the University of the Andes and in universities in Paris and Rome. Before she began her career as a writer, she earned a living as a folk singer in Europe. Since the 1970s she has lived in Europe, primarily in Great Britain, and the geography of her

literary work echoes that of the countries where she has lived and traveled. Her brief marriage to iconoclastic Chilean writer Mauricio Wacquez ended in divorce.

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# ANTICLERICALISM

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The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed a change in the attitude toward the Catholic Church. Historically, the influence of the clergy was not restricted to religion; its presence was apparent in many secular bodies, including political, educational, and economic organizations. There had always been a continuous power struggle to curtail or destroy religious control in society; however, the seventeenth century saw the rise of a powerful weapon to this effect: eroticism in literature. This continued into the eighteenth century with the evolution of the libertine novel, where libertine culture signified the sexual freedom of the French aristocracy and the opposition to the strict moral, religious, and social codes enforced by the Church. An example of a late-libertine author is the Marquis de Sade. Notorious for his portrayal of obscene cruelty, sadism, and perverse sexual acts, many of his works are anticlerical in their nature, including *The 120 Days of Sodom* (1785) and *Justine, ou les malheurs de la vertu* (1791), which was revised over a ten-year period in three different versions—the first begun during de Sade's imprisonment in the Bastille.

In the three-volume *Bibliography of Prohibited Books* by Pisanus Fraxi (pseudonym of Henry Ashbee), there are listed examples of earlier works detailing illicit sexual liaisons between priests and nuns. Such titles include *The Cloisters Laid Open, or Adventures of the Priests and Nuns* (there is no date of publication of this work) and *The Nunns Complaint Against the Fryars*, published in 1676 as an English translation of an original French work entitled *Factum pour les religieuses* (1668). *The Nunns Complaint* is described as a novel that portrays the perversion of friars, detailing amongst other acts of impiousness “secret entries into the nunnery, and riotous and licentious conduct there; mariages with the nuns; wasting the revenue of the convent; general tyranny and injustice towards the sisters” (Pisanus Fraxi, vol. 2., 193).

The Enlightenment brought anticlerical literature to the fore. As Sánchez (1972, 57) writes:

The intellectual revolution of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries broke sharply with the anticlerical tradition of the past. It is true that the *philosophes* (the enlightened thinkers) made many of the same criticisms which had been made ever since the anticlerical revolution of the twelfth century: the clergy were criticized for their obscurantism, their superstition, their greed, and their inability to practice what they preached. The *philosophes* varied this traditional criticism slightly by offering rational proof, for they were admirers of the scientific revolution. Even so, some new criticisms were made. These aimed at the clergy's otherworldliness, and in these attacks the difference from traditional anticlericalism became noticeable.

The anticlerical literature of the Enlightenment was different from earlier works due to the fact that in addition to being anticlerical it was also notably anti-Christian. In short, it not only attacked religious institutions and the clergy, but also launched an assault on the Christian faith. As a result, anticlerical literature of the Enlightenment was prominent in countries that were devoutly Catholic, including France and Spain. Many works aimed to represent religion as a violent, sadistic, and corrupt institution that violated the civil rights of people, especially the rights and purity of women.

There are many works that portray young women, particularly nuns and novices, as objects of erotic fantasy and desire or as tragic individuals who are nothing more than prostitutes and sex slaves for religious figures. Well-known examples include Denis Diderot's novel *La religieuse* (begun in 1760, though not published until 1796), which describes the life of Suzanne Simonin and her experiences in three different convents after being forced to become a nun by her family, and Matthew Lewis's *The Monk*, completed in 1796. Prior to writing *The Monk*, Lewis had seen some anticlerical dramatic productions, including *Les victimes cloîtrées* and *Camille, ou le souterrain*, both of which contained erotic scenes that influenced his novel. *The Monk* portrays the virtuous, beautiful, and young Antonia, who is ruthlessly raped and

eventually killed by the monk Ambrosio. Unrepentant for his crimes, Ambrosio blames Antonia's beauty for leading him to violate her. During the course of the novel, Ambrosio is also seduced and tempted by the demonic Mathilda, a further testimony to the weakness of religious figures in anticlerical literature. Indeed, religious personages are often portrayed as figures of immorality; consider Frollo in Victor Hugo's *Notre Dame de Paris* (1831).

A later example of anticlerical literature, relatively unknown by comparison with the foregoing, is *The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk*, published in 1835. A notable anti-Catholic work, it was written as a direct assault upon the Catholic religious establishments of Canada. The novel describes Maria's experiences at the Hôtel Dieu Nunnery at Montreal. Used as a sex object by the local priests, she is informed by her superior that the debauchery of the priests is justified: Forbidden to marry and denied the pleasures of the flesh, they live assiduous, yet lonely and isolated lives for the benefit of others, and so deserve to be "rewarded." The true extent of the depravity becomes apparent with Maria's discovery of a mass grave for illegitimate babies in the convent's cellars. In the preface to the novel, Maria observes: "It would distress the reader, should I repeat the dreams with which I am often terrified at night; . . . often I imagine myself present at the repetition of the worst scenes that I have hinted at or described. Sometimes I stand at the secret place of interment in the cellar; sometimes I think I can hear the shrieks of the helpless females in the hands of the atrocious men; and sometimes almost seem actually to look again upon the calm and placid features of St. Frances, as she appeared when surrounded by her murderers" (Anon., *Awful Disclosures*, preface, vi).

Other notable examples from the key 1860s-1870s period listed in the *Bibliography of Prohibited Books* include:

- Two works by French author Émile Alexis. *Les immoralités des prêtres catholiques* [*Immoralities of the Catholic Priests*] was first published in 1868 and republished in 1870 as *Crimes, attentats et immoralités du clergé catholique moderne* [*Crimes, Attacks, and Immoralities of the Modern Catholic Clergy*], in order to increase sales. It is

described by Pisanus as "not directed against religion in general, nor even against priestcraft as a whole, but only against that part of the body whose conduct has proved to be immoral" (vol. 2, 201). The other work by Alexis is *Horreurs, massacres et crimes des papes* [*Horrors, Massacres, and Crimes of the Popes*], 1868.

- Works set in convents, including *The Pastimes of a Convent*, published in 1798, which was later republished under the title *The Amorous History and Adventures of Raymond de B—, and Father Andouillard*; and *Nunnery Tales*, published in 1866.
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# APHRODISIACS

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Named after the Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite, aphrodisiacs are substances consumed before or during lovemaking which are thought to enhance desire and pleasure. Scientists often question whether the supposed effects occur with any regularity, but erotic literature does not reflect those doubts.

In erotic stories, irritants usually have an aphrodisiacal function. The most striking in this regard, referred to regularly from the eighteenth century onward, is cantharides, often called “Spanish fly.” It is not in fact a fly at all, but a small black beetle, *Cantharis vesicatoria*, which is crushed into a black powder and swallowed. Cantharides has in fact long been known to be quite dangerous. Even in very small doses, it causes burning of the urinary tract. The great French *Encyclopédie* of the eighteenth century calls it a poison. But there was erotic appeal in absorbing small quantities of poison, and the burning sensation within was taken to be a powerful sign of desire.

In libertine novels of the mid- to late eighteenth century, cantharides is just one of a class of substances used. Amber was another, as was aniseed. *Diabolini*, from Naples, were dark, small, and hot. In general, according to the literature of northern and western Europe, the warm, Mediterranean countries were the natural sources of almost everything aphrodisiacal. In the novels of writers such as Andréa de Nerciat, cantharides and diabolini are served up in libertine festivities as *bonbons*, or sweets. He calls them “charming poisons.” But during the nineteenth century, the poisonous aspect became progressively more important, at the expense of the charm. There is in fact an escalation in the literary use of aphrodisiacs, and an aggravation of their effects. A powerful myth attributes the origins of the whole thing to de Sade. The young marquis had caused a scandal in 1772, in Marseilles, by giving black confectionery to some prostitutes, who became ill as a result. In the eyes of aristocratic libertines, and even in the view of de Sade’s virtuous wife, this was only

an unfortunate miscalculation of effects. But for the many writers of the nineteenth century who were haunted by de Sade’s image, aphrodisiacs, and cantharides in particular, were the very substance of his influence. The diabolical marquis could thus be blamed (or credited) for disseminating through France, and thence through Europe, the black substance of poisonous desire.

The connection between sexual excitement and the risk of death by poison is made, for example, in Alfred de Musset’s *Gamiani, ou deux nuits d’excès* (1833). Cantharides is used there as a stimulant, along with others, during an orgy involving a group of nuns. But the story’s conclusion goes beyond this, as Gamiani, desperately seeking a remedy for chronically unsatisfied desire, brings about her own end with a “burning poison” which causes her to die in a violent spasm of pleasure. In the course of the nineteenth century, the role of aphrodisiacs in French erotic stories evolved further.

Toward the end of the century, there was an increasing preoccupation with links between sexuality and illness, and many novels on the generic borders of erotic literature managed to represent desire and pleasure while also expressing anxiety about their effects on the characters’ health. There were more drastic venereal health concerns in the late nineteenth century, most notably the widespread presence of syphilis. But everyday erotic literature paid great attention to diet. Hot things were now often sourced to the Orient, rather than the Mediterranean. Chili, curry, pepper, cummin, even peppermint were all said to have the dangerous effect of heightening desire by gnawing away at the body from within. Under the effects of spicy diets, characters came to suffer from a desire too acute to be satisfied by any standard forms of pleasure. Drugs such as ether were also said to contribute to the same effect, producing pathological desire that could result eventually in death.

Certain women, especially of the East, were talked about as being dangerous to European men because their breath, their touch, their

perfume, their very substance were thought to be erotically contagious. For fearful and excited writers of the fin-de-siècle, Oriental women were often seen as walking aphrodisiacs. Even for the anxious and the prurient, there was a thrill in aphrodisiacs, but it was, as literally as possible, the thrill of playing with fire, the intimate thrill of putting fiery substances inside one's body.

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## APOLLINAIRE, GUILLAUME

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1880–1918

French poet and prose writer

As a precocious adolescent, Apollinaire was well versed in the erotica of the fin-de-siècle, which Mario Praz in *The Romantic Agony* has called an age in which there reigned a vogue for "exotic perversions," including *sadisme à l'anglaise* ("English-style sadism," i.e., flogging) and the dark excesses of the "Slav soul." It was indeed a period much interested in flagellation, a taste for which Apollinaire apparently acquired from his Polish mother, who had a quick hand with a whip, and which he exploited in his own active sex life and in the best of his two pornographic novels, *The Eleven Thousand Rods*. He was also well read in the classics of erotic literature, a knowledge which served him well when he edited a series of anthologies of works by de Sade, Aretino, Baffo, Nerciat, Mirabeau, etc., for the Bibliothèque des Curieux from 1909 to 1912. He compiled secretly the first catalogue of the Bibliothèque nationale's collection of banned books, its "Enfer" in 1913, and edited a major collection

of nineteenth-century erotic poems in 1910 called *Germain Amplecas* (*cas* is a slang word from the Italian *cazzo*, meaning "prick" and "shit").

Along with erotica, the fin-de-siècle was also a period when myths of theosophy were popular among intellectuals as a result of the influence of advanced Bible criticism, Jewish mysticism and the Cabala, and Rosicrucianism, as well as the serious study among ethnologists of comparative religions and folklore. In all of these studies Apollinaire was well versed, considering them valuable as poetic sources. The influence of Nietzsche was pervasive in the avant-garde circles in which he and friends, like the artist Pablo Picasso and the fantasist Alfred Jarry, moved—especially Nietzsche's dictum in *Europe Artiste* "We have killed God, we must become gods ourselves." Like Nietzsche, they favored the pre-Socratic Greek philosophers and placed their own aesthetic attempts at transcendency under the mythic aegis of Pythagoras, Dionysus, Orpheus, Pan, and Amphion. They were attempting to become new Orpheuses, new Nietzschean Antichrists themselves. They particularly celebrated the

love-death (*Liebestot* or *petite mort*) between the poet-sun-Eros-Christ-phallus-phoenix and the Muse-night-Psyche-Mary-womb-siren, out of which the work of art is born. The artist thus becomes a kind of erotic savior, imposing his vision on a hostile world. In Apollinaire's poems and prose works, he variously portrays himself as Merlin the Enchanter, Pan, Ixion, Orpheus, Amphion, Christ, a holy clown, and a cosmopolitan, wandering god; his Muse is Viviane, the Sirens, Hera, Eurydice, Lilith, Eve, Salome, the Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalen, de Sade's Juliette, the Fair Rosemonde, and a number of beautiful passersby, from midinettes to prostitutes. Their offspring are his works of art.

On a personal, sexual level, these theories translated into a doctrine of apocalyptic salvation through the complete possession of a woman, both vulval and anal, stimulated by flagellation. To Apollinaire as to other, more serious theosophists, there was a cosmic unity between man-sun-penis and woman-night-vagina (or anus), the human experience being a microcosm of the universe (*Letters to Lou*, 1915). As in de Sade's statement, "Outside of the ass there is no salvation" (*Juliette*, IV), based on Alexis Piron's earlier saying, "Outside of the cunt there is no salvation" ("Ode to Priapus"), Apollinaire fashioned an absolute, mythic ethos from physical sexuality. Included in this ethos was his advocacy of the repopulation of France in view of the depredations of the Franco-Prussian War and World War I. Both in his minor pornographic novel, *The Exploits of a Young Don Juan*, and in his surrealist farce, "The Breasts of Tiresias," he championed free love and female fertility as essential aspects of human eroticism.

On an aesthetic level, in the two little reviews he edited, and in his prolific journalistic writings from 1903 until his death in 1918, Apollinaire attempted to propagate these ideas. His principal aim was to bring together a "popular front" of modernism among all the arts, which he thought would result in a utopian age, a new erotic renaissance, in which poets and artists would be the prophetic leaders and role models. This age would be secular and would include the discoveries of science along with those of the arts. Together, they would unite the traditional order, sexuality, and beauty of French culture with the adventurism and futuristic explorations of the avant-garde. Although his vision of this

unity was somewhat compromised in the last years of his life by a certain amount of jingoism and antifeminism aggravated by his war experience, Apollinaire's modernistic ideas strongly influenced the surrealist movement of 1924-39, and his books soon were serving as revolutionary treatises throughout the artistic world.

### *The Eleven Thousand Rods*

One of the Marquis de Sade's most influential pornographic works, *The 120 Days of Sodom*, written at the end of the eighteenth century, was not published in France until 1904. It is not surprising, therefore, that Apollinaire's most sadistic novel, *Les onze mille verges*, should arrive anonymously in the Paris underground two years later (1906-07). Incorporating much of de Sade's cruelty, black humor, and emphasis on bisexuality and anal intercourse, as well as providing a burlesque catalogue of the possibilities of sexual experience, Apollinaire's work is obviously a spin-off of de Sade's. It also resembles the latter's *Juliette* in being highly picaresque, full of libidinous, fantastic characters from various countries in Europe, with a priapic Romanian hospodar (a provincial governor in the Ottoman Empire) as its antihero and a wildly promiscuous French whore, Culculine d'Ancône (from *cul*, "ass," and *encommer*, "to put the prick in the cunt"), as one of its principal female protagonists. These characters embark on voyages into areas much in the news in the early years of the twentieth century, particularly into revolutionary Serbia and Siberia during the Russo-Japanese War. Like his patriotic Polish mother, Apollinaire detested Russia and was enthusiastically on the side of the Japanese in that conflict, unlike most of the mainstream French media. He had written columns for the socialist-anarchist newspaper *L'Européen* and shared the editors' revolutionary antagonism toward the tyrannical czarist regime. There were articles in the paper on Russian atrocities both in the war and on the home front (e.g., in the suppression of peasant uprisings), usually involving soldiers and workers being flogged to death by officers and landowners. It was appropriate, therefore, that Apollinaire's "one great unholy orgy," as the surrealist Robert Desnos called the novel, should feature "the dull thud of birch rods on robust and over-ripe flesh." Desnos also wrote that the work displays "the essentially modern

role of masochism and the whip.” Another surrealist, Louis Aragon, wrote that “it displays all the bitchery [*chiennerie*] of our century.”

The title of the work is a pun on *verges* (“rods” or “scourges”) and *vierges* (“virgins”) and originates in the medieval legend of 11,000 virgins martyred by the Huns at Cologne. It also relates to a proverbial expression for a would-be womanizer, “a man in love with the 11,000 virgins.” The main character in the book, the wealthy Romanian hospodar Mony Vibescu (*Mony* = “prick” in Romanian; *Vibescu* = French slang for “Dickfuckass”), an insatiable priapist, boasts that he can copulate twenty times in a row. His failure to accomplish this heroic feat results finally in his death under the scourges of 11,000 Japanese soldiers! As he dies, his body nothing but a formless mass of sausage meat, “his wide-open, glassy eyes seemed to contemplate the divine majesty of the great beyond.”

As Aragon wrote in an introduction to the book, “Obviously, all that is not really very serious.” Robert Desnos stated in his turn that “it was more poetic than erotic.” And it is true that there are a number of burlesque episodes, parodies of French poets, and wild punning passages where the author seems drunk on his own verbiage, exotic customs and vocabulary, and bawdy jokes taken from books on European and Asiatic folklore. In addition, Apollinaire brings together some of the basic styles of the erotic classics with which he was so familiar. Not only does he set forth a de Sade-like compendium of the forms and positions of love, but he includes obscene punning names like those of André de Nerciat, the scholarly erudition of Mirabeau, incestuous episodes as in the novels of Rétif de la Bretonne, and bawdy dialogues among low-life types like those of Aretino, Zoppino, and Rétif. Yet he mentioned to friends that he wrote the book strictly for money; and after his arrest in 1911 as a suspect for the notorious theft of the *Mona Lisa* from the Louvre (he was innocent and soon released, but the affair seriously depressed him and aggravated the danger of his expulsion from France as a radical alien), he carefully hid his copy of the work in his library, toned down his campaign for erotic freedom, and increasingly became an outspoken French patriot.

Nevertheless, the multiple episodes of sadism, masochism, fetishism, saphism, transvestism,

masturbation, homosexuality, incest, blasphemy, scatology, urolagnia, coprolagnia, coprolalia, necrophilia, pedophilia, gerontophilia, and zoophilia turn the work ultimately from a “not really serious” piece of Rabelaisian satire into something of an apocalypse of world sexuality, emphasizing the violence of revolution (in Serbia) and the sadistic chaos of a particularly bloody war in Russia. While Apollinaire’s book was being written, Leo Tolstoy published *La guerre Russo-Japonaise*, in which he stated, “Hundreds of thousands of human beings are hunting each other down like wild beasts on earth and sea to kill each other, to mutilate each other, to torture each other as cruelly as possible.” Thus it is not a coincidence that Mony Vibescu’s most violent, most nauseating deeds, those involving torture and mutilation, make of him a Russian war hero. Indeed, several of the most violent incidents in the book were taken from reports in mainstream newspapers of the time, leading to the conclusion that the novel, almost in spite of itself and under all its satirical and comic episodes, is an ironic commentary on the terrible consequences of excessive sexuality and the gratuitous violence of war. It reveals a Manichaeian dialogue between the light and the dark, between the cruel and the joyous sides of Apollinaire’s philosophy of universal eroticism, a dualism which is not uncommon in the art and letters of the twentieth century and may be found in the eroticism of Bataille, Aragon, Artaud, Hemingway, Faulkner, Joyce, and many others. It is significant, for example, that Apollinaire’s close friend Picasso, “that woman hater” (as Apollinaire once called him), maintained that *The Eleven Thousand Rods* was Apollinaire’s best creation!

In addition, Apollinaire, like another friend and influence, the philosopher-novelist Remy de Gourmont, found a scientific basis for sexual excess. They were both fascinated by Émile Fabre’s pioneering studies of insect life, and both believed that the murderous sex lives of certain insects paralleled those of men and women. In a letter dated October 14, 1915, Apollinaire wrote his fiancée that he had amused himself by attaching human names to Fabre’s insects, giving them “a terrifying aspect of overly real humanity à la Marquis de Sade.” Many of the episodes of *Les onze mille verges* thus fall into Gourmont’s category of sex as *more bestiarum* (in the manner of animals).

A few years after writing *Les Onze mille verges*, Apollinaire edited an anthology of some of de Sade's more moderate passages, along with the works of other classic eroticists from the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, and quickly became widely known as one of the principal European apologists for erotica in general and for "the Divine Marquis" in particular. In his introduction to de Sade, he called him "the freest spirit that has lived until now" and went so far as to refer to Juliette, de Sade's cruel and insatiable heroine, as "the new woman, . . . a being of whom we have as yet no idea, who is detaching herself from humanity, who will have wings, and who will renew the universe."

### *The Exploits of a Young Don Juan*

Picaresque stories of the sexual initiation of randy adolescents go back to the ancient Greeks and constitute a stock-in-trade of nineteenth-century pornography. Apollinaire's obscene novel about a promiscuous sixteen-year-old boy named Roger (the name was chosen for its bawdy English meanings) is thus more conventional than *The Eleven Thousand Rods*. It is also more poorly written, and even though it was not published until 1911, it could well have been the first composed of the two. It contains some autobiographical allusions, and its sexuality is somewhat puerile, in keeping with the age of its protagonist. Its setting, moreover, is partly based on Apollinaire's yearlong sojourn as a tutor of French in a large German country house in 1901–02 when he was twenty-one years old. Perhaps he began writing it at that time in his frustration at being unable to bed his fellow tutor, the attractive English governess, Annie Playden (although they were probably stand-up lovers). He was also surrounded by a largely feminine household which included his pupil, an attractive young German girl. The novel deals largely with incest, a lifetime obsession of Apollinaire's, which partly stemmed from not knowing his father (Picasso thought he was a son of the pope) and from his love-hate relationship with his tempestuous Slavic mother.

Other influences besides de Sade (he probably hadn't yet read *The 120 Days*) were nineteenth-century "coming of age" pornographic novels, and especially the erotic dialogues and themes of incest in the works of another favorite eighteenth-century author, Rétif de la Bretonne. He

particularly found fascinating Rétif's most pornographic novel, *The Anti-Justine*. Like Picasso, who sketched Alice Derain reading Rétif's book, Apollinaire was in rebellion against his strict Catholic upbringing, which led him to relish the novel's remarkably obscene and blasphemous celebration of the sexual relations between a father and a daughter (in a famous passage, she prays to "sweet Jesus the good fucker and pimp" of Mary Magdalene and "the sodomizer of Saint John"). And although Rétif ostensibly wrote the work to counter the cruelty of de Sade's pornographic writings, his book contains several sadistic episodes, just as Apollinaire's recurrent misogyny led him to include sadistic elements in his own pornographic works.

In *The Exploits of a Young Don Juan*, Roger recounts in the first person his first sexual experiences in a large country château. After discovering masturbation while looking at medical pictures, he first sleeps with the bailiff's pregnant wife, then deflowers his seventeen-year-old sister, Berthe, during her menstrual period. He then moves on to sex with Kate the maid, with the bailiff's wife's sister-in-law, with a servant Ursula, with a kitchen girl Babette, with Ursula again, and finally with his oldest sister, Élise, and with his aunt, Marguerite. Some of this lovemaking is preceded by spanking, and a certain amount of scatology is included, along with traditional puerile episodes of voyeurism and eavesdropping (at the confessional, in the maidservants' dormitory), in keeping with the adolescent subject matter. In all, a fairly wide range of sexual activity is explored in Apollinaire's usual picturesque, idiomatic vocabulary. Yet the episodes become monotonous by the end, as if the author were losing interest in his subject. Finally the book is brought to a close by the summary relation of three pregnancies and births, those of Ursula, Marguerite, and Élise, along with Roger's hope that he will have many more children.

The young Don Juan's final comment is that he is accomplishing his patriotic duty by augmenting the population of his country! This sounds outrageously satirical at first after the relation of so many self-indulgent orgies, yet it is echoed by several passages in other works of Apollinaire. In the final analysis, we are forced to take seriously Apollinaire's conception of repopulation as an inextricable element in his neo-de Sadean philosophy of pan-eroticism.

If free love is responsible for many babies, so much the better!

### *Alcools*

*Alcools* (1913) was the first of Apollinaire's two main collections of poetry, works that bridged the transition from nineteenth-century, neo-Swedenborgian "angelism" in the symbolist poems of Nerval, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, and Mallarmé, to the more Freudian and revolutionary surrealist poems of the 1920s and 1930s. Its thematic structure is based on the poet's mythic picture of himself as an orphic, messianic figure wandering through modern European cities and landscapes experiencing the joys and sorrows of erotic, transcendent love. The *alcools* of the title flow through the book both as the intoxicating products of picturesque cafés and as the poetic vistas of the enchanting rivers that Apollinaire knew and loved, particularly the Rhone, the Rhine, and the Seine. They summarize the Dionysian-Apollonian dance of life and death that he experienced as an indefatigable *flâneur* ("walker-spectator"), his participation in the fascinating adventures of Eros and Anteros, their ecstasy and pain, and their infusion of light and shadow, fire and water. The book ends with the orphic lines, "I am drunk from drinking the entire universe / . . . / Listen to my songs of universal drunkenness."

The book opens in Paris on the edge of the Seine with the poem "Zone," which heralds the poetic and scientific glories of the twentieth century while chronicling at the same time the poet's own tragic loss of love in the departure of his mistress, the artist Marie Laurencin. He becomes a Christ-figure, crucified by love, and the famous final image of the poem is that of a beheaded (castrated), blood-red sun at dawn. Yet the book ends, again on the edge of the Seine, with the revolutionary Unanimist poem "Vendémiaire" [Vintage Month], a triumphant, Whitmanesque hymn to the poet-god and his privileged place at the center of an alcoholic universe. Apollinaire's beloved Paris becomes a kind of New Jerusalem to which the other drunken cities where the poet has lived—Rome, Nice, Lyons, and Cologne—pay homage. Thus the book is framed by two great poems, the first ending with an ironic sunrise at the poet's tragic demise ("Zone"), and the second ending with a sunrise at the dawn of a new apocalyptic age, a

"wine festival" of cosmopolitan poetry in utopian Paris ("Vendémiaire").

Other well-known poems in *Alcools* relate to love's loss in autumn and the melancholy passing of time; most famous are the haunting "Le pont Mirabeau" [Mirabeau Bridge] and the epic "La chanson du mal-aimé" [The Song of the Poorly Beloved]. The latter is a balladic, autobiographical work that takes the poet from London to Paris and includes ancient and modern legends, folklore, and lyrical refrains reminiscent of the "Testaments" of François Villon. It also contains the famous "seven swords" passage, seven fascinating, enigmatic stanzas that name and describe seven swords in the poet's heart that probably represent seven phases of the poet's sex life.

Besides the poems of love's loss, *Alcools* contains a number of poems of messianic transcendence. The most powerful of these are "Cortège," in which Apollinaire hymns himself as the product of all past experience; "Le Brasier" [The Brazier], in which he rises from Paris in a cosmic voyage to the heavens, where he unites with his dream of beauty like the mythic King Ixion uniting with his dream of the Mother Goddess; and finally "Les Fiançailles" [Betrothal], dedicated to Picasso and probably influenced by Picasso's artistic renewal in his seminal painting "Les Demoiselles d'Avignon" (1906–07). In this last work, the poet passes from his early Mariolatry to his crucifixion, when he loses both his friends and his former poetic truths, to finally his solar resurrection on Easter Day. The poem ends on the poet's rebirth as a new Knight Templar, a phallus- and Phoenix-like resurrection which makes him, like Picasso, the apocalyptic architect of a new temple of art.

### *Calligrammes, Letters to Lou, Tender as Memory*

Apollinaire's other main poetry collection, *Calligrammes*, was published a few months before his death in 1918; the title is his term for concrete poems, a number of which are included in the work. The book consists of poems written largely out of his war experience, many of them composed under fire in the front-line trenches near Rheims. It begins with several free-verse poems from the period immediately preceding the war.



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These poems relate to cosmopolitan, modernist ideas of poetry, sex, and art and feature lines inspired by paintings of Picasso, Delaunay, and Chagall. The first section also contains several experimental poems such as “Lettre-Océan,” a simultaneous poem-telegram containing sights and sounds of Paris, and “Monday, Christine Street,” a collage of bits of conversation heard in a café. There is also a long, prophetic work begun before the war and completed in 1917, “Les Collines” [The Hills], an important summary of the poet’s life and creative achievements. The poem ends with a call to other poet-prophets to bring the old, classic world of order into the new world of adventurous art. These last three poems had a major influence on young Dadaists and surrealists after 1918, as did Apollinaire’s revolutionary technique of doing away with all punctuation in the work, as he did in *Alcools*.

Following the prewar section come the war poems, which constitute a unique record of life and love in battle. There is probably nothing like them in any literature: journalistic, joyous, and erotic, they celebrate life in the front lines and the fantastic spectacle of war with its priapic canons, blazing ejaculations, and labyrinth of lascivious, female trenches. Out of this fabulous “love-death of nations,” the utopian age of the future will be born. The allied victors of the war will realize all joys, “Women Games Factories Commerce/ Industry Agriculture Metal/Fire Crystal Speed/Voice Gaze Touch . . .” (“War”).

Many of these poems from the war zone were written to Apollinaire’s various loves on the home front and are full of frank eroticism, paeans to “the nine holes of the (beloved’s) body.” They also provide an accurate record of his fellow soldiers’ bawdy songs, jokes, and obscene vocabulary. Yet Apollinaire’s most erotic writings out of his army experience are contained in two collections of letters, *Letters to Lou* and *Tender as Memory*. These two collections constitute a subtext to *Calligrammes*, the background of many of the best war poems. The first collection contains the letters and poems to his mistress Louise de Coligny, a wild party girl like his mother, a woman so turned on to eroticism—including anal sex and flagellation—that she comes close to Apollinaire’s ideal woman of the future, de Sade’s insatiable Juliette. The second collection has as its main theme the

epistolary seduction of a virginal schoolteacher/penpal, Madeleine Pagès, whom the poet had met only once on a train. The increasing heat of this correspondance, excited by the enforced chastity of a soldier’s life in the trenches and the blossoming sexuality of a repressed schoolteacher, gradually rises to passionate outpourings from both camps, with the result that Madeleine eventually becomes Apollinaire’s frank and totally submissive fiancée—entirely by mail! These two astonishingly intimate collections of letters, composed under the most difficult wartime conditions, besides giving a valuable blow-by-blow description of life on the western front, reveal in minute detail Apollinaire’s wide experience in all matters pertaining to sexuality. They also provide impressive evidence of qualities he was famous for as a leading impresario of the avant-garde in Paris: his seductive enthusiasm and charm, his wit and humor, his astounding memory, his creative fluency, his inventive techniques, and the depth and breadth of his literary knowledge. All of these qualities were complemented by a broad and deep scholarship, which served to support his orphic philosophy of universal eroticism.

Yet Apollinaire’s wide-ranging erudition and profound knowledge of foreign cultures and languages often make his works difficult to understand. For all their exotic vocabulary and references, however, they are never dull or overly academic; indeed, the poet was regarded by his contemporaries as a master of musicality and lyrical intoxication, purveyor of a mysterious beauty akin to the symbolists Gérard de Nerval and Arthur Rimbaud. As for his scholarship, most of his contemporaries agreed with his friend Gertrude Stein that it was a social and literary plus: “Guillaume was extraordinarily brilliant and no matter what subject was started, if he knew anything about it or not, he quickly saw the whole meaning of the thing and elaborated it by his wit and fancy carrying it further than anybody knowing anything about it could have done, and oddly enough generally correctly” (Stein, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*, 1933).

Apollinaire’s erotic vocabulary is particularly rich. It includes French, British, Italian, German, and Slavic slang, Latin and medieval sayings, picturesque idioms, hundreds of euphemisms, poetic phrases, proverbs, and complex puns, the

latter of which often fall into the category of what French critics call “calembours créateurs,” *creative* puns. These are words and phrases that carry both a lyrical charge and a philosophical subtext.

A famous example of his punning profundity is the poem in *Alcools* “Chantre” [Choir-director, cantor]. The complete poem consists of one line, “Et l’unique cordeau des trompettes marines” [And the single cord of the trumpet marines]. All the words have witty, cosmic overtones. The *trompette marine* is both a large ancestor of the bass viol with a single string and a Mediterranean conch, thus both a stringed instrument and a wind instrument. *Cordeau*, “cord,” contains several puns on terms for the penis (*cor*, *corde*, *cordón*) and relates to the sea trumpets sounded by water sprites in classical seascapes—it is a *cor d’eau* (“water horn”) and a *corps d’eau* (“body of water”). The trumpet marine/conch is a symbol of the vulva, like the trumpet marine/horn which originally got its name from the German for “Mary’s trumpet” (it was often played by nuns; the term was mistranslated by both the French and the British). In seventeenth-century occult writings, the huge instrument was both a symbol of the universe and of the body of man, both played upon by God.

Thus in one alexandrine line full of creative puns, Apollinaire, the godlike *chantre*, or poet/choir leader, both directs and plays on the single string of his instrument. The instrument resounds with all the male and female, aerial, terrestrial, and oceanic forces of the cosmos. While playing on the body of his mistress, Marie Laurencin, he is playing at the same time on Mary, the mother, daughter, and spouse of God. His phallic, microcosmic *uni-vers*, which means “one line” in French, thereby contains the macrocosmic *universe!*

Apollinaire’s most frequent erotic terms and metaphors relate to the penis and the vulva. Many of these are of foreign origin. For the penis, there are *mony* (Romanian), *Roger*, *rod*, *cock*, *willy*, *horn* (English), *cazzo* (Italian), *lul* (Belgian), *Hans* (German), *phalle*, *priape* (Latin), *muleta* (Spanish), *IOD* (Hebrew), *Pata* (Turkish), and more than 150 French expressions, some of them of his own invention. For the vulva, there are *kteis* (Greek), *tiz* (Arabian), *kunia* (Czech), *hole*, *queynte* (English), *quoniam* (Latin), and more than 130 French terms. In

addition, there are no lack of expressions for breasts and nipples (more than 80 terms), a woman’s body (more than 60), the anus (35), the clitoris (15), and various expressions for the testicles, buttocks, pubis, menses, excrements, ejaculation, and vaginal discharge, as well as for various kinds of lovers (e.g., more than 25 terms for a prostitute) and the many postures and acts of love. But the most interesting metaphors are often the most poetic, as for example, for the vulva of his penpal, Madeleine Soulas, which he had never seen, “a submarine garden of algae, coral, and sea urchins, of arborescent desires” (letter of October 9, 1915). Or for a penis in anal intercourse: “a bear cub stealing a honeycomb” (“6th Secret Poem” to Madeleine). Overall, Apollinaire’s erotic vocabulary may be ranked in size and variety along with that of Aristophanes, Rabelais, Shakespeare, Mirabeau, de Sade, Joyce, and Genet as one of the richest in Western literature.

Apollinaire’s “Carte du tendre” (map of the country of Love) is at the same time humorous, beautiful, ugly, poetic, cruel, and mysterious. He believed that the joyous and melancholy union of Psyche with Eros was the beginning and the end of the world, the full meaning of existence. In the *Chroniques d’art* of January 26, 1911, he wrote, “Love is not only French art, but Art itself, universal Art.” *Poetry* to him had the Greek meaning of *creation*, the poet’s re-creation or recasting in works of art of the orphic meaning of the universe, the cosmic force that “moves the sun and the other stars” (a quote from Dante he used in *Alcools*). His poems are pantheistic microcosms that reflect the larger reality, and if they are full of erotic puns and exotic phrases, the puns and phrases are like the ancient Greek *herms*, phallic mileposts to guide the reader to the center of that reality. This center is yonic and ineffable. In the poems’ ultimate stage, “All is only a rapid flame / Flowered by the adorable rose / From which rises an exquisite perfume” (last stanza of “Les collines”).

### Biography

Apollinaire was born Wilhelm Albert Vladimír Alexander Apollinaris Kostrowitzky in Rome, Italy, August 25, 1880, to a young Polish woman and (probably) an Italian aristocrat. He was educated at Monaco, Cannes, and Nice,

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1887–97, mostly in private Catholic schools. After short sojourns in Lyons, Paris, and Stavelot, Belgium, he settled in Paris in 1899, then left Paris to spend a year in the Rhineland as tutor to an aristocratic German family 1901–02, and toured Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Austria with the family. He lived in Paris the rest of his life except for a year in the army during World War I (1915). From 1907 to 1918, Apollinaire became a major apologist for the avant-garde art movements Fauvism, Cubism, Orphism, and surrealism (“the School of Paris”) and for modernist poetry in the years of transition from symbolism to surrealism. His two influential poetry collections were *Alcools* (1913) and *Calligrammes* (1918), and he wrote a collection of short stories, *L'hérésiarque et cie* [*The Heresiarch and Company*], 1911; a book of art criticism, *Les artistes cubistes*, 1913; a fictional autobiography, *Le poète assassiné*, 1917; and a play, “Les Mamelles de Tirésias” [The Breasts of Tirésias], 1917. He was wounded by shrapnel in the temple in the trenches near Rheims on March 17, 1916, and was trepanned in Paris on May 2. He married Jacqueline Kolb in May 1918. Apollinaire died of influenza and the effects of his wound on November 9, 1918.

SCOTT BATES

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# APULEIUS

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c.125 CE

Roman orator and philosopher

The book for which Apuleius is now chiefly remembered is the *Metamorphoses*, or *The Golden Ass*. The subtitle “Golden” (“Aureus”) may contain an allusion to Pythagorean philosophy, might possibly be an indicator of the esteem in which the novel was held in antiquity, or could constitute an ironic allusion to the epic quest for the mythological Golden Fleece of Jason and the Argonauts as told in the *Argonautica*, a poem by Apollonius of Rhodes (third century BCE). It is the only Latin novel which survives complete, and consists of a series of imbricated tales told by a variety of different characters, including the Ass himself. In form it belongs to what were known as “Milesian Tales,” being a collection of stories somewhat similar to the style of the *Arabian Nights* or Boccaccio’s *Decameron* but set in a picaresque framework as the Ass moves from one disreputable or dangerous situation to another. It is in turn bawdy, humorous, melodramatic, mock-heroic, romantic, and mystical.

The basic plot is provided by the story of the adventures of a young man, who, through his uncontrolled curiosity, is transformed by witchcraft into an ass. After many adventures, he finally regains his human shape through the intervention of the goddess Isis and her brother Osiris and participates in the celebration of their mystic rites, recognizing his duty of worship and celibacy. The most famous inserted tale in the *Metamorphoses* is the story of Cupid and Psyche (IV.28–VI.24). This may be read as an allegory of the Soul (Psyche), who, sad and tormented while separated from her Master (Cupid, or Eros), regains perfection and happiness when reunited with Love. There is a parallelism with the plight of the Ass, whose curiosity causes his tragedy and who finally achieves salvation. “Cupid and Psyche” is, perhaps rather incongruously, told by an old hag, who is eventually murdered by the robbers she serves. She recounts how Venus, the Goddess of Love, is annoyed at the

fame of Psyche’s beauty, which threatens to rival her own, and so sends her son Cupid to persecute the girl. Cupid, however, falls in love with her and does not tell his mother. Their love is consummated in the dark, for Psyche must not see her husband. Her envious sisters, alleging that she is mating with a snake (for so an oracle has seemed to indicate), persuade her to light a candle. But a drop of hot wax wakes Cupid up and tragedy seems about to occur. Venus, now furious as she learns the truth, berates Cupid and sets impossible tasks for Psyche to perform, but Psyche accomplishes all she is told to do, being rescued from eternal sleep by Cupid. Jupiter, the King of the Gods, resolves that Cupid’s cunning will be cured by matrimony. The child which is born of this union is called Pleasure (Voluptas). The story is highly charged with allegory and, among other things, illustrates the hag’s contention that what we see, including what we dream, often signifies the opposite of what it apparently means. Despite being told by a lecherous old woman, this erotic tale is narrated chastely. Many of the other stories are not so restrained. They may be divided into two categories: those which concern the Ass himself, and those which are recounted by other individuals. Among the former we find the episode of Lucius’s original misfortune: He sees in magic the possibility of erotic and other adventures (II.6). He is sexually aroused by Photis, the servant girl (II.7), and energetically makes love to her all night long on a couch. Having avoided Byrrhena, the predatory wife of his host, he witnesses with Photis the magic transformation of her mistress, and on trying the special ointment turns into an ass. A number of his subsequent adventures involve avoiding physical abuse, pain, and several unpleasant threats of imminent castration or death. A youth malevolently asserts that the Ass will go after anything: marriageable women, girls, boys, in the hope of sodomizing them (VII.21). But this is in fact untrue. Eventually, however, a woman, attracted by the size of his member, does make lustful advances to him and sets up a situation in private where she can

## APULEIUS

gratify her desire. Surrounded by soft cushions and beautiful furnishings, they taste the delights of Venus despite the Ass's fear that his organ might prove too large (X.19–22). As a result, his owner decides to arrange a display where the Ass will couple with a multiple murderess, a condemned woman of the lowest sort, in the arena. The public's anticipation is, sadly, disappointed as the Ass makes his escape before he can be gored to death while locked in a bestial embrace (X.23–35). On an earlier occasion, he becomes the property of a band of wandering priests of Cybele, renowned for the orgiastic nature of their worship. The devotees are all castrated effeminate, eager for the services of a well-hung country lad whom they prefer to the Ass (VIII.26–29). Among the stories told by other characters, one features a corpse who says he was murdered by his adulterous wife (II.23–30); in another, a certain Thrasyllus attempts to seduce Charite, who eventually tricks and blinds him before committing suicide on her husband's tomb (VIII.1–14).

Four interrelated stories play on the theme of the lustful wife who outwits her cuckolded husband. In the first, a lover hides in a storage jar and is then replaced there by the husband while the adulterous pair sit on top and enjoy each other (IX.5–7). The second is about a lover who flees in haste, leaving behind a sandal which he nevertheless wittily explains away and calms the husband's suspicious jealousy (IX.17–21). In the third, to which the Ass is actually witness, a baker's wife welcomes her youthful lover, who has to be hidden under an inverted tub. When the Ass deliberately treads on his protruding fingers he is discovered, the baker takes him off, and, saying that what his wife enjoys should be shared, sodomizes him before having him soundly whipped (IX.22–23, 26–28). Inserted in this tale is the story of the fuller who discovers his wife's infidelity when the lover sneezes in his hiding place (IX.24–25). Unrelated to these, but still displaying a high degree of misogyny in the portrait of an insatiably lustful wicked woman, is the story of incest between a

wife and her stepson (X.2–12). A false poison frustrates her foul designs and reveals her schemes. If all these women are shown in a disreputable light, it has also to be remembered that the nature of an ass is composed of lust, grossness, and lazy deceitfulness. The *Metamorphoses* takes us through these human states before reaching a final moral apotheosis (XI.15).

### Biography

Apuleius was born into a prosperous family in Madaurus (North Africa). He was educated at Carthage, Rome, and Athens, thereafter becoming a priest of the Imperial Cult and a public speaker.

PATRICK POLLARD

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## ARABIC: MIDDLE AGES TO NINETEENTH CENTURY

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The vast corpus of premodern Arabic writing is anything but reticent about matters of love and sex. Nostalgia for a lost love is a prominent theme already in the earliest preserved Arabic poetry, from the sixth century, and throughout the following millennium the independent love lyric enjoyed a central place in the poetic canon, undergoing developments that expanded its thematic range to include everything from the earthy and puckish to the desperately ethereal. Anthologists and prose essayists also turned their attention to the phenomenon of sexual love, producing a stream over the centuries of some two dozen monographs on “love theory,” rich in psychological insight and providing the outside observer with a trove of sociological evidence. While this literature generally avoided explicit discussion or description of sex, the latter enjoyed its own well-defined and fully con-doned literary space. In both poetry and prose, the forthright treatment of sexual matters was assiduously cultivated, in a variety of forms and with a variety of intentions, including amusement, shock, education, and sexual stimulation, all recognized as legitimate literary objectives. This broad range of literature included, but was by no means limited to, a genre of “erotica” in the narrow sense—that is, monographic treat-ments of sexual matters for which “explicitness” was a defining feature.

Both continuity and dynamism are givens in a literary tradition that extends over a millennium, and any overview of an important segment of that tradition must cope with both. For the survey presented here, chronology has been given precedence over typology, with the imposi-tion of a very rough periodization meant to highlight developments over time, although contin-uity in the maintenance of specific genres will be apparent enough, not to mention the handing down, century by century, of a corpus of canon-ized poetry and anecdote. For its first three cen-turies, until about the 800, the Arabic literature

we have is essentially an oral tradition and, unless we count the Qur’ān, a poetic one. Ninth-century philologists carefully recorded this tradition as they knew it, and despite the inevitable uncertainties about authenticity, the result is a corpus of poetry extending back well into the sixth century, several generations before the advent of Islam in 610–622.

Pre-Islamic Arabic poetry was a highly devel-oped art form, with a complex system of meter, rhyme, and thematics. Its most prestigious genre, the *qaṣīda* (ode), consisted of a mono-rhymed poem of some 50 to 100 lines with a fairly rigid sequence of themes: an initial remi-niscence about a former love affair (the *nasīb*), followed by a description of the poet’s journey on a camel, and then, the point of the poem, a section praising himself, his tribe, or (a harbinger of later developments) a patron. The *nasīb* was most commonly evoked by a chance visit to an abandoned campsite in the desert, the scene of the now-remembered tryst; the poet might describe the beauty of his lost beloved but would usually focus on his own emotions. Spe-cific descriptions of what went on are relatively rare, although the most famous of these poets, Imru’ al-Qays, notoriously described the way he made love to a nursing mother who had her infant at her side.

The *qaṣīda* eschewed any use of obscenity, but obscenity was certainly a recognized concept, and it turns up here and there in poetry of the genre recognized as the *qaṣīda*’s obverse, *hijā’*, “dispraise” or attack poetry. In *hijā’*, rival tribes, or specific members of them, were assaulted for all sorts of reasons, including their sexual immo-rality; and slurs on enemies’ wives, mothers, and sisters, describing their (usually fictional) sexual escapades in the grossest terms, were a sanctioned component of such attacks.

The ninth-century philologists also preserved a fair amount of more general lore about pre-Islamic Arabian society, whose accuracy is,

however, highly questionable, both because of doubts about its transmission (not being anchored by the specific wording of poetry) and because of the intervening advent of Islam, which gave later scholars every reason to paint the mores of pre-Islamic society in dark colors. This lore includes lurid descriptions of pre-Islamic Arabian prostitution; lists of famous fornicators of the period, as well as active and passive homosexuals (a topic untouched by the poetry altogether); and identification of the princess Hind, daughter of al-Nu'mān and a Christian, as the "first" Arab lesbian, whose devotion to her lover al-Zarqā' led to her founding of a nunnery to which she retired after her lover's death.

With God's revelations (in what was to become the Qur'ān) to the Prophet Muḥammad in Mecca and Medina in the early seventh century, Arabian society was transformed. Relations between the sexes were regularized, in carefully defined forms of marriage (including polygamy, with a maximum of four wives) and concubinage (unlimited); a firm line was drawn between licit and illicit sexual behavior (with adultery punishable by stoning and premarital fornication by flogging); and homosexual behavior was (rather ambiguously) condemned. Neither the Qur'ān nor handed-down traditions about the Prophet's words and deeds (the *ḥadīth*) have much to say, however, about *talking* (or writing) about sex. According to some accounts, the Prophet resorted to euphemism in referring to sexual pleasure ("tasting his or her little honey"); but others, defending the use of the Arabic equivalent of "four-letter" words, place them in the mouths of both the Prophet himself and his most highly esteemed Companions—in the proper context (one Companion is quoted repeatedly in the following centuries as saying that "obscenity" in speech is only objectionable when women are present). Again, questionable "lore" fills in some details about sexual practices at the time, including both greater independence among Medinan women (as compared with Meccans) and their greater sexual conservatism (e.g., opposition to anal intercourse, practiced by some Meccan immigrants to the city); the Prophet is reported to have objected to an institutionalized form of male transvestism only when one such transvestite, assumed to be impervious to women's sexual charms, betrayed too intimate a knowledge of them when describing a

prospective bride to an interested third party; but all such accounts are highly colored by later cultural developments.

In fact the Arabs' world changed radically after the death of the Prophet, as their Muslim armies conquered the Sasanian empire of Iran and Iraq in its entirety and deprived the Byzantine empire of its Syrian and Egyptian provinces. During the following century Arab warriors and their families put down roots in these foreign, sedentary societies, ruling over them and attempting to keep themselves segregated from them, but inevitably gradually succumbing to massive cultural influence from them. Our Arabic sources for this period—still oral, and still primarily poetic—do not yet betray much of an effect from this influence, but they do manifest important literary developments. Abuse poetry (*hijā'*) enjoyed an efflorescence, and the use of scurrilous sexual attacks on the victims' womenfolk became a commonplace in the invective of the famous poets Jarīr (d. 729) and al-Farazdaq (d. 728), as well as many others. At the same time, the poetry of love, separating from its status as a component of the *qaṣīda*, became a genre on its own, in two forms. On the one hand, nostalgia yielded to sweet despair among some Bedouin poets, who composed plangent lyrics about their hopeless passion for a thwarted love that drove them to madness or even an early death; this trend, which was to have a rich (and heavily romanticized) future, was dubbed "Udhri," after the 'Udhra tribe that was particularly associated with it. On the other hand, some urban poets, most notably 'Umar b. Abī Rabī'a (d. c. 720) in Medina, composed light and charming lyrics about their flirtations with the local girls, a style with an equally impressive future before it. Both of these styles of *ghazal* (love lyric) were quite chaste—specific references to sexuality were inappropriate, although a little raciness here and there was acceptable in the "urban" genre.

Again, the historically dubious anecdotal evidence preserved by later authors gives us a fuller picture, specifically of the "gilded" society of Mecca and Medina in the first century of Islam, when political power—the caliphate—had moved away (to Damascus), but the aristocrats of the holy cities gained enormous wealth from both their ascribed status and the economic impact of the annual pilgrimage. We hear a great deal about the lives of pleasure and indeed

decadence led by these aristocrats, with intimations of freewheeling sexual lifestyles going well beyond the modest license reflected in the verse of ‘Umar b. Abī Rabī‘a and his fellow poets; representative of this material are the many stories about Ḥubbā, a Medinan prostitute and self-professed expert on sexual technique, whose detailed advice to brides (and bridegrooms) was to be quoted for many centuries.

But things seem to have gone yet further in the provinces, and specifically in the city of al-Kūfa, in Iraq, where a third school of love poetry can be discerned, one that moved in the direction of explicit articulation of sexuality. A group of Kūfan poets, at the opposite pole from ‘Udhri chastity, began to compose poems celebrating their sexual liaisons, as well as the joys of wine, both of which were in defiance of Islamic norms. It is here that we find the first articulation of what was quickly to become the important literary genre of *mujūn*, or “libertinism,” antinomian poetry (and prose) that thumbed its nose at Islam and preached a message of pure hedonism—and equally quickly achieved acceptance as a *literary* phenomenon that did not, as such, endanger the mores of actual society. This trend was boosted further by the Damascene caliph al-Walīd b. Yazīd (d. 744), notorious for his attention to pleasures and inattention to affairs of state but famous as well for his seductive poetry about wine and women.

In 750 the Umayyad dynasty of caliphs in Damascus was overthrown by a revolutionary movement originating in eastern Iran, that of the ‘Abbāsids, who assumed control of the Islamic state and shifted the center of power to the east, establishing their new capital in Baghdad in 762. This political revolution had profound cultural repercussions as well. With interaction, intermarriage, and the sheer passage of time, the conquering Arabs could no longer hold themselves aloof from the sedentary societies of the former Byzantine and Sasanian provinces they controlled; and the shift of power to the east assured a new dominance of Persian cultural norms over the evolving Islamic society.

Although it is difficult to pinpoint the exact correlation between political and literary events, it is clear that Arabic literature underwent a profound shift at this point as well, one aspect of which is enshrined in Arabic literary history as the advent of the “New” (*muḥdath*) poets. The former canons of Bedouin poetry—weeping

over a deserted encampment, for instance—were not only abandoned but mocked, and the reality of city life was emphatically affirmed; at the same time a new and more precious literary style was instituted. In love poetry, the earthy Kūfan style was further developed, while the Udhri style of breathless longing for an impossible love was taken to new (and acknowledgedly artificial) heights by the poet al-‘Abbās b. al-Aḥnaf (d. c. 805). The Bedouin ‘Udhri poets of a century earlier became the subjects of legend, and an apparently totally fictitious poet, al-Majnūn (“the Madman”), was enshrined as their leader, complete with a corpus of verse attributed to him. What had been a Bedouin trend became a (somewhat brittle) urban fashion.

But even more extreme innovations were also taking place. The most brilliant poet of the new generation in Baghdad, Abū Nuwās (d. c. 815), had no use for Udhri verse, but cultivated rather the Kūfan tradition of antinomianism. Not only did he become the most celebrated Arabic (and Islamic) poet of the joys of forbidden wine; he also established homoeroticism as a suitable, and quickly dominant, form of love (and sex) poetry. Later redactors of his collected verse divided his love poetry into three groups: heterosexual, homosexual, and libertine (*mujūn*). Poems in the first two categories celebrated the beauty of the beloved, complained (never too seriously) about his or her standoffishness and cruelty, and described the poet’s woeful state, or they amusingly, and elegantly, recounted a light flirtation. By definition such love lyrics (*ghazal*) never made direct reference to sex, although a certain amount of innuendo could be appropriate. In Abū Nuwās’s *mujūn* poetry, on the other hand, the point was to be as explicit—humorously and sometimes shockingly—as possible. Flirtation becomes seduction—one of the poet’s favorite themes is the seduction of a young Christian boy in a tavern or monastery—and sometimes we are told even the number of thrusts involved in their lovemaking. One long poem describes the seduction of a professional singing slave girl, with whom the poet was able to reach orgasm only by imagining her as a boy. A few depict orgies, voyeurism, and other such activities.

Abū Nuwās was an important trendsetter in many ways, not least in institutionalizing *mujūn* poetry as an acceptable genre. Inevitably, some of his contemporaries and successors attempted



to outdo him and devoted verses to such topics as loving descriptions of male and female genitalia; one poet made a specialty of writing elegies (*rithā'*) on his (putatively) uncooperative penis. The tradition of attack poetry (*hijā'*) also became even coarser, with the grossest sexual activities attributed to the poet's enemies. Of course, not all poets pursued all the available genres, but some of those most prominent for their panegyrics and elegies, such as Ibn al-Rūmī (d. 896), composed *mujūn* and *hijā'* with equal gusto. Virtually all of them included love lyrics in their work, and most celebrated both heterosexual and homoerotic passion.

But the early ninth century also witnessed the initiation of a serious written Arabic prose literature. Partly under the influence of a translation movement from Greek, Syriac, and Middle Persian, Arab authors embraced the concept of an authored monograph with a fixed text, and a flood of books ensued. Much of this early prose literature has been lost, but we are fortunate to have a sizable portion of the oeuvre of the most outstanding and prolific author of the day, al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 868). Al-Jāḥiẓ's interests were all-encompassing, and emphatically included love and sex. His essay collections *Love and Women* and *The Difference Between Men and Women* are unfortunately preserved only in fragments, but his work on *Singing Slave Girls* survives intact, presenting us with a characteristically sardonic picture of this institution of Baghdad high society. While casting his discussion in the form of a spirited defense of their trade by the owners and trainers of these professional entertainers, he manages to convey as well the negative side—the slave girls' gold-digging ways and the fuzziness of the line that kept many of them just this side of prostitution.

As is often the case with al-Jāḥiẓ, it is difficult to put a neat generic label on his *Singing Slave Girls*. Two other works, however, clearly fall into the category of *mujūn*, given their predominantly humorous purpose and their constant recourse to explicit discussion of sex. Both are debates about the relative merits of women and boys as sex partners for men, a topic known already in Greek literature (although the path of influence on the Arabic is impossible to trace) and one that was to continue to attract other Arabic authors for centuries to come. The *Boasting Match Between Sodomites and Fornicators*

actually begins with a defense of writing about frivolous topics and the use of obscene language, then presents a series of arguments comparing the physical pleasures of vaginal and anal sex, the beauties of women and boys, and so forth, together with an odd digression on eunuchs. The champion of heterosexual sex seems to win the debate, but not unambiguously. The situation is clearer in the *Superiority of the Belly to the Back*, in which al-Jāḥiẓ tries to turn a young colleague away from what he sees as his errant pursuit of homoerotic delights, employing mostly rhetorical arguments but also condemning sodomy flatly as unnatural vice—but without abandoning a jocular tone throughout.

Al-Jāḥiẓ has much more to say about sex and the sexes in his other works, notably in his multivolume *Book of Animals*, where his tendency to digress leads him to indulge in particular his obsession with eunuchs. Numerous other prose writers of the period included significant erotological material in their works as well, especially in the form of humorous anecdotes (ranging from short jokes to lengthy narratives) that were assiduously collected in anthologies, one of the most distinctive prose genres developed under the overall rubric of *adab*, or belles-lettres.

But a separate genre of erotica, in the narrower sense, also appeared in the ninth century. Unfortunately, all the early exemplars of what was to become an established tradition are lost, and we know of them only from later citations and bibliographical references. In particular, the invaluable late-tenth-century *Index*, a work composed by a Baghdad bookseller incorporating authors and titles with supplementary information about every book in Arabic of which he was aware, offers quite a lot of information about this early erotica. Referring to such works precisely as "sex books" (*kutub al-bāh*), he lists their titles under a rubric that indicates clearly enough an extensive debt to foreign influences as well as their explicitly prurient intentions: "Titles of books composed about sexual intercourse, Persian, Indian, Greek, and Arabic, in the form of sexually stimulating discourse."

Of the three Persian books listed, that of *Bunyāndakht* can be identified from extensive later quotations as advice for women on sexual matters proffered by a woman named Bunyāndakht, including detailed instructions for effectively stimulating a man in bed. The second, the

book of *Bahrāmdakht*, does not appear in later sources and may be a garbled duplicate of *Bunyāndakht*. The title of the third, the book of *Bunyān Nafs*, is uncertain, appearing elsewhere as *Bunyāqis* or *Bunyāfis*, but it appears to be a man's name, with the author addressing such issues as women's preferences in penis sizes and shapes, the necessity for men to tell lies in order to conquer women, and why old women hate younger women more than old men hate younger men.

The two Indian books listed in the *Index* are apparently two different versions ("big" and "small") of the *Alfīya*, whose title ("The Thousand") is explained by other sources as referring to an Indian woman whose sexual expertise she owed to experiencing sexual intercourse with a thousand different men. This work is probably the same as that of Harqaṭ (or Harūṭ?) son of Ṭamas the Indian (al-Hindī), usually referred to simply as "The Indian," which is quoted extensively in a number of other sources, notably in the *Encyclopedia of Pleasure* (discussed below), where several such quotations closely parallel material in the *Kamasutra*. Topics discussed by The Indian in preserved citations include the kinds of women one should and should not marry; the parameters of possible penis size, with nicknames for large, medium, and small; appropriate grooming for both sexes; and the stimulating effects of talking during sexual intercourse.

The *Index* lists only one Greek sex book, that of Martūṣ the Greek, which seems likely to be the same as that of Arīṭās (or Arīyās) the Greek referred to several times in the *Encyclopedia of Pleasure*, where it is said to overlap heavily with the book of The Indian and is quoted for descriptions of male and female genitals and techniques for achieving simultaneous orgasm, and its approval of jealousy so long as it is not excessive. Who the author of this book might actually be remains to be determined, but as a "stimulating" work, it was apparently generically distinct from both the medical sex book of Rufus of Ephesus (second century CE) and the medico-physiognomical work of his contemporary Polemon, both of which were translated into Arabic and left significant traces in the later erotological tradition.

In fact, under the stimulus of the Greek tradition—including, crucially, a major section of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problemata*, dealing with

various sexual questions—a number of Arabic physicians and philosophers composed works on sexual intercourse (*bāh*) that, unlike their more literary counterparts, have survived. We have a brief work of this nature by the "first Arab philosopher," al-Kindī (d. c. 865), dealing mostly with problems of impotence and various drugs purported to cure it; a reworking of the section on sex in the *Problemata* by al-Kindī's contemporary 'Īsā ibn Māssa, entitled *Questions on Reproduction, Offspring, and Sexual Intercourse*; and two works by the Christian Quṣṭā ibn Lūqā (d. 912), one again focused on impotence problems but the other casting its nets more widely, with discussions of the age of puberty for males and females, the dangers for health of both excessive sexual activity and abstinence, and the peculiar sexuality of eunuchs. A generation later the celebrated physician al-Rāzī (d. c. 925) composed both a *Book on Sexual Intercourse*, very much along the lines of Quṣṭā's broader work, with sections on the dangers of excess, the means to correct them, and an array of drugs and other treatments for male sexual problems, and a monograph, unique in the Arabic tradition, on what he calls *The Hidden Disease*, attempting to provide a physiological explanation for the phenomenon of passive male homosexuality, that is, adult men who derive sexual satisfaction from being penetrated anally by other men. Many of these ideas reappear in the *Canon* of Avicenna (d. 1037), which in Latin translation was to have a profound influence on medical thinking in medieval and early modern Europe.

The *Index*, in its section on medicine, notes some of these works, as well as a few others, including a work on coitus by the celebrated translator Ḥunayn b. Isḥāq (d. 873) that seems not to have survived; but such medical works are clearly considered to be generically distinct from the "lust-inducing" literary works listed for the Persians, Indians, Greeks, and Arabs. For the Arabs (presumably meaning original works, rather than translations, although foreign influence is clearly not irrelevant), the *Index* offers seven titles. Again, two of these are "big" and "small" versions of a single work, the *Book of Barjān and Ḥubāḥib*, by Abū Ḥassān al-Namlī (d. c. 860), which appears to have been quite popular. In the numerous citations from the book by later authors, the two women named in the title, apparently Persians, offer answers to a

wide variety of questions posed by a nameless king, mainly on things a man would like to know about a woman's sexuality, and with a particular concern about the timing of male and female orgasms and what to do when they are not simultaneous. Al-Namlī has also an independent entry elsewhere in the *Index*, where it is recorded that he composed works on *Passive Sodomy*, *Lesbianism*, and *The Donkey-Renter's Speech to the Grocer's Daughter* [or *Slave Girl*], all of which have disappeared without a trace.

Of the remaining five titles offered by the *Index*, three are otherwise unknown: *The Free Woman and the Slave Woman*, *The Woman in Power Named "Playful" and the Sodomite Husayn*, and *Beloved Slave Girls*. The last of these may well have dealt with lore about lesbian relationships, since elsewhere in the book the same vocabulary is used to refer to some dozen (completely lost) works on famous lesbian couples. The fourth, on *Lesbians and Passive Sodomites*, by the well-known court buffoon Abū l-'Anbas al-Ṣaymarī (d. 888), is known from extensive citations in later works and was clearly a typical "libertine" (*mujūn*) compilation of titillating anecdotes and other material; his other works (again, completely lost) include, according to the *Index's* own entry on him, a monograph on masturbation, a collection of anecdotes about pimps, and a book on *The Superiority of the Anus to the Mouth*.

It is surprising that the fifth of the *Index's* titles of Arabic erotica, the sex book by Ibn Ḥājib al-Nu'mān (d. 962), a contemporary of the *Index's* author, has not survived. Cited by the latter under the title *The Discourse of Ibn al-Dukkānī*, but more generally known as the *Book of Women*, it is singled out by the twelfth-century erotologist al-Samaw'al b. Yaḥyā as one of the two most effective works of this nature at stimulating a man's flagging sex drive, the other being the *Encyclopedia of Pleasure*. Oddly missing from the *Index's* list of erotica, but included in a separate entry elsewhere in the book, are the works of the obscure Ibn al-Shāh al-Ṭāhirī (early tenth century?), which included *Boys*, *Women*, *Passive Sodomy and Its Pleasures*, *Masturbation*, and *Taking Turns* (at homosexual anal intercourse).

The loss of all these early works is perhaps due in part to their relatively low prestige, but it would be quite erroneous to think of them

as either "underground" or even "popular" literature; their authors (and translators) were certainly full-fledged literati, and these works would have circulated like any other books. The primary reason for their disappearance is, rather, that they served as mines for later authors, and as the material they contained was increasingly recycled, newer (and perhaps more comprehensive and sophisticated) works simply drove out the older ones, and demand for fresh copies of the latter dried up. A milestone in this process was certainly reached with the *Encyclopedia of Pleasure* by the rather obscure late-tenth-century author 'Alī ibn Naṣr al-Kātib, which is the earliest Arabic work of erotica to be preserved intact, and in many ways the most interesting and impressive of all.

It is most unfortunate that this important book has not yet been published in full; we have only an English translation (with many problems) that appeared in the 1960s, and an uncritical edition of the second two-thirds of the Arabic text (but presented as if complete) from 2001. At least seven manuscripts of the work are known to exist, two of which serve as the basis for the following description. It certainly lives up to its title, being truly encyclopedic in nature. Drawing on a very wide variety of sources, the author manages to examine the phenomenon of sex from many different angles, including anatomical, medical, lexicographical, psychological, sociological, and of course literary. A brief introduction opens with the standard pious formulae expected of any book in this culture, but it praises God for, in particular, having created sex and made it pleasurable, as well as having raised human beings above the animal kingdom so that they may practice more elevated (and pleasurable) forms of sexual interaction. Not surprisingly, the work is presented basically as a didactic one, instructing the reader in the ethics and etiquette of sex. The audience is assumed to be male (if not necessarily exclusively so), and the subordination of women to men is mentioned but not stressed. Rather it is the pursuit of harmony between the sexes that is said to be most important, and (pseudo-)Socrates is quoted as saying, "Sexual intercourse without companionability is uncouth." In an age when living an "elegant" lifestyle was an often articulated ideal, this book is intended to show how one can behave "elegantly" in the realm of sex.

In fact, of course, not everything included is so very refined, and it is probably fair to say that the author's real intention was to offer the reader both a tour of pleasure and a guide for maximizing same. Some passages are clearly meant to be sexually arousing; many others are humorous; many are soberly analytical. Poetry looms large—thousands of poems by dozens of poets are cited—as does anecdote; but 'Alī ibn Naṣr also speaks in his own voice over long stretches of the work. Especially striking is his attempt to present a coherent sociology of sexual relations, in a way not really found elsewhere in the Arabic tradition.

A somewhat detailed survey of the contents of the *Encyclopedia* will serve to illustrate almost all the themes and particular concerns of the entire erotic tradition, while highlighting some of the areas in which this work is exceptional. It is reasonably well organized, if not tightly so. Of the 43 chapters, the first 3 are devoted to sexual intercourse in general: its Arabic terminology (42 nouns, 45 verbs, with discussion of nuances), its merits and benefits (abstinence is argued to be unhealthy), and its phenomenology (answering such questions as why it is pleasurable, why people find it shameful, and why drunkards cannot perform; this chapter is taken in its entirety from the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problemata*). Chapters 4–6 discuss the male and female genital organs, the approach being again terminological (12 words for penis, 26 for vagina), literary (many poems describing each are quoted), and medical (mostly from Galen). The literary chapter includes two debates, one between the vagina and the penis (attributed to al-Jāhiz, but not found in his extant works), the other between males and females as sex partners (from an otherwise unknown source).

Chapters 7–10 turn to forms of love “passion”—that is, bilateral sexual relations—and appear to be the real focal point of the book. Chapter 7 divides these into three types: male-female, male-male, and female-female (with a mini-debate, in verse, on which of the three is best), then adds a fourth, masturbation, with documentation of the occurrence of all four in the animal kingdom. Masturbation is set aside, however, since the author tells us he has devoted a separate monograph (otherwise unknown) to the topic, entitled *The Alchemy of Sex* (with an explanation of techniques “both with and without instruments”). A discussion is then added

about the controversy over whether sexual consummation enhances or destroys love passion, which gives the author the opportunity to retail a large quantity of poetry on both sides, with the Udhrī tradition well represented on the anti-sex side. A different fourth type is then proposed—what would today be called bisexuality—but the author refuses to give these people their own chapter, since they are relatively few, he says, and lack a name in Arabic, although he does find a few apposite verses to quote. Those whose tastes *do* run to both sexes, he suggests, might try eunuchs, who combine the attractions of each.

Chapter 8 deals with male-female relations, and the female role is divided into (1) woman as legal partner, (2) woman as mistress, and (3) woman as prey. Legal partnerships are also of three types: marriage with inheritance, marriage without inheritance, and concubinage; marriage without inheritance is *mut'a*, usually translated as “temporary marriage,” a relationship recognized by Shī'ī Islam but violently opposed by Sunnīs, and the author's Shī'ite allegiance is here clearly revealed (and emphasized throughout the rest of the book, where approving discussions of *mut'a* keep recurring, at places both appropriate and inappropriate). Mistresses come in two types: professional singers (numerous poems and anecdotes are adduced) and “others,” but the so-called others are problematic, since they inevitably have male relatives attempting to protect their honor. As for woman as prey, the author makes much of the superiority of the hunting of human beings to that of animals, the most important of the hunter's tools being love letters (the author puts in a plug for his separate work on the subject, unfortunately lost), although wine is also helpful.

In chapter Nine, 'Alī ibn Naṣr turns to male-male relations, beginning with an etymological discussion of the term for active sodomite (*lūṭī*) and concluding, correctly, that it actually comes from the name “Lot.” The sodomites' claim that they are actually hypermasculine (since they sexually dominate males, not just females) is presented as an introduction to two more debates on the comparative advantages of boys or women as sex partners, the first long and elaborate (with boys winning in the end) and the second truncated, but in verse. A male is said to have a relationship with another male in one of three ways: as a *lūṭī*, a *baghghā'*, or a *ḥalaqī*. This

is problematic; while a *lūṭī* is unambiguously someone who takes the active role in homosexual anal intercourse, *baghghā*’ and *ḥalaqī* are ordinarily considered synonyms for one who takes the passive role, for sexual (as opposed to, say, monetary) reasons. ‘Alī ibn Naṣr insists that he is not going to discuss the *baghghā*’, because it is too shameful a topic—he seems to mean here the truly committed adult male passive—but he gives a unique description of the *ḥalaqī* as someone who either enjoys *both* roles, because of his excessive lustfulness, or finds that he needs the sexual stimulation of the passive role in order (then) to perform actively.

*Lūṭīs* are then said to disagree about three things: (1) whether beardless or recently bearded boys are to be preferred (the former being the standard preference, and the whole controversy being enormously productive of poetry); (2) whether one should practice true anal or only intercrural (between the thighs) intercourse (the chief argument for the latter being its status as a lesser sin in Islamic law); and (3) whether one should grasp the boy’s penis while penetrating him (which may or may not affect the *lūṭī*’s sense of his unimpugned masculinity). On the other side of the relationship, the boy may relate to his partner in one of three ways: as a beloved (in which case he behaves just like a female, except that he can also be a “friend” to his lover in a way a female cannot); as a “valet” (that is, a slaveboy acting as a personal attendant, whose owner conceals from the public the sexual nature of their relationship); or as a “visitor,” which may mean simply a pickup, and under this category the author takes the occasion to offer a lengthy disquisition on (passive) male prostitution, with numerous humorous anecdotes. Further anecdotes about *lūṭīs*, and a discussion of the claim that *women* prefer their partners beardless, round out the chapter.

Chapter 10 proceeds to the subject of female-female relations. Medieval Muslim men in general seem to have found this phenomenon genuinely bewildering, and ‘Alī ibn Naṣr is no exception. This chapter draws very heavily on Abū l-‘Anbas’s lost *Lesbians and Passive Sodomites* and directs the reader to it for further information. The chapter is concerned primarily with *explaining* lesbianism, first in physiological terms (either a vagina too long to be satisfyingly penetrated by a penis, or some other more radical

abnormality, the latter explanation attributed to al-Kindī; Galen is also referred to) and then in practical ones (fear of defloration and scandal, or of pregnancy). A long series of anecdotes then retails a favorite male theme, the lesbian “converted” to heterosexuality once she discovers its joys; many of these are in verse, addressed by converts to their still benighted former lovers. As throughout the Arabic tradition, the treatment here of lesbianism is limited, bemused, and emphatically from a male perspective.

Chapter 11, on physiognomy (e.g., how to tell from physical features who—male or female—is particularly lustful), functions as a sort of transition, and for the first time draws heavily and explicitly on earlier works of erotica, Greek, Persian, and Indian. Chapters 12–14 look at women as sex partners, addressing such questions as, what is the ideal woman like, both physically and in terms of character? and how do women differ in their approach to sex, their degree of sexual desire, and their skill in bed? Again extensive appeals are made to earlier works, including *Bunyāndakht*’s claim that women’s lust is nine times as strong as that of men. An excursus on the permutations involved in matching male and female genital size (complete with a chart) and their strength of desire is attributed to The Indian—and is in fact an expanded paraphrase of a passage from the *Kamasutra*. Chapter 15 considers the question of heterosexual anal intercourse—a very high profile topic throughout the Arabic erotological tradition—noting the common (if not entirely justified) belief that one of the schools of Islamic law (the Mālikī) condones it and suggesting that while some women consent to it to avoid pregnancy, others do so because they enjoy it.

Having described what women are like, in chapters 16 and 17 ‘Alī ibn Naṣr turns to how to get them, first in general (sexual technique looms large, but reference to women’s dislike of men’s gray hair affords the opportunity to sample the abundant poetic corpus on that topic) and then specifically through the use of a go-between. Chapters 18 through 20 focus on the marriage bed—advance preparations (good grooming for men is recommended), foreplay (with a disquisition on cunnilingus, unusual for the Arabic tradition), and the effectiveness of lascivious wriggling and sex talk during intercourse.

The following chapters are devoted to ways of enhancing the sexual experience. Chapters 21 through 24 are mostly medical, offering detailed recipes for various aphrodisiacs, as well as a few nonpharmacological strategies; Chapters 25 and 26 consider appropriate times and circumstances for sex. Chapter 27 is entitled “Description of the Nasty Way of Doing It and Lewd Sex,” and seems to be where the author has decided to deposit the most blatantly erotic material at his disposal. In Chapter 28 he turns to sex positions, which he divides into five main categories with 32 subdivisions, 16 of them involving anal intercourse. Fellatio is noted in passing as one of several aberrant practices for which some Indians are known. Chapter 29 assesses positions medically (some of them are harmful) and also ethically, the author stressing that positions that humiliate a *wife* (if not a concubine) are to be avoided. Chapter 30 completes the marriage-bed section by discussing the need for proper ritual ablutions after completion of the sex act.

In chapters 31 through 33 ‘Alī ibn Naṣr returns to medical considerations, listing various treatments to prevent pregnancy, combat the ill effects of excessive indulgence, and cure impotence. Chapter 34 is dedicated to nonmedical “stratagems” for achieving such aims as quickening or retarding ejaculation and arousing a woman’s desire. Special attention is given to success at “creeping” (*dabīb*), which is sexual molestation of a sleeping boy or slave girl in the wake of a drinking party when everyone has passed out—numerous anecdotes and poems are provided in illustration of this practice. More briefly, *Bunyāndakht* is quoted on how a wife should manage each of three types of husband—(1) the proper mate, (2) the autocrat (one who is too jealous), and (3) the cuckold (one who is not jealous enough).

The remainder of the book concerns itself with a variety of secondary matters. Chapter 35, entitled “*Fatwās* About Sex,” consists of long quotations from the authoritative Persian, Indian, and Greek sources, all cast in the form of answers to specific questions. The Persians (*Bunyāqīs* and *Bunyāndakht*) address, among other things, men’s and women’s preferences in the size and shape of their mates’ genitals. The Indians debate whether women ejaculate and attempt to explain the different pattern in their

pace of sexual excitement from that of men; here again the text closely parallels a passage in the *Kamasutra*. For the Greeks, the author cites the book of (the unidentified) “Arṭiyās” for various opinions on both male and female ejaculation. Chapter 36, adopting quite a different tone, reproduces a long series of humorous exchanges, in poetry and prose, mostly between men and their saucy mistresses, as well as more straightforward jokes. This is followed up, in the brief Chapter 37, by examples of a sort of humorous code employed by lovers, or flirts, to communicate surreptitiously with each other.

Jealousy is the subject of Chapter 38, a general discussion and some poetry being supplemented by a series of recipes for potions to keep women faithful. Chapter 39, on pimping, is almost entirely literary and humorous. Chapter 40, “On the Advantages of a Nonvirgin over a Virgin,” consists of a debate between the two (with the nonvirgin winning) taken directly from the (otherwise unknown) book of that title by a certain Yazdajird ibn Nahmak (presumably a Persian). Chapter 41, on animal sexuality, is equally derivative, being made up exclusively of snippets from al-Jāhiz’s *Book of Animals*. The author returns briefly to the question of the size of genitals in Chapter 42, recounting an experiment he himself undertook to determine the volume of the average penis and quoting Galen on that of the average uterus. Chapter 43, “Miscellaneous Topics,” concludes the book with various anecdotes on eunuchs, bestiality, and prostitution, mixed with recipes for “restoring” virginity and “curing” passive sodomites, and much else besides.

In selecting the topics for inclusion in his *Encyclopedia*, ‘Alī ibn Naṣr was inevitably guided in large part by the texts he had at hand. While the work itself cannot be considered one of libertinism, or *mujūn*, a vast quantity of *mujūn* poetry and anecdotes were available, and he made the most of it. Literary (and, less clearly, sociological) conventions dictated the prominence of certain themes in this material, and accordingly we find ‘Alī ibn Naṣr dwelling at length on, for example, boy-versus-girl debates, beards, the treachery of singing slave girls, heterosexual anal intercourse, creeping, and gray hair. Over the past two centuries all these had developed into standard *mujūn* topics, and in ‘Alī ibn Naṣr’s own day (the late tenth century)

a second wave of *mujūn* fashionability can be detected in the literature, tinged with a distinct *nostalgie de la boue*. The most famous exponent of this trend was unquestionably the Baghdad poet Ibn al-Ḥajjāj (d. 1000), who, besides an impressive corpus of serious poetry, released a flood of obscene verses that went beyond anything seen before, most notably perhaps for their inclusion of a large dose of scatology. Straightforward (but extremely graphic) seduction poems alternate with such novelties as a lengthy arbitration by his personified penis between the competing claims of a slave girl's vagina and her anus; and constant references to anal intercourse (almost always heterosexual) are laced with deliberately disgusting references to excrement. Equally common are changes rung on the common phrase "my feces in your beard" (the approximate equivalent of "kiss my ass").

Other poets, notably Ibn Sukkara (d. 995), followed Ibn al-Ḥajjāj's lead and enjoyed great popularity with the cultured wazīr and Maeccenas, the Ṣāhib Ibn 'Abbād (d. 995), who in addition to his own scurrilous verses commissioned the composition of a lengthy ode by the poet Abū Dulaf detailing the lifestyles, predilections, and argot of the loose international confederation of beggars, thieves, and lowlifes generally known as the Banū Sāsān. Somewhat the same spirit pervades the *Maqāmāt*, a new form of prestige prose literature consisting of picaresque vignettes cast in a highly rhetorical rhymed prose, originated by Badī' al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī (d. 1008). It is true, however, that the protagonist of most of Badī' al-Zamān's sketches is much more interested in money than in sex, and their erotic component is comparatively small; the same pattern continued to hold for later *maqāma* collections, right down to the twentieth century, although there was usually a place for a sexual escapade or two, as for example a homosexual tryst in one of the *maqāmas* of Ibn Nāqiyā (d. 1092) or an attempted one in another by Ibn Sharaf (d. 1067). But the acknowledged master of the genre, al-Ḥarīrī (d. 1122), avoided *mujūn* almost entirely.

Richer in erotic content are some of the major anthologies of the period. An outstanding example is the *Quotable Quotes* of al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (early eleventh century), a handbook of short poems and anecdotes on every conceivable subject, one of whose 16 chapters offers an extraordinarily concentrated series of quotable bits

of *mujūn*. Al-Rāghib here divides his subject matter into four broad categories, with numerous subheadings, each comprising between one and six relevant snippets. The first category deals with "active sodomy, male prostitution, passive sodomy, male transvestism, masturbation, creeping, pimping, and heterosexual fornication," with some 53 subheadings, ranging from "He Who Is Caught in the Act of Active Pederasty and Justifies Himself with a Qur'ānic Verse" to "Boasts by Transvestites About Their Specialty" to "The Clever Pimp." The second category is about genitalia and intercourse, with 39 subheadings, including "Loss of Bowel Control During Intercourse" and "Dildos." The third category, on lesbianism, has only five subheadings, including arguments for and against it and descriptions of lesbian sexual practices. Finally comes a section on farting, with 14 subdivisions, including one on riddles about it—the one common component of *mujūn* not associated directly with sex. This chapter by no means exhausts the erotic content of al-Rāghib's book, since there is also a completely separate chapter on marriage and related matters (with subsections on marriage and divorce, dowries, chastity, and jealousy and cuckoldry), but the material there is considerably tamer. Even tamer is a third chapter, on love poetry (*ghazal*), in which representative verses illustrate the standard themes of the genre—and which may serve as a salutary reminder that by no means are all treatments of erotic themes in Arabic literature aggressively sexual.

*Mujūn* material comparable (and sometimes virtually identical) to that in al-Rāghib's book may be found in many other anthologies of this and subsequent periods, sometimes in unlikely places. For example, the *Scattering of Pearls* of al-Ābī (d. 1030), a seven-volume collection exclusively of prose pieces (omitting all poetry), includes selections of jokes, organized by topic, at the end of each volume, as a form of comic relief from the serious tone of most of the work; these include jokes by and about libertine women and slave girls, womanizers and fornicators of both sexes, male transvestites, active sodomites, passive sodomites, and male libertines. A slightly later work, *Euphemisms* by al-Jurjānī (d. 1089), devotes its first chapter to sex, with subdivisions on fornication; sexual intercourse, the penis, and impotence; virginity; heterosexual anal intercourse; male prostitution

and active sodomy; intercrural intercourse, male masturbation, and lesbianism; passive sodomy; jealousy; and pimping.

But the most extravagant example of *mujūn* literature from this (and perhaps any) period is certainly the *Sketch of Abū l-Qāsim al-Baghdādī*, by the otherwise unknown Abū l-Muṭahhar al-Azdī (probably mid-eleventh century). This unique work, which reads like a script, although its actual dramatic status is not entirely clear, depicts a single day in the life of its protagonist, a Baghdadi rascal visiting the Iranian city of Isfahan who crashes a drinking party and proceeds to wreak havoc. Having insinuated himself as a Qurʾān reciter and elegizer on the death of the Prophet's grandson al-Ḥusayn, he quickly reveals himself as a wastrel, insults the entire company one by one—accusing them in gross terms of various sexual vices—and launches into a long and elaborate comparison of Baghdad and Isfahan, to the discredit of the latter. After a chaotic game of chess and dinner, the wine is brought out, and as the party gets progressively drunker he alternately praises and attacks his companions, attempts to seduce the female singer and then the male cupbearer, launches into an extended tirade against the male singer, and finally falls asleep; the next morning he simply recites some pious phrases, bids the company farewell, and departs. In the course of this extended debauch, Abū l-Qāsim manages to quote vast quantities of obscene poetry and, to a lesser extent, anecdotes, touching on virtually all the multifarious themes inherent to the genre.

At the opposite extreme from such libertine literature, the tenth and eleventh centuries also witnessed extensive developments in the tradition of writing about a purer, more romantic, even ethereal sort of love. Already at the end of the ninth century, a major scholar of Islamic law, Muḥammad ibn Dāwūd al-Ẓāhirī (d. 910), had put together an anthology of chaste love poetry, entitled the *Book of the Flower*, organized in such a way as to present a coherent theory of how courtly love should progress; at the same time, being himself (by all accounts) in love (chastely) with another man, he succeeded in canonizing the incorporation of homoerotic love into this “higher” stratum of the Arabic treatment of erotic relationships (at the expense of abandoning all hope of ever sexually consummating such a relationship, something unthinkable in terms of Islamic law).

The *Book of the Flower* was, however, only one of three influential treatises on love produced at the time, advocating incompatible views of what it should be. A second, the *Embroidered* by al-Washshāʾ (d. 937), offered a distinctly more worldly general guide to stylish living, of which having elegant but not too serious affairs (strictly heterosexual) was an important part; characteristically, al-Washshāʾ also composed a manual for writing love letters. A third author, the pious al-Kharāʾitī (d. 939), in his *Malady of Hearts*, inveighed against the power of sexual passion to lead the good Muslim astray but managed in the course of his disquisition to review much of the literature of ‘Udhri passion; while holding out a loving, stable marriage as the ideal, he made significant concessions to the thwarted passion advocated by Muḥammad ibn Dāwūd as ideal, although to be sure without the homoerotic component.

Ultimately, it was Muḥammad b. Dāwūd's romanticism that was to prove most influential in the romantic love tradition, and he stands at the head of a long series of works on “love theory” composed over the following millennium. Of these, the most attractive, and best known in the West, if not the most influential within the Arabic literary tradition, is the *Ring of the Dove* of Ibn Ḥazm (d. 1064), an extremely prominent Spanish (Andalusian) scholar otherwise known primarily for his legal and ethical writings. What makes Ibn Ḥazm's book particularly compelling is his insistence on restricting his anecdotal accounts to stories about his friends and acquaintances (sometimes suppressing their names), rather than retailing inherited material from other times and places; thus, even though the conventions of love poetry dominate the discussion, the anecdotes are telling evidence for the degree to which art influenced life in eleventh-century Andalusia (and undoubtedly elsewhere). A committed heterosexual himself, Ibn Ḥazm has no qualms about recounting the homosexual passions of others; he does, however, conclude his book with paired sermons against the immorality of both heterosexual and homosexual fornication. The degree to which (if at all) Ibn Ḥazm has something to tell us about Arabic influences on medieval European courtly love remains a hotly debated topic.

Later books on love theory—there are some two dozen, extending well into the eighteenth century—mostly restricted themselves to ringing



changes on inherited materials, supplemented by the ongoing production of new love lyrics and anecdotes. Among the better-known examples of the genre are the *Lovers Devastated by Passion* of al-Sarrāj (d. 1106) and the *Martyrs of Love* of Muḡhulṭāy (d. 1361). A secondary stream continued the more pious stance of al-Kharāʿitī, notable contributions being the *Condemnation of Passion* by Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 1200) and the *Garden of Lovers* of Ibn Qayyim al-Jawzīya (d. 1350). While all these works take sexual love as their subject matter, they are generally very careful to avoid any explicit references to sexuality itself, except, to some extent, in passages dedicated to the condemnation of actual sexual immorality.

The love lyric (*ghazal*) retained or even increased its domination of poetic production after the eleventh century and up to the nineteenth, in what is often called the postclassical age of Arabic literature. Among the developments that can be noted in this poorly researched area are a shift in balance between homoerotic and heteroerotic verse heavily in favor of the former, and, more generally, an increasing artificiality or even brittleness of tone, in accord with broader literary trends in the late Middle Ages and early modern times. A case in point of the latter is the increasing popularity of epigrams, two- to four-line poems describing the beauty of a given boy or woman and playing off some characteristic (e.g., a physical trait, ethnicity, profession) in a witty and often punning fashion. The first known anthology of such epigrams is the unpublished *Book of Boys*, later known as *A Thousand Boys*, by al-Thaʿalibī (d. 1038), but they became particularly fashionable in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. A typical example is the *Pastures for Gazelles on Beautiful Girls and Boys* by al-Nawājī (d. 1455), who seems also to be the first to have devoted an anthology exclusively to poetry about beards, with an untranslatable title that can only approximately be rendered as *Running Riot with Descriptions of Downy Beards*. More broadly based encyclopedias also continued to incorporate sections anthologizing *ghazal* (not just epigrams), as well as *mujūn*.

One especially important development in the love lyric, originating in Spain and attaining wide popularity in the twelfth century, was the appearance of strophic poetry, as opposed to the hitherto unchallenged monorhyme verse. This

came in two forms. The *muwashshah*, in classical Arabic but often with noncanonical meter, features up to five separately rhymed stanzas, separated by monorhymed refrain verses and ending with a final line, the *kharja*, that is often couched in colloquial Arabic or Romance. Although the *muwashshah* came to be employed for a variety of genres (including panegyric), its first and natural subject was love, mostly reflecting standard thematic conventions—except in the *kharja*, which was often a sort of punch line, with a deflating or mocking message. The *zajal*, on the other hand, while structurally similar to the *muwashshah*, was composed entirely in the vernacular, and more often than not inclined thematically toward *mujūn*. Its most famous representative was Ibn Quzmān (d. 1160), whose bawdy lyrics, often depicting the seduction of both boys and women, evoke a lightness of touch relatively rare in the *mujūn* tradition.

Both *muwashshah* and *zajal* were originally forms of so-called popular literature, whose gradual (and incomplete) incorporation into the “high” literary tradition, particularly with the spread of their pursuit to the East, is difficult to trace and assess. This question is, however, a broader one, since the use of these popular forms, themes, and materials of all sorts was a growing phenomenon in the later medieval period. A particularly tricky example, but important in the *mujūn* tradition and thus to the history of Arabic erotica, are the shadow plays of Ibn Dāniyāl (d. 1310). The shadow play itself, with two-dimensional articulated figures held against a backlit translucent screen, was certainly a known form of popular entertainment from at least the eleventh century. Presumably of a generally ribald nature, it would not have had set written scripts, or at least not texts thought worthy of copying by respectable littérateurs. Ibn Dāniyāl’s three plays form a unique exception, and it is difficult to pronounce either specifically on whether they were intended for performance or more generally on their generic (and societal) status. With their wit and adroit manipulation of language from *all* registers, from the high classical idiom to the lowest vernacular, they certainly qualify as art. All three plays deal extensively with erotic themes—one presenting itself as a mocking response to a governmental anti-vice campaign, a second offering a parade of street entertainers with all sorts of prurient interests, and a third detailing a homosexual affair and

concluding with a series of poetry-spouting representatives of such various sexual practices as transvestism, masturbation, and creeping.

The thirteenth and fourteenth centuries also witnessed a second efflorescence in Arabic erotica in the narrow, monographic sense, after an apparently relatively fallow period in the wake of the *Encyclopedia of Pleasure*. The only identifiable work of this nature from the eleventh century is *Cohabitation and Coitus, on the Various Sorts of Sexual Intercourse* by the Egyptian historian al-Musabbihī (d. 1030), which seems to have disappeared without a trace. But then in the late twelfth century appeared two major texts, one more general and the other more specifically medical. Al-Samaw'al b. Yahyā (d. 1180), a Baghdadi convert from Judaism, seems to have followed very roughly the structure of the *Encyclopedia of Pleasure* in his *Pleasure Park for Friends on Companionship with Their Beloveds*, although the parts of this work that are accessible in print offer no direct textual evidence for such influence. It is divided into two parts, the first theoretical and the second practical, each with twelve chapters. Under theory, the first three chapters deal with sex in general, its positive and negative sides, frequency of practicing it, and why it is pleasurable. The next two treat impediments to sexual activity, either natural (impotence) or psychological (why some lovers decline to consummate their relationship—the 'Udhrī theme that sex destroys love). Chapter 6 explains why some men prefer boys to women and why some women prefer lesbianism; none of the reasons given for either are novel, except perhaps for the suggestions that some exceptionally masculine women desire to take the active role in sex and others are forced to have recourse to lesbian sex by the stringency of their seclusion. Chapter 7, however, on why sexual desire varies so much, includes a justification for such seclusion; and Chapter 8, also reflecting rather conservative views, explains why pious people do not turn away from sex altogether. The last four chapters discuss the etiquette of sexual relations, what one should look for in buying slaves (drawing from an established independent genre of writing on this topic), marriage and desirable and undesirable qualities in brides, and the rather different rules for taking mistresses. The tone throughout is considerably more sober than that of 'Alī ibn Naṣr's book, and citations from

poetry and anecdote, while not entirely missing, are kept to a minimum. The second, practical half of the work is almost entirely medical in nature, offering prescriptions for treating impotence, penile warts, premature ejaculation, and other maladies; recipes for aphrodisiacs; and concoctions to prevent pregnancy, induce abortion, and block the sex drive. The one malady al-Samaw'al despairs of curing is love passion ('*ishq*) itself.

At about the same time, the physician Jalāl al-Dīn al-Shayzarī (d. 1193), who was patronized by Saladin, composed his *Clarification of the Secrets of Sexual Intercourse*, whose content is almost entirely pharmacological. The work's two parts, each with ten chapters, deal with the "secrets of men" and "secrets of women," respectively. The recipes for men are said to increase sexual power and pleasure, as well as penis size, to promote or prevent pregnancy, and (the final chapter) to decrease sexual desire. Those for women are mostly cosmetic, promising to improve the complexion, promote weight gain, ensure good body odor, and narrow the vagina. References to former authorities are sparse and mostly medical (particularly Galen); the *Encyclopedia of Pleasure* is explicitly cited once, but in fact drawn on more heavily (if extremely selectively). Al-Shayzarī also wrote a book of love theory (although it includes, surprisingly, one chapter on *mujūn*), *The Garden of Hearts and Pleasure Park of Lover and Beloved*, which remains unpublished.

Several other purely medical sex books appeared in the course of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. One, *Sexual Hygiene*, was written by the famous Jewish physician, philosopher, and legal scholar Maimonides (d. 1204), who apparently also wrote a different work on sexual intercourse in Hebrew. Another, by the scientist and polymath Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 1273), was composed for the ailing son of a sultan, with numerous prescriptions meant to increase potency and sexual desire, but also including medicaments promising both to promote pregnancy and to inhibit it. But the sexological "star" of the thirteenth century was unquestionably the Tunisian Shihāb al-Dīn al-Tīfāshī (d. 1253), who composed at least three and possibly four influential works. Of these, one, the *Epistle on What Men and Women Need in Practicing Sexual Intercourse*, is again almost entirely pharmacological, this time with primary

emphasis on the woman's cosmetic, medical, and psychological needs; the author's primary source (although he nowhere acknowledges it) is al-Shayzarī's *Clarification*. A second work, the *Book of the Forewing on the Etiquette of Sex*, is lost and known only from a few citations in later works, which suggest that it was primarily sociological in orientation and replete with anecdotes. The third, however, the *Delight of Hearts on What Cannot Be Found in Any Other Book*, is a major contribution to the genre.

What makes the *Delight of Hearts* stand out is its liveliness and immediacy, the originality of its structure, and its unabashed intention both to amuse the reader and to stimulate him (or her) sexually. It is unquestionably a work of *mujūn*; and, while relying heavily on by now well-worn poetry and anecdotes from the past, it leavens these with quite a number of contemporary accounts, gleaned by the author from his acquaintances in North Africa, Egypt, and Syria (with names sometimes but not always suppressed). The *mujūn* tone is quickly established in the first of the work's twelve chapters, which in fact has nothing to do with sex but presents the merits of "slapping" (*ṣaf*) in a pseudo-serious manner. For whatever reason, slapping someone on the back of the neck was generally considered uproariously funny in medieval Arabic societies, to the point that professional "slap takers" functioned as salaried buffoons in royal courts. Al-Tifāshī's tongue-in-cheek analysis of this phenomenon serves as a signal that what is to come is going to embellish the material, delightful in itself, with a persistently ironic overlay that will only add to the fun.

Contrary to all his predecessors, al-Tifāshī begins, in chapter Two, with panderers. These are carefully divided into 22 categories, 12 of them pandering women and 10 pandering men, the panderers themselves being women (10), men (10), transvestite men (1), or eunuchs (1). Each category is given a name, and the particular rules of the game are elucidated. This analytic section is followed up with an extensive selection of (traditional) "anecdotes and jokes about panderers," establishing an organizational pattern which recurs throughout the book. Chapter 3 explains how to be a proper (male) fornicator and how a female prostitute should behave, with Chapter 4 supplying both a list of seven kinds of whore and appropriate anecdotes (and poetry) on whoredom, and Chapter 5 adding yet more anecdotes

about fornicators. Giving equal time, as it were, Chapter 6 explains how to be a proper active sodomite, and how a male (passive) prostitute should behave, with the requisite anecdotes and poetry collected in Chapters 7 ("beardless male prostitutes") and 8 ("active sodomites"). Chapter 9 deals with creeping; here the primary prerequisite, we are told, is to have a small penis (an anecdote illustrates the point), and a detailed list of ten pieces of equipment (including scissors to cut the boy's trousers open) is followed by a profusion of anecdotes, both homosexual and heterosexual, traditional and contemporary. Chapter 10, on heterosexual anal intercourse, offers little that is unexpected; but Chapter 11, a rich and lengthy treatment of lesbianism, adopts a position that is on the whole more sympathetic than usual, with an entire section on arguments in its favor, as well as several extremely lubricious descriptions of lesbian sexual practices. Chapter 12, on transvestites (*mukhannathūn*; in this period perhaps better translated as "effeminates" or even simply "passive sodomites"), is the longest in the book. It includes, besides the anticipated wealth of traditional anecdotes and poetry, an entire series of contemporary stories (some simply humorous, others startlingly lascivious), an extended interview with a contemporary Baghdadi *mukhannath* about his taste in penises, and, in an unexpected conclusion, the entire text of al-Rāzī's medical monograph on *The Hidden Disease*.

The fourth work attributed to al-Tifāshī, *The Old Man's Return to His Youth in Sexual Prowess*, is rather a puzzle. Unquestionably the most famous, or notorious, sex book in the contemporary Arab world (the *Perfumed Garden*, discussed below, is far more celebrated in the West than in the Middle East), this work is attributed in the extant manuscripts both to al-Tifāshī and to Ibn Kamāl Pāshā (d. 1533), a well-known Ottoman author who, however, more likely simply translated it into Turkish, or, possibly, produced an abridgement of it in the original Arabic. On the other hand, al-Tifāshī's authorship seems equally questionable, since the text we have (with considerable variation among the manuscripts) includes a number of anecdotes datable to at least a generation or two after his death, which are almost certainly not interpolations. Since virtually the entire text of al-Tifāshī's medical *Epistle* is reproduced in *The Old Man's Return*, one possible solution to

this problem would be to posit a somewhat later, unknown author for the latter, with the erroneous ascription to al-Tifāshī being due to the close relationship between the two works; but further research will be needed to resolve these difficulties.

While lacking the verve that characterizes al-Tifāshī's *Delight of Hearts*, *The Old Man's Return* does, with its extensive exploitation of the entire previous erotological tradition, represent a sort of culmination thereof, which perhaps accounts for its popularity. Its most fundamental debt is to al-Shayzarī's *Clarification*, but this is only one of seven basic sources obligingly listed in its introduction, the others being the *Book of Barjān and Ḥubāhib*, al-Namlī's *Book of Sexual Intercourse* (this is a problem, since al-Namlī is otherwise known in the tradition only as the author of the *Book of Barjān and Ḥubāhib*), Ibn Ḥājib al-Nūmān's *Book of Singing Slave Girls* (usually referred to as his *Book of Women*), al-Musabbihī's *Cohabitation and Coitus*, and *Wedding and Brides*, attributed (certainly wrongly) to al-Jāhīz, a text much in the popular genre whose history has not yet been investigated. Whether the author had direct, or only indirect, access to the book of The Indian, whom he repeatedly cites, also remains to be determined.

Like al-Shayzarī, the author of *The Old Man's Return* divides his book into two parts, the first dealing with men and the second with women, each part comprising in this case 30 chapters. Part one begins with a discussion of male genitalia, then turns to a general consideration of sexual intercourse, with several chapters (mostly on the dire effects of overindulgence) lifted from al-Rāzī's medical *Book of Sexual Intercourse*. Virtually the entire remainder of this part (Chapters 8 through 29) is pharmacological, although there is a significant admixture of more purely magical remedies for the various sexual problems from which men may suffer. Only in the final chapter, "The Divisions of People's Objects of Love and Passion," does the author turn to broader considerations, although even here he restricts himself essentially to reproducing a rather garbled version of the Greek *Problemata* discussion of why some men have recourse to passive sodomy. Part 2 begins with a general discussion of women's charms and ways one can determine their degree of lustfulness, but then again turns to medical, cosmetic, and pharmacological subjects, the focus of

Chapters 3 through 17. At that point, however, the work veers in a much more literary direction and begins to look more like a *mujūn* treatise. Chapter 18, on "different types of intercourse," quotes The Indian on a series of positions; Chapter 19, on "strategems," specifies the tools needed by the creeper (in a male homosexual context, despite this being the part of the work on women); Chapter 20, on "stories," offers an elaborate frame story with ten slave girls recounting their sexual adventures; and the remaining chapters deal in a wholly conventional way, replete with traditional anecdotes, with such topics as pandering, sexual etiquette, anal intercourse with women, and foreplay, extensive quotations from The Indian being a prominent feature throughout.

Considerably more restrained, although not wholly divorced from the *mujūn* tradition, is *The Gift of the Bride and Garden of Souls* by the Algerian al-Tijānī (d. after 1310), a work wholly dedicated to the subject of women (and avoiding the topic of homosexuality, male or female, almost altogether). In his introduction this author takes pains to distinguish his book—one of "scholarship and analysis"—from those of "light entertainment," by which he surely means the sort of thing composed by al-Tifāshī (although the latter's *Forewing* is in fact the one erotological work he does quote). His many sources, which he scrupulously identifies, tend to run toward treatises on Islamic law and ethics, although mainstream belletristic works also figure prominently. Generically, the book appears to be rather a hybrid, despite its lucid organization. Having declared women to be "the greatest of pleasures" and described their general characteristics in his first chapter (of 25), al-Tijānī organizes the following ten chapters around the topic of marriage (choice of bride, dowry, wedding banquet, rights of spouses), with a single follow-up chapter on concubines. (Marriage guides are not a well-defined genre in Arabic literature, but a few somewhat parallel texts do exist.) The author then shifts his attention to "beauty," relying heavily on literary sources in the next eight chapters to detail women's physical attributes, including such components as age, virginity, complexion, weight, and stature, and dividing his twentieth chapter, on specific features, into 20 subsections, covering the woman's body from top to bottom, beginning with hair, forehead, and eyebrows, and ending

with buttocks, legs, and feet. A section is included on the vagina, but even there the material presented is relatively mild. Only in the concluding five chapters (sexual intercourse in general, lascivious sounds and motions during intercourse, anal intercourse, jealousy, and jokes) does some truly libertine material appear, drawn, however, from more general earlier works rather than specifically erotic ones.

Much more conventional, but by no means unoriginal, is a work from the other end of the Arab world, the *Intelligent Man's Guide to Keeping Company with the Beloved* by the obscure Yemeni author Ibn Falīta (d. after 1363). Placing his work squarely within the erotological tradition, Ibn Falīta says he has read many sex books but has noted that they leave out a great deal, which his book is meant to supply. He explicitly leaves aside all medical aspects of the subject, as well as the more chaste love tradition, saying he is interested in "pleasure with the present beloved rather than preoccupation with seeking the absent one." While the topics covered are mostly in fact the usual ones, the author is true to his promise in offering primarily unique material, much of it the fruit of his own observations, and relatively little even of the poetry and anecdotes he includes have parallels in earlier erotic works. His first three chapters (of fourteen) cover marriage and sexual relations in general, with a particular emphasis on women's unbridled lubricity. Then come chapters on what women like and dislike in men, and what men like and dislike in women. Chapters 6 through 8, on various topics related directly to sexual desire and the sex act itself, are rather a hodgepodge, managing to touch on impotence, voyeurism, different types of vaginas (with a detailed list), sexual positions (with a particular concern for problems of the very obese and hunchbacks), masturbation, and dildos. Chapter 9 examines lesbianism, and the following two chapters present yet another debate on the relative merits of boys (Chapter 10) and women (Chapter 11) as sex partners for men. The final three chapters are devoted to panderers, women's wiles, and a potpourri of jokes and verses that do not fit anywhere else. Examples of the sort of unexpected content with which Ibn Falīta fills his book are an extensive discussion of the importance of kissing, especially during sexual intercourse, and a striking account of

two elderly men of his acquaintance who had maintained a close sexual relationship throughout their lives from their adolescent years.

For all its explicitness, and considerable entertainment value, Ibn Falīta's book seems on the whole to put didactic considerations to the fore and nowhere to present passages intended purely as sexual stimulation. In this respect it contrasts both with al-Tifāshī's *Delight of Hearts* and with a slightly later work, by another Tunisian, the *Perfumed Garden* of al-Nafzāwī (early fifteenth century). The exceptional fame this book has attained in the West, due to the publication of French and English translations in the late nineteenth century, seems not to reflect any comparable status in the Arab world, although it has enjoyed some popularity there as well. The extant manuscripts of the work appear to reflect at least two different recensions, or perhaps merely an unusually extreme susceptibility to interpolation; most but not all of the passages unique to the longer version represent borrowings, probably direct, from Ibn Falīta's *Guide*. Al-Nafzāwī speaks himself in his introduction of having revised the work, at his patron's request, by adding supplementary medical information, and in fact the medical chapters sit rather ill with the primarily anecdotal and extremely lubricious content of the rest; but that is a different question, and none of the known manuscripts seem to reflect such a purported earlier version.

Be that as it may, the *Perfumed Garden*, in both versions, is characterized by a rather jejune presentation of basic information, to which is added, often rather awkwardly, quite a number of exceptionally long anecdotes, unparalleled elsewhere in the literature, whose intention is partly humor but mostly titillation. The first nine of its 21 chapters cover exactly the sort of topics one would expect: desirable and undesirable features in men and women; sexual intercourse, techniques and positions, harmful aspects; and terms for male and female genitalia. The accompanying stories, whose general tone and blatant fictionality are reminiscent of parts of *The Thousand and One Nights* (but far more obscene than anything in the latter), contribute little to the (shorter) contexts in which they are embedded and seem rather themselves to be the book's main point. After a perfunctory chapter on names for the penis of various animals, this

pattern of succinct exposition combined with fairly elaborate anecdotes reasserts itself in two chapters on women's wiles and the variety of their sexual desires. The following brief eight chapters turn to medical topics (aphrodisiacs, abortifacients, penis enlargers, etc.) and consist mostly of recipes, with no accompanying anecdotes at all. The concluding chapter, again on aphrodisiacs, offers five recipes, in the midst of which it inserts, with only a perfunctory attempt at justification, a long story about how four men, interrupting a lesbian orgy of one hundred virgins, managed to convert them all to heterosexuality.

The kinds of stories included in the *Perfumed Garden* give the distinct impression of a trend downward, toward the popular genre, in late medieval Arabic erotica, which may or may not be supported by further research into the following Ottoman period, thus far barely investigated. On the other hand, the extensive erotic writings of a major scholar of the late fifteenth century suggest that such topics were in no danger of losing their respectability in the high-brow tradition. The Egyptian al-Suyūṭī (d. 1505), famed for his unmatched productivity (he published well over 500 works) if not his originality, devoted at least eight and possibly more monographs to this field. Of these, the most substantial is *The Sash, on the Merits of Sexual Intercourse*, divided into seven parts: traditions handed down from the Prophet and his companions (covering various issues regarding both marriage and sex); lexicography (very long lists of synonyms for sexual intercourse, male and female genitalia, and lascivious movements during intercourse); anecdotes (mostly gleaned from standard belletristic works); rhymed prose and poetry (chiefly descriptions—both chaste and explicitly sexual—of beautiful women); anatomy (citing both medical and erotological sources); medicine (mostly a series of extracts from al-Rāzī's *Book on Sexual Intercourse*); and sexual intercourse in general (relying heavily on the *Encyclopedia of Pleasure*), with an appendix on sexual habits of animals. While by no means avoiding the explicitly lubricious, the work quotes so very widely from the broader literary tradition that its overall tone seems relatively mild, if by no means chaste. The author presents it as a drastic abridgement (one-tenth the length) of a larger work of his composition entitled *The Smiles of the Pretty and Beauty Marks of the*

*Comely*, which seems to be irretrievably lost. He also composed a supplement to the *Sash*, called *Luxuriant Thickets of Anecdotes About Coitus*, which, as published, is both more lascivious than the former work and more indebted to erotological predecessors, although some major questions about both the text and its attribution remain to be investigated.

Al-Suyūṭī's more modest works include a brief marriage manual, presented as an antidote to the loose morals of contemporary women; a word study of the term *ghumj*, meaning lascivious sounds and motions during intercourse (divided into sections on terminology, religious traditions, anecdotes, and poetry, with acknowledged indebtedness to al-Tifāshī and al-Tijānī, among others); and a literary tour de force in which representatives of 20 different professions present detailed descriptions of their wedding nights, employing technical terms of their craft as metaphors in doing so. Extant in manuscript, but not yet published, are two short opuscles on sexual terminology and legal questions concerning "the entry of the glans penis into the vagina," as well as a comic sermon on the penis.

The Arabic literature of the sixteenth through nineteenth centuries has traditionally been viewed as a vast wasteland of banal imitation of earlier glories, further marred by an obsessive preoccupation with rhetorical excess at the expense of either meaningful content or valid aesthetic objectives. While this view has come under increasing attack, a lack of adequate scholarly research precludes offering anything but the most impressionistic observations about the Arabic erotica of this period. Certainly works in the traditional mold continued to be produced, although none seem to have attained particular fame. Many titles noted by manuscript catalogues are anonymous; where authors are named they are obscure. Both medical works (mostly on aphrodisiacs, including at least one in verse) and anecdotal collections are known. One of these works, very much in the traditional mode, by the unknown and undatable 'Umar al-Ḥalabī (seventeenth century?), entitled *The Pleasure Park of Litterateurs and Consolation of Intimates*, found a French translator in 1893 but has had little impact in either the West or the East, and the Arabic original remains unedited.

One important trend in Arabic writing during the Ottoman period was the production and

copying of texts of popular literature, generally composed in semicolloquial Arabic and considered unworthy of the attention of the educated classes. The most important representative of this literature (but by no means the only one) is the *Thousand and One Nights*, whose erotic component is far from negligible. Not only the frame story itself (presenting Shahrazād's dilemma as the result of her husband's despair over the unfaithfulness of wives) but also a significant proportion of the nested stories turn on sexual themes; on the whole, these seem—not surprisingly—to track rather well with what is to be found in the high-brow erotic literature, with which, in works like the *Perfumed Garden*, there is in fact significant overlap.

Aside from the somewhat greater prominence of popular fiction, it is probably safe to say that the pursuit of erotic themes, both in an ongoing *mujūn* tradition of poetry and anecdote and in a monographic literature devoted exclusively to sexual topics, continued unabated in Arabic Ottoman literature until the mid-nineteenth century, when the massive impact of Western colonialism changed all the rules and permanently disrupted the literary tradition. In the previous millennium, Arabic literature offered a remarkably open, rich, and variegated corpus of erotica, in which religious and ethical considerations, humorous exuberance, sociological analysis, and an unfettered celebration of the power of the word to stimulate both the imagination and the hormones were all given free play.

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## ARCAN, NELLY

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1975–  
French Canadian novelist

Nelly Arcan is the author of *Putain* and *Folle*. With *Putain* she made a notable entry onto the literary scene, both in France and in Quebec. The novel was first published by Editions du Seuil, winning her a place among the rare Quebecois authors whose first novel saw the light of day through a major French publisher.

With brutal and despaired writing that gives her texts a throbbing force, Arcan depicts not only sexuality, exhibited without shame, but also the immense despair of a narrator who simultaneously seeks and loses herself through sex. This

sexuality, omnipresent throughout her texts, assumes an industrial form and presents itself effectively as labor, where the narrator is defined as a sex worker. She expends herself through this work in which money received in exchange for her sexual services compensates for her consumption. Her literary works recount the whole industry of sex, from prostitution to porn cinemas, and through erotic photographs in the Internet that preoccupy Arcan.

In *Putain*, she depicts a former escort who spits out her hatred and disgust for her customers as well as for the diktat of the image that turns women into enemies in the race for the title of the most beautiful and the most desired.



Bearing the form of litany, the account, built with long, breathless sentences, does not seek to rouse desire in the reader, who is implicated in and engulfed by the narrator's violence. Known only through an alias, Cynthia—the prostitute's name is borrowed from her older sister, who died at a young age—this narrator remains anonymous. Through the story, Arcan ventures beyond the specifics of the escort experience, relating a family history. Between the religious bigotry of her father, busy hunting down the devil, a bedridden mother reduced to the state of a larva, and the phantom of her deceased sister, the narrator attempts to find her place. Her exacerbated sexuality is both a way of breaking with her childhood's religious upbringing and of hurling a primal sort of scream back at her parents, her mother, in particular, who persists in ignoring her presence. Through these repeated screams and this excessive pleasure, she perhaps seeks to please her clients, but also to thus awaken her catatonic mother to her daughter's very existence.

The same narrator, driven by the will to be the goddess of the boulevard, on whom all gazes and desires converge, is also at the center of *Folle* [*Mad*], the author's second work. In this chronicle of a suicide, announced in a letter addressed to the man who has left her, the narrator—this time explicitly named Nelly Arcan—is constantly in search of a glance that would make her exist. If, in *Putain*, the man/woman relations are treated from the perspective of prostitution, Arcan in *Folle* approaches them through an amorous encounter. However, this encounter, doomed from the start, the end of which is announced at the beginning, remains subject to the leeches of the sex industry, which goes so far as to pervert the amorous discourse itself, invading it with pornographic vocabulary. There are intruders between the narrator and her lover; her former clients invade while he, the lover, finds pleasure with the Net girls, inevitably ruining their relationship.

The critical reception of Arcan's work was strongly tainted by the question of autobiography. Some reviews insisted on the autobiographical character of her work and presented it as factual truth rather than fiction. Having been more interested in hearing the author's reflections on the intricacies of the escort occupation rather than on the writing process, they have often overlooked the literary qualities of *Putain*

and *Folle*. However, the work of Arcan may be better described as *autofiction* in the general sense of the term, i.e., an account that uses the author's life as basic material without necessarily sticking to the historical or prosaic facts. Just as Nelly Arcan reveals herself to the public while remaining masked behind a pseudonym, in an inextricable way her accounts intertwine truth and fiction and, in one gesture, conceal what they allow to reveal.

The space occupied by sexuality in the work of Arcan places her alongside such French authors as Catherine Millet and Virginie Despentes. Often qualified as sulfurous, these writers depict female sexuality in detail and endeavor to smash the taboos regarding the representation of the female body. Following the example of her contemporaries, Arcan seems to have heard Héléne Cixous's call during the 1970s, inviting women in her manifesto, *The Laugh of Medusa*, to write their body and to thus reappropriate it.

But some 30 years later, in the work of Arcan, the female body is no longer a territory to reconquer, nor is it a place to find pleasure. On the contrary, here sexuality is inextricably related to death and to the loss of oneself. The fragile identity that the narrator attempts to consolidate by taking command of her speech is unceasingly shaken by sexuality, which appears to her primarily as the pawn for her existence. Her race to be the most beautiful, the most desirable, i.e., the most consumable, however, sets her in the role of the perpetual substitute. For, the prostitute that she becomes is not there for herself but is always called upon to replace another. The appropriation of her dead sister's name highlights this role of a replacement. Thus, not only is another person named in her place, but, concomitantly, the dead is questioned. In *Folle*, the narrator once again finds that she is at odds with herself. And from this conflict her madness is born: Mad with jealousy and with not being chosen as the goddess of desire, the narrator knows herself to be loved by her companion because of her borrowed name, Nelly, which has the quaint sound of the name of one of the man's former girlfriend.

In the image of the unstable identity of the narrator, the body proves to be a malleable object that must be incessantly fashioned to respond to the requirements of femininity and male desire. However, even though Arcan adopts a moralizing tone when it comes to warning against the icons of "perfect" femininity, her

narrator adheres to this doctrine of beauty and physical perfection and is obsessed with her appearance and the effect she has on men. Arcan thus explores the feminine archetypes: Between the figure of the whore and the rejected lover driven to madness, a woman is caught in the endlessly recurring scission between body and spirit, striving to exist through her mind as well as through her sex.

### Biography

Born in Quebec, Canada, in 1975, Arcan studied literature at the Université du Québec in Montréal, where she received a master's degree with a thesis on *Memoirs of My Nervous Illness* by Daniel Paul Schreber.

EVELYNE LEDOUX-BEAUGRAND

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## ARETINISTS

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Of the Italians who were doing for sexuality in the way of literary exposure and redefinition what Machiavelli had already done for politics, the most influential was undoubtedly Pietro Aretino. The prince in Lodge's *Margarite of America* (1596) keeps both "*Macheuils* prince" and Aretino's *Ragionamenti [Dialogues]* in his pocket. Aretino was equally associated with the notorious sexual postures designed by Giulio Romano and engraved by Raimondi, for which he supplied a set of *Sonetti lussuriosi [Lascivious Sonnets]* in 1527. Burton, *Anatomy of Melancholy* 3.2.2.4, aligns these postures with those of several women of antiquity: Astyannassa, maid of Helen of Troy; Philaenis of Samos; and Elephantis; the latter's work, according to Suetonius, being one of the visual stimulants which the emperor Tiberius brought to Capri. Jonson's Epicure Mammon (*Alchemist* II.ii.43–45), imagining his chamber "Fill'd with such pictures, as TIBERIVS tooke / From ELEPHANTIS: and dull ARETINE / But coldly imitated," still manages to hint that the imitations gesture mockingly toward a supposed

classical tradition. As visual images, they had an international currency which could transcend linguistic barriers. But, for cultural and political reasons—Protestant England identified Italy not only with artistic innovation but with papal threat—Italian was the most studied of the continental vernaculars amongst educated Elizabethans, providing a significant domestic market for the London editions of Aretino. Although Italian lost ground to Spanish as a result of Philip II's aggressive policies, the interactive spread of literacy and cheap print facilitated Aretino's displacement of Ovid as the most favored erotic model for the British during the seventeenth century.

Aretino would have had an appeal not only as a symbol of sexual enlightenment but as critic of Rome. In the dedication to his *Sonnetti*, his insistence that the penis should be worn as a badge of honor directly challenges the Church's view, as articulated by St. Augustine, that the loincloth is a badge of the Fall. Effectively, he popularizes that libertinism latent in Pomponazzi which would take vigorous root in

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seventeenth-century France and thence influence Charles II and his modish following. Interestingly, Gabriel Harvey, *Pierce's Supererogation* (1593, p.47), links Pomponazzi as "poisonous Philosopher" with Machiavelli and Aretino, respectively poisonous politician and ribald. Harvey upbraids Thomas Nashe for following Aretino in exploring "veneriall machiavelisme." Nashe brackets Ovid and Aretino as upholders of Whoredom's throne, and the twin influence is apparent in his *Choise of Valentines*. Although it had only manuscript currency, Davies of Hereford, *Wits Bedlam* (1617, p.206), notes its popularity as well as its alternative title, "Nashes choosing Valentines; To wit, his *Dildo* knowne to euery Trull"; Tomalin's whore using a dildo when he suffers first from the disability described in Ovid's *Elegy III.vi* and then premature ejaculation.

In wedding an Aretine spirit to his neo-Ovidian verse form, Nashe anticipates that mid-seventeenth-century explosion of pornography, when Aretino's *Ragionamenti* and Giulio's pictures were major inspirations. That Aretino's sonnets had lapsed from view has less to do with their sodomitical bent than with the way that print, rendering verse's memorial aids redundant, allowed prose to usurp many of its functions. His device of subversive gossips imparting their sexual experience had already a firm place in such English writing as *A Talk of Ten Wives on Their Husbands' Ware* (c.1460) and Dunbar's *Tua mariiit wemen and the wedo*. But the focus on marital problems and irregularities tended to shift to commercial sex under the impact of print and Reformation. Thus *The New Brawle Or, Rosemary-Lane against Turnmill Street* (1654), an exchange of insults between husband and wife, its dialogue form and scandalous tone both recalling Aretino, has more to do with whoring than marriage. Even before Doll appears, John complains that she "makes Hornes at me, bids me go look under the candle-stick" (i.e., where her clients leave their fee), her neighbors being Damrose Page and others of the brothel sorority.

In *Ragionamenti* marriage loses out to prostitution as a career for the whore Nanna's daughter Pippa. Also considered is the convent, but that hardly differs from the brothel; Aretino's anticlericalism being as influential as his racy language. The hackneyed figure of pestle pounding in mortar is refurbished when Nanna in frustration actually uses a pestle as dildo. This

recalls Shakespeare's way of getting fresh mileage from tired old Petrarchisms in "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun." But here again Aretino led, versifying that while the mistress's breath hardly matches the odors of India or Sheba, and her eyes are neither Love's dwelling nor source of the sun's splendor, she can still charm a hermit. Aretino's book appeared as two parts in 1534 and 1536, the second commenting on reception of the first. Those orgiastic convent pictures, insists Nanna, were not malicious; she could have delivered a much more damaging exposé had she wished. But she is very conscious that print, new enough to require delicate negotiations with the oral, has brought alarming possibilities for breach of confidence. Hence, with some unscrupulous idler ever ready with his pen, instruction of Pippa will also alert future clients to the whore's wiles.

This crux, ignored by Markham's *Famovs Whore* (1609), who "knew all *Aretine* by rot" and passed on "his book-rules ... / To euery ignorant, yet wanton louer," provides justification for the writer purporting to treat unseemly topics as moral warning. Striking illustration is provided by an anglicizing of Nanna's discourse on prostitution. Although much of Nanna's activity might be accepted as ingenious pranks, Aretino allows neither her zest nor her witty resourcefulness to excuse her relentless pursuit of profit, exploiting people's good nature as well as their greed and gullibility. There are moments when even Antonia—herself riddled with an incurable pox—is shocked by the revelations, and begs Nanna to desist. But Aretine satire disappears and Markham-style repentance and moralizing conclude *The Crafty Whore* (1658). Part of this date has been trimmed in the unique surviving copy, but Naumann proposes dates outside publisher Henry Marsh's active life span. Besides, there is an advertisement appended to Montelion, *Don Juan Lamberto* (1661), valuably identifying the translator as R. H. (presumably Richard Head, who around this date produced the lost *Venus' Cabinet Unlock'd*, while in 1665 Marsh handled his *English Rogue*). That lost title accompanies *The Crafty Whore* in *A Strange and True Conference Between Two Notorious Bawds Damarose Page and Pris. Fotheringham* (1660), as desiderata for a brothel library. This dialogue, like a companion piece, *Strange and True Newes from Jack-a-Newberries Six Windmills*, focuses on Fotheringham's

chuck-office, clearly the talk of dissolute London in 1660. Fotheringham's trick was to stand on her head, legs astride to allow "her Cully-Rumpers to chuck half crowns" into her commodity. Both dialogues itemize house regulations, a burlesque of brothel ordinances. The second, which orders that inmates must never "refuse to do the deed of nature either backwards or any other of *Peter Aretines* postures," was allegedly written by Aretino and sold by Rodericus a Castro, Spanish convert to Judaism and pioneer in gynecology.

It was the bitterness of the continental religious wars invading Britain which brought the flood of obscenity adumbrated by Nashe some half-century earlier. Sexual defamation was an obvious weapon for the civil war propagandist. Thus an allegation that "a holy Rebel" buggered a horse (*Mercurius Aulicus* 51, 16 December 1643) brought the rejoinder from *Mercurius Britannicus* 19 (28 December 1643) about royalists "keeping Mares for breeding Cavaliers on, and they may do it as lawfully as the Ladies of honour may keep Stallions and Monkies, and their Bishops She-goates and Ganimesdes." *A Dialogue Between Mistress Macquerella, a Suburb Bawd, Ms Scolopendra, a Noted Curtezan, and Mr Pimpinello an Usher* (1650) was occasioned by the Commonwealth's act "for suppressing the detestable sins of incest, adultery and fornication." Despite the bawd's reassurances about "a nine dayes wonder," Scolopendra decides to head for Venice (Aretino's literary home, celebrated for its courtesans). The political gibe is missing from *The Wandring Whores Complaint for Want of Trading* (1663), which rehearses different problems: "The Coffee-houses have dry'd up all our Customers like Spunges.... Besides, there is so many privat Whores that a common wandring whore can get no employment." *Strange Newes from Bartholomew-Fair Or, The Wandring-Whore Discovered* "by Peter Aretine" (1661) represents the fair's "Py-women" as whores who "have long since ... read *Aretine* both in Print and Picture," as *Mercurius Fumigosus* 13 (23 August 1654) puts it.

When Everard Guilpin, *Skialetheia* (1596, p.64), alludes to "*Aretines* aduenturous wandring whore," he means Lorenzo Venier's mock-heroic *Puttana errante* (c. 1531), commended by Aretino and frequently ascribed to him. This Renaissance *Eskimo Nell*, spiked with anticlericalism, is not to be confused with the (late?)-sixteenth-century *Piacevol ragionamento de*

*l'Aretino* [Aretino's Pleasant Discourse], which acquired the *Puttana errante* [Wandering Whore] title when appended to a 1660 edition of Aretino. It is heavily concerned with postures, making *The Ladies Champion* (1660) condemn "*Peter Aretine* for inventing the six and thirty several ways and postures of occupying." Its title and characters were quickly appropriated by John Garfield for his scurrilous serial, *The Wandring Whore*. *The Ladies Champion*, ostensibly attacking him as a "woman-hater, and enemy to multiplication" and supplying free advertisement. Ambiguity persists as the "Champion," feigning identity with John Heydon through adopting his pseudonym "Eugenius Theodidactus," accuses him of writing *The Wandring Whore*. The latter's author is also blamed for another serial, *Select City Quaeries*, while the wrong man (presumably Garfield) has been imprisoned for writing the *Whore*. The mesh of relationships draws tighter when *Strange and True Conference*, insulting Heydon in much the same terms as the *Champion's*, receives advance notice in *Whore II*, suggesting that it was written by Garfield or a cony.

*Quaeries* 3 dubs Betty Lucas "*La Puttana Errante*"; but *The Wandring Whore* appends extensive lists of current professionals, indicating that there was no shortage of streetwalking candidates. The *Whore* staggered through six issues, containing details not only of traders but of their tricks. Grotesquerie peaks in the first issue, where Fotheringham's immodest posture was imitated while "Rhenish wine was [poured] into the Dutch wenches two holes till she roar'd" because of its "smarting and searching quality." Another tried the experiment with sack, "poured in on one side ... and suck'd out on the other, which is a new fashioned Cup for roaring boyes to drink in." These roarers laid a drunken whore "belly naked upon a Table, ... sticking a Candle in her Comodity, and drinking healths over the dead drunk party, til the merciless Candle fir'd her fur-bush quite away, the flame whereof was quickly abated by drawing a codpiece engine, and giving her two or three Coolers." The last (1663) issue, "Written by Peter Aretine," visits the Sesto Bridge district, haunt of prostitutes in Aretino's Rome. It also introduces Eubulus, hitherto supposedly a silent Aretinesque recorder, as one who has translated "*Peter Aretines Postures* into English" (presumably this serial echo of *Puttana errante*).

## ARETINISTS

Aretino's last dialogue, where midwife and wet nurse discuss the art of bawding, probably inspired the lost *English Bawd* as well as *The London Bawd*, surviving in a fourth (1711) edition. The latter recalls Aretino's comparison of a doctor's bedside manner with a bawd's need to be ready with a hundred little tales, as the dialogue threatens to collapse under the weight of anecdote. But this does allow the bawd to retrieve her character, showing herself, like the Prohibition bootlegger, to be providing a public service; not only in cooling the spark's amorous ardor but in alleviating the frustration of mismatched wives. (This gibe at city husbands is more a London than an Aretine touch.) Another important bawd book, *The Whore's Rhetoric*, although based on Pallavicino's *La rettorica delle puttane* (1642), becomes Aretine dialogue. Like Pippa, Dorothea is an apt pupil; and her anxiety about losing her virginity is a direct borrowing. Warnings against lapsing into love and displaying envy of other women are similarly appropriated, while whole pages on handling superannuated clients follow *Ragionamenti* almost verbatim. Pallavicino's parody of the Jesuit Suarez has vanished, though it is this mockery of rhetorical procedures which explains why he was frequently assumed to be the author of *L'Alcibiade*, ambiguously signed "D.P.A.," viz., "di Padre Antonio" [Rocco] (or "Pietro Aretino"), published 1652 after lengthy manuscript circulation. London's fashionable set had absorbed Italian homoeroticism by the 1590s, and a later generation must have discovered Rocco's original, though it remained untranslated. The roles of pedagogue and seducer blur through reliance on rhetoric. The pupil's eventual sodomizing, a near-burlesque of that other scholastic method of applying rod to arse, becomes the ultimate teaching mode, recalling ancient associations of semen with brain matter and anticipating Chorier's punning suggestion of intellectual benefit from losing virginity: *mentula/mentis* (of the mind).

Rocco lacks Pallavicino's anticlericalism, something Aretino sponsored in works as diverse as Leti's pope-baiting *Puttanismo romano* [*History of the Whores and Whoredom of the Popes, Cardinals, and Clergy of Rome*] and Barin's *Venus in the Cloister*. Leti's book, which Buet reissued with a new dialogue between Pasquin and Marforio (the two statues in Rome on which satires were hung), under a false London imprint in 1669, appeared in English the

following year. Leti suggests that prelates favor bardashes over harlots because they are more discreet and allegedly free from pox: What price church neutrality if one becomes "a Frenchman both in blood and constitution"? Wealth and status await the "Sodomitical boys ... for their great services done to those that take a pride to have their standing-chambers in the Arsehole of Rome" (*Culiseo*, popular arsehole/Colosseum quibble, also occurs in *Ragionamenti*). Sexual struggles to influence papal elections could be eliminated by making "the Popedom Hereditary; which might be done by the Popes taking a Wife; and so neither the Ingles, nor Whores would have any pretence to the *Vatican*."

French and English texts of *Venus in the Cloister* appeared simultaneously in 1682, ascribed to "l'Abbé du Prat." The pattern of two young women, the elder instructing her junior, is borrowed from two other books which are required reading for the nuns. One is *L'Escole des filles* [*School of Venus*], perceptively termed insipid, though the other, Chorier's *Aloisia Sigea* is recognized as more accomplished and more dangerous. Angelica tells Agnes that the monks offer practical instruction far more efficacious than anything she can. When denied conjunction, the nuns ply glass instruments "oftner than their Beads," while the monks wage "*The War of Five against One*." A sexual elite, founder-members including both bishop and supposed author Prat, grotesquely title themselves "Knights of the *Grate*, or of St. Lawrence," with double allusion to flames of passion and the grate providing access to the nuns. One wears a reliquary against his heart containing pubic hair of all those he has enjoyed. From Chorier comes a dynamic use of dialogue (non-Aretine, but perfected earlier in Rojas's *Celestina*, a courtly tale switching emphasis from lovers to go-between). Thus Angelica's talk is interspersed with lesbian caresses and spanking (after Agnes has become enflamed by hearing how teaching duties offer scope to visit pupils' "back apartments").

Millot and l'Ange's *L'Escole des filles* (1655) avoids such diversions. Although Fanchon is rapidly aided to lose her virginity by her more precocious cousin, Susanne's lore about flogsters, castrati, and dildos is all secondhand; and she is so late with her hints on contraception that it is well that she claims acquaintance with an effective abortifacient. Indeed Dunton,

*Athenianism* (1710), reckons this “lewd, vile and abominable Book ... a meer Novice” compared with some of the unnatural practices currently adopted to thwart pregnancy. Pepys, encountering it on 13 January 1668, thought it “rather worse than *putana errante*,” abandoning his idea of getting his wife to translate it (first mention of an English version is in a 1680 court record). It is notable for shifting from an atmosphere of commercial sex to that of youthful ardor, producing frisson through Fanchon’s combination of naiveté and knowingness. Despite a paucity of nonsexual detail, the ambience is clearly that of middle-class comfort. There is no reason, beyond that which brought Pepys to solitary orgasm, to engage with Fanchon’s predicament, as there is, for instance, in Ward’s *Rise and Fall of Madam Coming-Sir: Or, An Unfortunate Slip from the Tavern-Bar into the Surgeons Powdering-Tub* (1703), where the grim battle for economic survival allows the protagonist, lacking the support of parents or friends, both to teach a moral lesson and (despite Ward’s facetiousness) to arouse sympathy. Lacking social comment, *L’Ecole des filles* offers mild subversion, setting education by peers above the teaching of the church and advocating marriage as cover for extramarital activity. If the fragments quoted from a 1745 trial transcript by Donald Thomas are typical, English versions were both more pithy and more subversive than the original.

Chorier’s *Aloisia Sigea* is amply subversive, reducing morality to reputation. Power is the theme: Husbands control wives but are themselves duped, as wives control their lovers using the leverage of law and religion as well as sex. Chorier sticks to a privileged milieu, recognizing with Aretino that the poor have neither time nor energy for sexual variation. His central character Tullia is doubtless the inspiration for Barrin’s Angelica in finding religion, like other social forms, a matter of policy. Her friend Sempronia’s sinister manipulations anticipate those of Laclos’s Madame de Merteuil, though the cynical Chorier exacts no retribution. His Latin text exploits a new French descriptive spareness and enters English with one dialogue rendered in a manuscript commonplace book dated 1676, though the date may be that of either translation or source. Reference in the first scene of

Ravenscroft’s *London Cuckolds* (1682) to “the beastly, bawdy translated book called the *Schoole of Women*” probably alludes to the 1680 French translation entitled *L’Academie des dames* (Foxon) and constitutes no evidence for a 1682 English version (Naumann, Wagner), especially as Ravenscroft’s play was produced the previous year. An Englishing entitled *A Dialogue Between a Married Lady and a Maid* was prosecuted in 1684, Tom Brown, *The Reasons of Mr. Bays Changing His Religion* (1688), condemning Dryden because bits of his Lucretius are fit “only to keep company with Culpeppers Midwife, or the English Translation of Aloisia Sigea.” While the book’s main influence lies elsewhere, it occupies a climactic position in the English Aretine context and was still viewed as “the father or mother” of her pornographic collection by an English whore in the 1830s *Bagnio Miscellany*.

GORDON WILLIAMS

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# ARETINO, PIETRO

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1492–1556

Italian poet, novelist, and essayist

Pietro Aretino, one of the most influential and financially successful men of letters in sixteenth-century Italy, is an almost mythical figure in the history of European erotic writing. He first gained notoriety in Rome in the mid-1520s with the *Sonetti lussuriosi*, a series of “lustful sonnets” he wrote to accompany 16 erotic engravings produced by Marcantonio Raimondi after drawings by Giulio Romano. The sonnets describe sexual activities and desires in clear, nonmetaphoric language, and although they were quickly suppressed, they became notorious throughout Europe. Although Aretino’s name was synonymous with erotic writing and pictures well into the nineteenth century, the majority of his texts were not, in fact, erotic. After the sonnets and some other early poems, his major erotic work was the *Ragionamenti*, or *Dialogues*, written in Venice in the mid-1530s.

Aretino first attained public notoriety after the death of Leo X in 1522, when he wrote a series of satirical poems opposing the election of the foreign Pope Adrian VI and supporting the candidacy of his new patron, Cardinal Giuliano de’ Medici, the future Clement VII. These poems, often quite bawdy and crude, were known as “pasquinades,” because they were affixed anonymously to a battered old statue near Piazza Navona called Pasquino. It is unlikely that Aretino initiated this practice, which persisted throughout the sixteenth century and beyond, but more than anyone else he was identified with the poems. Indeed, when Adrian VI took power, Aretino found it prudent to leave the city.

## The *Sonetti lussuriosi*

Adrian was pope for only two years, and Aretino returned to Rome after the election of his patron as Pope Clement VII in 1523. But he was soon in the midst of a new controversy. His friend Raimondi, a renowned Italian engraver,

was imprisoned by the pope’s counselor, Giovanni Matteo Giberti, for having made the 16 erotic prints based on Romano. The court of Clement VII was not at all prudish. But while erotic drawings and paintings might be tolerated and even enjoyed within the relatively closed aristocratic world of the court, erotic *engravings*, which could be printed in large quantity, sold in the marketplace, and widely disseminated beyond the court, were another matter altogether. At a time when Lutheran criticism of papal corruption was spreading all over Europe, the Pope could not afford to have such materials associated with the Vatican.

Aretino petitioned the pope for Raimondi’s release, and then, once his friend was safely out of jail, he wrote a series of 16 erotic sonnets—the *Sonetti*—to accompany the engravings. Together, the sonnets and engravings were known as *Imodi* (the modes or postures) because each portrayed a man and a woman having intercourse in a different position. The history of the sonnets’ dissemination is very difficult to trace with any accuracy, because the printing took place surreptitiously and most copies have been destroyed. At first, the sonnets probably circulated in manuscript, written by hand on the printed sheets of the engravings. While it was long thought that an edition of poems and engravings was printed in Rome in 1525, Bette Talvacchia has argued convincingly that the first printed edition was probably produced in Venice in 1527. No copies of this edition are known to exist. The earliest surviving edition is another one, probably printed in Venice the same year, but with crude woodcuts replacing the elegant engravings. Only one of the original 16 engravings is now extant.

Aretino’s sonnets are the most important and influential erotic texts of the sixteenth century, not because of their content—significant though it is—but because of their sheer notoriety. Few copies were printed, and almost none survived the papacy’s attempt to suppress them; but although few people read them, everyone heard of them. As time passed, the role of Raimondi and

Romano was largely forgotten, and the engravings became known as “Aretine’s pictures,” a phrase which was soon synonymous with erotic art or text of any kind. In Shakespeare’s day, “aretine” was an English adjective and “to aretinize” was an English verb. In Elizabethan England, Aretino became an almost mythical figure of erotic excess. John Donne included him in a list of damned Catholic innovators, including Machiavelli; Ben Jonson used him as a model for his most famous character, Volpone; Thomas Nashe, a ranting satirist, took to calling himself “the English Aretine.”

Raimondi’s engravings are groundbreaking in that they depict naked couples having sex without recourse to any mythological trappings. The figures are clearly men and women, not gods and nymphs. Similarly, the language of Aretino’s sonnets is straightforward and slangy rather than elevated and formal. Sex is described using crude everyday words without the aid of elaborate metaphors. As befits poems written to explicate images, the sonnets are more descriptive than narrative. They are almost all written in dialogue form—the men and women in the pictures converse as they have sex. They tell each other what they like and what they don’t like. They celebrate their pleasures and make fun of their rivals. The couples engage in both vaginal and anal intercourse; neither practice is declared superior. The sonnets do not propose any hierarchy of positions or claim that any one position is natural. There is no depiction of oral sex or manual stimulation without penetration. The fundamental purpose of the poems would appear to be a celebration of the pleasures of heterosexual intercourse.

But in this case, appearances are deceiving. The sonnets cannot be understood outside of the political context which produced them. Aretino’s writing of the sonnets was a slap in the face to those who had imprisoned Raimondi, and constituted a serious attempt to embarrass the papal court at a time of heightened social and political tension. Not only was Luther’s revolt against Church authority gaining strength throughout Europe, the pope was also on the verge of war with the Holy Roman Emperor, Charles V—a conflict which would lead to the sack of Rome two years later. Aretino was no Protestant, but he was outraged at the mistreatment of his friend and the hypocrisy of the papal court. In a public letter written to justify his

writing of the sonnets, he contrasts official persecution of *I modi* with tolerance of corruption:

What harm is there in seeing a man mount a woman?  
 ... The thing nature gave us to preserve the race ... has produced all the ... Titians, and the Michelangelos; and after them the Popes, the Emperors, and the Kings... And so we should consecrate special vigils and feast-days in its honor, and not enclose it in a scrap of cloth or silk. One’s hands should rightly be kept hidden, because they wager money, sign false testimony, lend usuriously, gesture obscenely, rend, destroy, strike blows, wound, and kill. (*Selected Letters*, p. 156)

Here Aretino ironically praises the penis, but in the sonnets, female genitalia receive equal praise and attention. In most cases, the speeches are equally divided between male and female speakers. While some of the engravings stress the man’s aggressive strength, as a group the sonnets do not suggest masculine domination of the sexual encounter. In several sonnets the woman directs the man on how best to please her. And although the sex in some is fairly rough, none of the sonnets represents a rape. In most, both partners seem to take equal sexual pleasure. The following exchange from the first sonnet is typical:

[He]: Let’s fuck, my love, let’s fuck quickly,  
 Since we are all born to fuck.  
 If you adore the cock, I love the cunt...  
 [She]: But let’s stop babbling and ram your cock  
 All the way to my heart.  
 (Sonnet 1, lines 1–3, 12–13)

Aretino’s audacity in supporting Raimondi infuriated many at court, especially Papal Secretary Giberti, the official who had imprisoned Raimondi. On the night of July 28, 1525, Aretino was attacked by Achille della Volta, a gentleman in Giberti’s service, and left for dead with serious injuries in his chest and hand. As soon as he had recovered enough to travel, Aretino left Rome. After a year or so spent mostly in Mantua, he settled in Venice in 1527.

That same year, Aretino wrote a *pronostico*, or prophecy, a parody of the many astrological almanacs published at the time. Rather than predicting astrological events, Aretino predicted political ones. The text does not survive, but it seems that in his attack on his former patron, the pope, he predicted that the Holy Roman Emperor would send an army to sack Rome. When a few months later his prophecy was substantially



fulfilled, Aretino's reputation as a critic of official abuses was assured. By this time, his outspoken nature had already earned him the nickname "Il flagello dei principi" [The scourge of princes] and he adopted the Latin motto "Veritas odium parit" [The truth brings forth hatred].

Venice, an independent and powerful republic which was also the largest center of printing in Europe, gave Aretino a safe haven in which to live and write. There was little regulation of the press in Venice in the mid-sixteenth century, and as long as Aretino refrained from criticizing the republic, he could safely say almost anything he wanted to. A gifted polemicist and shrewd manipulator, he proceeded to amass a substantial fortune by encouraging various rulers to bid for his services. He received large sums of money from the Marquis of Mantua by promising to write an epic poem in his praise, which was never quite finished. In 1533, King Francis I of France hoped to buy Aretino's favor by sending him a three-pound gold chain with links in the form of tongues and bearing the motto "Lingua eius loquetur mendacium" [His tongue will speak lies]. Aretino continued to support Francis' rivals, but proudly wore the chain. After 1536 he received a generous annuity from Emperor Charles V. In the 1540s, he was also wooed by the court of King Henry VIII of England, who hoped he might make a good Protestant polemicist. Like Francis, Henry was disappointed.

### The *Dialogues*

Aretino's most substantial erotic work is the *Ragionamenti*, or *Dialogues*, which was published in two parts in 1534 and 1536. Each part of the dialogues is divided into three books, each book devoted to a day's discussion, and for this reason the work is also sometimes referred to as the *Sei giornate* [Six Days]. The *Ragionamenti* is notorious for its explicit descriptions of sexual activity of all sorts: heterosexual intercourse, sex between men, lesbian sex, masturbation, anal sex, group sex, and voyeurism. As with many erotic Renaissance texts, however, there is little mention of oral sex.

The first part of the *Ragionamenti* is a dialogue between two Roman courtesans. Nanna, the older and more experienced of the two, is trying to decide how to raise her daughter Pippa, and she discusses Pippa's future with her friend

Antonia. Both Nanna and Antonia agree that as a young woman Pippa has only three options in life: She must become a nun, a wife, or a whore. In her time, Nanna has been all three, and Antonia encourages her to recount her experiences so they can compare the three vocations and make the right choice for Pippa. Nanna spends the first day describing her experiences as a nun in a convent where she was placed by her parents as a young girl, the second day talking about her marriage to an impotent old man, and the third day recounting her lucrative career as a Roman courtesan.

At the end of the three days' discussion, the choice for Pippa is clear. Antonia concludes:

The nun betrays her sacred vows and the married woman murders the holy bond of matrimony, but the whore violates neither her monastery nor her husband; indeed she acts like a soldier who is paid to do evil, and when doing it, she does not believe that she is, for her shop sells what it has to sell.... Go freely with Pippa and make a whore of her right off. (Rosenthal translation, p. 102)

The second volume of the *Ragionamenti* continues the discussion: On the fourth day, Nanna advises Pippa of her future profession; on the fifth day, Nanna warns her daughter about men's cruelty; and on the sixth day, mother and daughter listen as a midwife teaches a wet nurse how to become a procuress. The last day in particular has a desultory feel to it, and although Aretino did publish other volumes of dialogues, they are unrelated to the first two volumes and are not particularly erotic in nature.

As with the *Sonetti lussuriosi*, the *Ragionamenti* cannot be understood if one ignores its political context. Almost all the graphic sex for which the text is renowned comes at the very beginning, in the description of Nanna's experience as a virgin inducted into a convent. The life of monks and nuns is portrayed as a lustful, gluttonous, perverse, and selfish pursuit of pleasure. Pretending to renounce the world, the clergy are in fact the greatest sensualists of all. This criticism of monastic hypocrisy is reminiscent of a long medieval tradition of anticlerical stories, yet Aretino goes beyond his models both in the explicitness of his erotic description and the ferocity of his critique. In the fourteenth century, when Boccaccio and Chaucer wrote their tales of bawdy clerics, there was no Protestant alternative to the Catholic Church. When Aretino was

writing the *Dialogues*, monasteries were being abolished all over northern Europe. At no time did Aretino ever seriously support Protestant reform—on the contrary, he allied himself with the Catholic imperial court of Charles V and wrote popular Catholic devotional texts. But he had a grudge against the pope, and the first “day” of the *Dialogues* is clearly a continuation of the antipapal polemic Aretino had pursued since his expulsion from Rome. Whatever his intention, harsh criticism of the abuses of the Church by Catholic writers was necessarily inflammatory, and could not help but weaken the Catholic cause in the early years of the Reformation.

Arriving at the convent, the innocent Nanna is treated to a gluttonous banquet, at the end of which Venetian dildos made of hollow glass are distributed to all the nuns. She is then taken to a room decorated with erotic paintings and soon discovers that she can peek into several other rooms through holes in the walls. Peering through the cracks, Nanna views a panopticon of sexual activity: Nuns engage in lesbian sex; monks bugger each other; monks and nuns have sex in couples and in groups. Nanna first learns how to use her own dildo (finding it cold, she urinates in it to warm it up), and then has sex with one of the prelates. This pattern of sexual initiation—voyeurism followed by masturbation followed by intercourse—was repeated in countless European erotic texts in the following centuries.

Pulled out of the convent after being beaten to a pulp by her clerical lover, Nanna is married off to an ugly, impotent, wealthy old man. She fakes her virginity by putting an egg filled with chicken’s blood in her vagina, and then spends her time as a wife thinking of clever ways to commit adultery. The shocking description of orgiastic sex in the first book more or less vanishes in the second. In tone and content, Book Two is similar to the bawdy tales of Boccaccio’s *Decameron*. The emphasis is on the funny tricks the wives play on their foolish husbands, not on steamy descriptions of the sex they finally get.

After her decrepit husband dies, Nanna goes back to her mother, who disguises her so that no one will know that she has been married, and then shrewdly markets her daughter as a virgin prostitute. The third book deals with Nanna’s career as a courtesan and all the tricks she uses

to get money out her clients. Ironically, of all the women in the *Dialogues*, the whores are the least concerned with sex. Aretino’s nuns live for sex, his wives for freedom, and his whores for money. “There wasn’t a single man who slept with me,” Nanna boasts, “who didn’t part with a piece of his hide” (p. 127).

The dialogues are profoundly ambiguous in their portrayal of women. Courtesans are ironically celebrated for their cleverness and lack of hypocrisy, but they are simultaneously attacked for their selfishness and trickery. Separate editions of the third book of the *Ragionamenti* were published all over Europe in French, Latin, Spanish, and English translations as a warning against the wiles of wicked women. Editors added moralistic prefaces to ensure that readers would see Nanna and Antonia as subhuman predators.

Taken as a whole, however, the dialogues are hard to read as a simple attack on whores. They recognize that women’s social and sexual options are severely limited and that women become whores for practical social reasons. They are also clear that financially successful courtesans like Nanna are not normative: “For one Nanna who knows how to have her land bathed by the fructifying sun, there are thousands of whores who end their days in the poorhouse” (p. 134). And the battle of the sexes in the *Dialogues* is clearly an unfair contest. As Nanna says, “I could tell of tens, dozens, scores of whores who ended up ... in hospitals, kitchens, or on the streets ... thanks to having whored for this man or that; but nobody will ever show me a man who, due to the whores, became a ... coachman, ... lackey, ... or mendicant” (p. 269).

Like Chaucer’s Wife of Bath, Nanna is at once a nightmare of the antifeminist imagination and a proto-feminist heroine. Like her great contemporaries Gargantua, Pantagruel, and Falstaff, she is both grotesque and sublime. And like Aretino himself, she is clever, vindictive, and manipulative. Indeed, Aretino’s greatest character may well also be his best self-portrait.

In the *Dialogues*, the greatest sin is hypocrisy, followed closely by stupidity. Like Boccaccio before him, Aretino accepts sex and physical pleasures as a predictable part of the natural world. For Aretino, whores are better than nuns or wives because they are not hypocrites. Like soldiers, they are doing an ugly but necessary job. Like merchants, they sell their wares to

supply a social demand. The greatness of the *Dialogues* lies in its ruthless honesty, its irony, and its refusal to moralize. Aretino's social vision is extremely acute, and his text is one of the most remarkable and insightful works on the status of women in the sixteenth century.

The *Ragionamenti* was only a small part of Aretino's prolific writing during his time in Venice. He wrote some other satirical dialogues, several comic plays—some still highly regarded—and a series of devotional books with titles like *Three Books of the Humanity of Christ* (1535) and *The Life of the Virgin Mary* (1539). His popular translation of the *Seven Penitential Psalms* (1534) influenced other vernacular translations as far away as England. Over the period 1538–1557, Aretino published six volumes of his letters—thus becoming the first vernacular writer in Europe to publish his correspondence. He was known as a perceptive art critic and served as a business agent for his friend Titian, facilitating sales of Titian's paintings to Italian and European courts. In return, Titian painted his portrait twice.

In Venice, Aretino lived in a palatial house on the Grand Canal near the Rialto, full of courtesans and male secretaries, several of whom seem to have been his lovers. Though he never married, he had two daughters (Adria, 1537, and Austria, 1547), of whom he was very fond. Rumors of the licentiousness of his household were common, and in 1538 accusations of blasphemy and sodomy led him to leave Venice for a time. His provocative personality and polemical writing involved him in a series of literary feuds and scandals with rival writers such as Niccolò Franco and Anton Francesco Doni. He tended to win.

After Julius III, also from Arezzo, acceded to the papal throne in 1549, Aretino journeyed to Rome one last time in hopes of being made a cardinal. He had to settle for the honorary post of Gonfaloniere (standard bearer of the Catholic Church) of Arezzo and induction into the order of St. Peter. Two years after his death, in 1558, all of his books, devotional, political, and erotic, were placed on the Index of Prohibited Books by the Catholic Church. His reputation as a writer and art critic immediately went into eclipse. In the popular imagination, he was reduced to a caricature of sexual perversion, just as Machiavelli became a caricature of political amorality.

Only in the late twentieth century did the extent and nature of Aretino's achievement as a writer, art critic, and cultural figure come to be seriously reevaluated.

Given Aretino's notoriety and the fact that all his works were banned, it is not surprising that over the years many erotic texts were misattributed to him. John Wolfe, an Elizabethan printer, published an Italian edition of the *Ragionamenti* in London in 1584, which also included two other erotic texts not by Aretino: the *Ragionamenti di Zoppino* [*Zoppino's Dialogues*], an anonymous survey of famous Roman courtesans; and the *Commento di Ser Agresto* [Ser Agresto's Commentary], a bawdy academic dialogue by Annibale Caro. Perhaps the three texts most often misattributed to Aretino are the erotic and misogynist poems *La puttana errante* [*The Wandering Whore*] and *La trentuna di Zaffetta* [*The Rape of Zaffetta*], both by his pupil Lorenzo Veniero, and the anonymous prose dialogue known as *La puttana errante, or the Dialogue of Julia and Maddalena*, printed in the same volume as the *Ragionamenti* in an edition published in Amsterdam in the 1660s. *The Dialogue of Julia and Maddalena* is modeled closely on Aretino's *Dialogues*, though with none of its irony and subversive wit. It recounts the story of a young girl's initiation into prostitution and ends with an extensive list of sexual positions, with comic names such as "Moorish Style," "The Sleeping Boy," and "Riding the Donkey."

Although such misattributions have made Aretino's role in the history of European erotic writing seem larger than it was, he is nonetheless a crucial figure. Both Aretino's poetry and his *Dialogues* brought an unparalleled simplicity of language and explicitness of description to erotic writing. As noted earlier, the poems and engravings of *I modi* were the first modern European work to take sexual pleasure as their primary subject matter, without any philosophical gloss or mythological trappings. After centuries of scholarly neglect, Aretino's importance as a major cultural figure in sixteenth-century Italy is being strongly reaffirmed. A reevaluation of his achievement which balances his erotic writing with his significance as a social satirist, art critic, and influential man of letters is essential for a better understanding of the history of sexuality in the Renaissance.

### Biography

Pietro Aretino was born in Arezzo, Italy, April 19/20, 1492, the son of a shoemaker. The name "Aretino" is not a family name—it simply means "from the town of Arezzo." Aretino's family origins and early career are somewhat unclear. In any case, his father soon deserted the family, and Pietro was raised by Luigi Bacci, a local nobleman who knew his mother. Aretino left Arezzo for Perugia in his early teens (c. 1507), apparently to apprentice as a painter, and he seems to have wandered around Italy for several years before entering the service of Agostino Chigi, the powerful Siennese banker, in Rome in 1517. Chigi's household was one of the most luxurious and sophisticated in Rome and offered Aretino the opportunity of coming in contact with many of the most renowned figures in the city, including the painter Raphael and the Medici Pope Leo X, who soon took Aretino into his own service.

Aretino was at the court of Pope Leo X from 1518 to 1521, then was in the service of Cardinal Giuliano de' Medici, later Pope Clement VII, from 1522 to 1525, before settling in Venice in 1527. There he rented a house on the Grand Canal, near the Rialto, 1529–1551. He received a gold chain from King Francis I of France in 1533, then an annuity from Emperor Charles V after 1536, and was named Gonfaloniere of Arezzo and Cavaliere of San Pietro by Pope Julius III in 1550. Aretino died in Venice on the evening of October 21, 1556, when he succumbed to an attack of apoplexy while talking with friends.

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## ARGENS, JEAN-BAPTISTE DE BOYER MARQUIS D'

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1703–1771  
 French novelist

The major work attributed to Argens is *Thérèse philosophe*, whose reputation was promoted by

no less than the Marquis de Sade. Comparing Argens's work to other erotic novels of the period (*L'académie des dames*, *Histoire de Dom Bougre*, *L'éducation de Laure*), de Sade pointed out the superiority of his Provençal compatriot who

was finally inspired to write an “immoral book.” But despite de Sade’s enthusiasm, attribution of the work to the Marquis d’Argens remains unproven. The surest confirmation of this attribution came from Guillaume Pigéard de Gurbert, who relied on a series of clues and echoes of phrases found in Argens’s *Mémoires*, as well as *Lettres juives* and *Lettres cabalistiques*. *Thérèse philosophe* has also been attributed to Diderot, as well as to Arles de Montigny, who was involved in the clandestine production of the book. The date of 1748 for that production suggests that the novel first appeared that same year. But, as with every aspect of the novel, this date remains debatable. Combing the archives of the Bastille police, François Mouréau traced the steps in the publication of the book and its underground printing. In December of 1748, the printing of the book and its engravings was completed, and Montigny, who for months had claimed to be in possession of the unpublished manuscript, was looking forward to selling the copies. *Thérèse philosophe* underwent several printings in the eighteenth century, and nearly a dozen illustrated editions were printed before the Revolution. Robert Darnton has shown how this work dominated bestseller lists until the end of the *ancien régime*. From this historian of the book we also learn how the publication of *Thérèse philosophe* coincided with the publication of the great works that ushered in the Age of Enlightenment and with the explosion of erotic literature, in his estimation a result of the simultaneous surge of free thinking and moral license.

A word must be said about the novel’s subtitle, *Mémoires pour servir à l’histoire du P. Dirrag et Mademoiselle Eradice* [*Memoirs to Serve as a History of Father Dirrag and Mademoiselle Eradice*]. This subtitle is in part responsible for the attribution to Boyer d’Argens, who records in his *Mémoires* a contemporary event that was the stuff of scandal. The first part of the novel recounts the crux of the affair, in which a pious young woman of twenty years, Marie-Catherine Cadière, becomes involved with a Jesuit priest, Jean-Baptiste Girard, the rector of the naval chaplain’s seminary at Toulon. The scenario draws on a notorious trial of the year 1730–1731, in which the young woman accused her confessor of sorcery, spiritual incest, and sexual abuse. Narrowly acquitted by the Aix Parliament on October 12, 1731, the priest escaped being

burned at the stake. What Argens recycles in his novel is the story of seduction by the Reverend Father, with its whiff of witchery. These characters borrowed from real life are thinly disguised by the anagrammatic names in Argens’s text: Cadière becomes Eradice, Girard becomes Dirrag, and the site of the original affair, Toulon, becomes Volnot, located in the province of Vencerop (Provence).

*Thérèse philosophe* follows the typical pattern of a libertine initiation. The novel can be read as the pornographic version of a traditional coming-of-age novel. Thérèse is set upon the path toward realizing her potential up to the final revelation that caps the novel. The sexually precocious girl engages at the age of seven in pleasures usually reserved for a fifteen-year-old. Her mother tries to wean her from her compulsive and deleterious habit of self-stimulation. The story of Thérèse is that of reconciling the heroine to her “temperament”—that is, to the health of her body, the inverse of cachexia. In fact, the novel seems to result from a collage of four different narratives that end up involving the narrator. First there is the story of Eradice; second, the narrative recounting the sexual adventures of Madame C. and Abbé T.; third, the story, told in an unusual style, of Madame Bois-Laurier, a prostitute (the story of this courtesan could stand virtually on its own, with its picaresque, carnivalesque adventures and bawdy tales far removed from the more reserved style of the previous two stories); and fourth, the story of Thérèse’s meeting with a count whose mistress she becomes and to whom the narrative is addressed. In the end Thérèse’s apotheosis assumes the style of the first parts: Once again the text consecrates the meeting of sex and philosophy. These four seemingly disparate pieces can be seen as connected by their significance in Thérèse’s development. They explain *a posteriori* the heroine’s progress from her initial naïveté to her eloquent affirmation at the end of the novel.

Thérèse’s initiation begins when she stays in a convent, where she meets the couple Eradice and Dirrag. The lovemaking she witnesses while hidden in a small closet is presented to her as a virtual ceremony. The nun receives instruction from the old priest, who cinches Eradice’s devotion by persuading her to believe in the existence of a sacred cord, the cord of St. Francis, for which he ends up substituting his own

sexual organ. In this programmatic episode, the narrator is confronted with the power of the erotic imagination. Thérèse “dreams” about the fetishized cord, which the text closely associates with Eradice’s mystical ecstasy. Thérèse embraces the sacrilegious scenario as her own, for her own pleasure. The cord itself becomes, by association, an arousing object, which Thérèse keeps in mind even as she substitutes her bed poster in order to achieve pleasure. This cord, the first erotic object to be offered to Thérèse, will take on a primitive, associative function. The story of Eradice and Dirrag sets in motion the heroine’s phantasmagorical delirium, the mystical ecstasy that had initially brought her to erotic satisfaction. At the beginning, the novel superimposes forbidden erotic images: snake, apple, terrifying firmament (hell), which become objects of arousal—hand and finger. The young heroine experiences only this frustrated and forbidden pleasure, marked with the sign of terror.

Dirrag’s discourse, under the guise of spiritualism (he constantly plies Eradice with the commandments *forget yourself, let yourself go*) is however imbued with a free-floating materialism. Darnton sees Dirrag’s lessons as indistinguishable from those of La Mettrie, and the seductive technology employed by the father is like a materialist application of the spiritual exercises (the chemical solution used to create stigmata, a dildo offered as a sacred relic, coitus experienced as religious ecstasy).

The second phase of Thérèse’s initiation is entrusted to another couple, Madame C. and Abbé T., through a meeting arranged by her mother. This episode, a bucolic summer idyll, continues the voyeuristic structure of the novel. The optical machine previously used as a vantage point to observe Father Dirrag and Eradice is replaced by a series of observation posts: a “copse” from which Thérèse inspects her new friends (she hides there not only to watch them but “to hear them”), or the gap between the wall and a couch upon which the couple engages in sex, whence she watches and listens. This time Argens mixes the erotic tableaux with philosophical lessons. This is one of the elements that most resembles the structure of de Sade’s work: the alternation between scenes of lechery and disquisitions. The Abbé takes on the role of Thérèse’s new “confessor.” In this part of the book, Argens exposes the principal materialist

theses of the novel. Thérèse gains from the “enlightenment” of her friends. The narrator notes with enthusiasm that “Madame C. was satisfied with my way of thinking and reasoning, and she was happy to guide me step by step to clear and undeniable proofs.” Thérèse emerges from her state of illusion and sees “the shadows of her mind” dissipate. Through her contact with these two mentors, the heroine discovers the exercise of reason. She finds herself at ease in philosophical discourse, in the discussion of “moral and religious matters, metaphysical subjects.” The Abbé mentions a series of precepts which reveal a conservative epicurean bent: an apology for virginity, the restriction of intercourse to marriage, and respect for social conventions and the public good. Nature is presented as sovereign, reigning over our passions. Abbé T. insists on debunking religious institutions as created by men out of the fears and hopes of mankind. God himself is subject to mechanical laws—“the principles of movement that He has established in everything that exists.” The clichés of materialist discourse are all enumerated here, shades of La Mettrie’s *L’Homme machine* [*Man a Machine*] and, as regards the criticism of religion, an anonymous text published in 1743 under the title *Examen de la religion dont on cherche l’éclaircissement de bonne foi* [*Examination of Religion to Seek Honest Clarity*].

As for the childhood masturbation that was harmful to Thérèse (through her obsessively self-gratifying hand), here it is converted into a natural instrument of pleasure. This is the project undertaken by her two instructors. Thérèse discovers the virtues of the hand, learning, by example, from the skillful finger of the Abbé. In Argens’s text, touch is the sense that mediates the other senses (especially sight). The hand is certainly the most active organ in the novel. A machine par excellence, the nerve center for all organic functions, it circulates and distributes the entire range of erotic functions. The first contraceptive lessons begin at this stage of the narrative: Thérèse is well informed of the dangers of penetration and of unwanted pregnancy. This episode of enlightenment affirms the narrator’s will to learn. The heroine is not merely a passive observer; she soon puts the Abbé’s principles in writing.

The third stage in Thérèse’s initiation coincides with her meeting with Bois-Laurier. The text presents this narrative of her life in a

quasi-autonomous form. Bois-Laurier's account belongs to a genre typical of courtesans' memoirs. Her first name, moreover, is Manon, in an ironic and depraved nod to Prévost's famous heroine. Bois-Laurier, a retired prostitute whom Thérèse encounters in Paris shortly after the death of her mother, quickly becomes a surrogate mother. No longer a remonstrating mother, ruled by a fear of the senses, Bois-Laurier is on the contrary an enthusiastic instigator of Thérèse's initiation to pleasure. In the heroine's eyes, she naturalizes whoredom. Argens's Manon also shares with de Sade's major *débauchées* a common physiological trait: Like Durand and Martaine, Manon is barred from intercourse, "fastidiously" sealed by a "nervous membrane." But Argens inverts this flaw, or "irregularity," through the invention of sexual acts of unbridled imagination. Bois-Laurier's obstacle forces her partners to find pleasure through a series of inanimate devices. Mirrors, music, bizarre choreography, transvestism are all part of the menu of proffered "tricks." Thérèse will discover "male whims," the infinite variety of sexual acts, new positions to add to Aretino's catalogue. Indeed, what distinguishes the courtesan is this imaginative response to the impulses of nature. The actors in the scenarios recounted by Bois-Laurier find fabulous substitutes (dildo, whips). Sexual pleasure is also the occasion for laughter, another indulgence Thérèse discovers with Bois-Laurier as the two engage in "all sorts of follies." In fact, freed from any sense of guilt, sex becomes an occasion for shared laughter. At the same time, Argens inverts the relation with Thérèse's mentor. The philosophical upper hand reverts to Thérèse in this episode. Bois-Laurier, the narrator confides, "was not surprised at my moral, metaphysical, and religious awareness." It is noteworthy that if female homosexuality is celebrated in laughter and folly, the story of Bois-Laurier finds sodomy a stumbling block. In a text that is otherwise preoccupied with the relativity of sexual morality, she condemns as categorically abhorrent the "taste" of those she calls "monsters," whom she deems "the enemies of our sex."

Having reached maturity through her reasoned mastery of pleasure, the heroine meets a count at Bois-Laurier's, who will put the finishing touches on her libertine education. This character, presented as a paragon of the Enlightenment man, joins Thérèse in furthering her materialist instruction, to which he naturally

brings a depth of libertine experience. Becoming the narrator's benefactor, he uses his erotic library and bawdy pornographic collection as tools of seduction. If Thérèse's actions still emulate the tableaux placed before her, this time the moves are "sophisticated": They are guided by the mind. She also becomes a reader and consumer of erotic novels, some of whose titles are mentioned in the text: *Le portier des Chartreux*, *La tourière des Carmélites*, *L'académie des dames*, *Thémidore*, *Fertilon*. Finally she can progress to the act, to the experience of pleasure.

In the end Argens also leads the heroine's hand to another exercise. The masturbating finger no longer follows a mechanical instinct; it becomes a tool in service of a discipline of pleasure. It involves Thérèse in a prophylactic regime: "I had seized the shaft I held it lightly in my hand... in which it bridged the space that brought it closer to pleasure." The Count himself is an expert at "external ejaculation" as preached by Abbé T., recommended for the effective and risk-free repetition of pleasure. The balance of happiness is possible only when these conditions are realized: "no fuss, no children, no worry."

Argens thus ends his heroine's enlightened phase. He brings her to the apex of her "determination," in the sought-after apotheosis of the senses. If Thérèse started out as a machine, propelled by her "temperament," at the end of the narrative she is a thinking, desiring machine. She has found the path to her desire and the means to act upon it. At last, reason informs the intelligence of the passions. Thérèse has become a *philosopher*.

Thérèse's emancipation brings Robert Darn-ton to consider the question of the text's feminism. Anachronism notwithstanding, he proposes a nuanced examination of this perspective. Indeed, at the end Thérèse has fully assumed the narrative voice, exceeding the simple role of listener that she has held all along. The final contract between Thérèse and the Count reflects the terms put forth by him (he offers to share his retirement property not far from Paris and guarantees her 2,000 livres). But Thérèse imposes her independence to the very end, demanding the right to pursue her own pleasure, to govern her own body.

Catherine Cusset finds even more irony in the ending. For her, the text ultimately upsets the self-aggrandizement of the male sex. She recalls

the miserable sex of Bois-Laurier's anecdotes, with its dephallicized agents. Argens's novel thus quashes the male fantasy of omnipotence and counters it with the two women's laughter, just as in the end Thérèse's hand overmasters the Count's conquering sex.

In this sense, *Thérèse philosophe* writes an original story that slips the bonds imposed on the heroine by the typical pornographic novel. Thérèse's emancipation is that of a narrator who no longer "resists" writing, who no longer fears reflection, who joyfully embraces the first-person verb: "Ecrivons!" [I'll write!] The caption on the frontispiece of the novel ("Pleasure and philosophy bring happiness to the sensible man; he embraces pleasure with taste, he loves philosophy with reason") brings sex and philosophy together for man by joining taste with the love of reason. This is the same ground that Thérèse covers as she reaches the height of pleasure and writes in the happy assurance of reason. She then discovers her true mission, that of transmitting and divulging "truths." She wants to change, "by example and by reason," the way others think.

### Biography

Jean-Baptiste de Boyer d'Argens was born in Aix on June 27, 1703, to a venerable Provençal family. His father, Pierre-Jean de Boyer, Lord of Éguilles, served as an attorney at the Parliament in Aix. After a colorful and adventurous youth (including trips to Algiers, Tunis, and Constantinople), the Marquis d'Argens joined the army, but his military career was cut short by a horseback riding accident. In 1735 he left for the Netherlands. That same year he published his *Memoirs* and embarked on a new career as a novelist. Argens also tried his hand at a more serious genre: His interest in the mores and customs of both ancient and modern peoples bore fruit in the publication of *Lettres juives* (1736), *Lettres cabalistiques* (1737), and *Lettres chinoises* (1739). At Voltaire's suggestion, Argens accepted an invitation from Frederick II of Prussia, arriving in Berlin in 1742 as the king's

chamberlain. Argens's Berlin years saw a number of publications, including *Réflexions historiques et critiques sur le goût* (1743) and *Réflexions sur les différentes écoles de peinture* (1752). Overcome by the ills of old age and the tyranny of Frederick II, he left Potsdam in 1769, returning to his family and his native Provence, where he built a country house named My Repose. Argens died at his sister's home on January 12, 1771.

PIERRE SAINT-AMAND

Translated from the French by  
Jennifer Curtiss Gage

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# ART OF THE BEDCHAMBER LITERATURE

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The Chinese “Art of the Bedchamber” literature, a corpus of about a dozen received texts spanning two thousand years, represents a unique system of sex for health, harmony, pleasure, and eugenics. It shares borders on the right with medical sexology, which is chiefly concerned with sexual dysfunction and therapeutics, and sexual alchemy on the left, which is exclusively concerned with cultivating the physiological elixir of immortality.

## Recovery and Reconstruction of the Texts

The theoretical foundations of the bedroom arts literature are prefigured in the earliest medical classics, *The Yellow Emperor’s Inner Classic*, *Plain Questions* [*Huangdi neijing suwen*] and *Spiritual Pivot* [*Lingshu*]; in historical works, such as the *Zuo Commentary* [*Zuozhuan*] and *Spring and Autumn Annals of Lü* [*Lüshi chunqiu*]; and in philosophical works, such as the *Zhuangzi* and *Liezi*, all of which counsel moderation in the bedroom. Specialized medical works devoted exclusively to this theme include Zhu Danxi’s *Treatise on Sexual Desire* [*Seyu pian*] and Zhao Xian’s *Restraining Desires* [*Guayu*]. The bedroom arts literature, after occupying a rubric of its own in the official dynastic history of the Han (206–220 CE) and sharing a section with “Medical Works” in the Sui (581–618) and Tang (618–907), finally landed under “Daoist Works” in the *History of the Song* (960–1279). None of the titles listed in the *History of the Former Han* have survived, but unknown to the Chinese themselves, fragments were preserved in a Japanese collection of Chinese medical literature, the *Ishimpo* (982–984). Chinese scholar Ye Dehui [1864–1927] made this discovery in Japan and concluded that titles and fragments in chapter 28 of the *Ishimpo*, “Fangnei” [*Art of the Bedchamber*], closely corresponded to those listed in the *History of the Sui*. Piecing the fragments together, he was

able to reconstruct four of these texts and published them in his 1903 *Shadow of the Double Plum Trees Collection* [*Shuangmei jingan congshu*]. Following this, Robert van Gulik’s 1952 *Erotic Color Prints of the Ming* brought additional medical sexology and sexual alchemy texts to scholarly attention, the Mawangdui manuscripts gave us two complete sex handbooks of early second century BCE vintage, and Wile introduced a number of new texts from the Ming sexual alchemy tradition.

## The Cultural and Empirical Foundations of the Bedroom Arts

It would be difficult to say whether the biology of human reproduction has done more to shape human culture or human culture has done more to shape human sexuality. Nevertheless, the classic Chinese sex manuals, written by and for men, are the elaboration of certain shared cultural assumptions, which might be conveniently summarized as the response to a series of perceived dilemmas:

1. Sexual arousal suffuses the body with a “divine wind,” “living *qi*,” or “spiritual enlightenment,” but ejaculation brings “weariness, heavy joints, drowsiness in the eyes, parched throat, and buzzing in the ears.” The ephemeral high is followed by a languorous low. Ejaculation equals enervation, not relaxation: A paradigm of tension/release is rejected for one of fullness/emptiness.
2. The more we spend the essence that creates new life, the more we shorten our own lives. Sexual potency declines with age; in fact, aging itself is the direct result of sexual expenditure. Before puberty, we are blessed with abundant *yang* (positive) energy, without lust or leakage.
3. Men are like fire, easily aroused and easily extinguished, whereas women are like

- water, slow to heat up but more sustainable. This is a fundamental asymmetry between the sexes.
4. Ejaculation causes depletion, but abstinence causes physiological and psychological aberrations: atrophy of sexual fitness and obsessive thinking. The side effects of abstinence—masturbation, spermatorrhea, and nocturnal emissions—are worse than the disease of incontinence. In fact, long abstinence, punctuated by occasional ejaculation, results in “violent vacuity” that can actually be fatal.
  5. Lovemaking creates harmonization and bonding between partners, but ejaculation leads to loss of interest and somnolence. Shared sexual satisfaction is the foundation of family solidarity, but satiety sets up a slide into disgust and shame.
  6. Homeostasis between the heart (the seat of intellection) and kidney (the seat of sexual essence), or physiological fire-and-water principles, can be maintained only when the mind is calm and the semen is stable. A deficiency of water (semen) through frequent ejaculation allows the fire of desire to rage unchecked and leads to sex addiction, premature ejaculation, spermatorrhea, and nocturnal emission. Stability of sexual essence requires frequent, full arousal without ejaculation, not a disengaged or passive state.
  7. Wives, concubines, courtesans, slave girls, and maids, collected as trophies of wealth, may end up being psychological, financial, and sexual burdens. The pleasures of polygamy may soon evaporate in the heat of jealousies and the responsibility to keep everyone satisfied.

The collective cultural solution to all of the above dilemmas is *coitus reservatus*: The measure of sexual prowess is not the ability to ejaculate repeatedly but to withhold climax and satisfy multiple partners. Repression of climax does not lead to frustration but to the prolongation of pleasure: trading in the precarious peak for the safe plateau. This is the esthetic of anti-climax that in Chinese painting, poetry, and music is called “blandness” (*pingdan*). Moreover, going beyond saving to profit, the man who induces his partner to release her sexual essence through orgasm, while restraining his

own, may absorb her energy, thereby doubling his gain. Secondary potencies of sexual energy can also be absorbed from breath, saliva, and breasts. All of the texts counsel multiplying the number of partners to maximize the profit and warn that women can easily turn the tables in this contest. Therefore, men must strive heroically to discipline themselves not to ejaculate and to conceal this art from their partners. A man’s primary loyalty must be to his parents, and every time he ejaculates, he gives away part of his inheritance and becomes a slave to his wife. If menstruation brings disorder and pollution to the community, ejaculation decapitates the patriarchy. Men must also regulate their sex lives in relation to the macrocosm, hence the dictum, “Thrice a month in spring, twice in summer, once in autumn, and none in winter” expresses the idea that *yang* energy is most easily replenished in the spring and summer and should be hoarded in the fall and winter.

From our earliest records, the Chinese bedroom arts have been inseparable from medicine. The regulation of sex life was as fundamental to health as eating and sleeping, and sexual energy (*jing*) was one of the three pillars of physiology, the other two being vital energy (*qi*) and spirit (*shen*). *Jing* is both semen and the energy residing therein; in its prenatal aspect it is pure life-giving potential, and in its postnatal aspect it is material, requiring supplementation and subject to corruption and instability. The second-century BCE *Ten Questions* [*Shiwen*] says, “Nothing is more important for the *qi* of man than the *jing* of the penis.” The great Tang physician Sun Simiao puts the conventional wisdom in the mouth of the immortal Peng Zu in his *Supplement to Prescriptions Worth a Thousand Measures of Gold* [*Qianjin yifang*]: “The superior man sleeps in a separate bed, and the average sleeps under a separate quilt. A hundred doses of medicine are not as good as sleeping alone. Satiety at night costs one day of life, intoxication one month, but sex a year.” *Jing* is stored in the kidneys, which in traditional medicine takes in the urogenital system but is also linked to the bones, marrow, brain, teeth, and hair. The kidneys are also the locus of the “gate of life” (*mingmen*), which is the seat of the “ministerial fire,” “lesser heart,” or the fire principle in the midst of water, *yang* in *yin*. The heart (seat of the spirit) and kidney (the seat of water) form an axis of influence such that agitation of the heart

(emotions, desires) causes the kidney to lose seminal essence, while deficient seminal essence, in turn, causes clouding of the spirit. The aspect of consciousness centered in the kidneys is “will,” which explains postcoital enervation. A final function of the kidney is to absorb the *qi* of the lungs during respiration, a function enhanced by deep abdominal breathing during intromission.

### The Structure and Content of the Handbooks of Sex

In reconstructing the ancient manuals from fragments found in the *Ishimpo*, Ye Dehui’s methodology was to derive a template based on a typical sequence of topics. A literary device used by nearly all the handbooks of sex is to structure them as a series of dialogues between a mythical emperor, usually the Yellow Emperor, and goddess initiatrices, immortals, or other legendary figures. Two exceptions are the *Dong Xüan zi*, which consists of the highly poetic and flowery pronouncements of a pseudonymous author, and the *True Classic of Perfect Union* [Jiji zhenjing], which is framed as an extended metaphor on the “art of war” in the bedroom.

Most of the bedroom-arts texts begin with a passage on the cosmological or ethical significance of the sex act. The *Secrets of the Jade Chamber* [*Yufang bijue*] opens with, “One yin and one yang are called the dao; intercourse and procreation are its function”; the *Dong Xüan zi* with, “One must imitate heaven and pattern oneself on earth, take yin as compass and yang as square”; and the *Exposition of Cultivating the True Essence* [*Xiuzhen yanyi*] with, “Without sexual intercourse, there would be no means of achieving harmony of the heart and oneness of spirit, which would be a perversion of human relationships.” Alternatively, some begin with a personal predicament put in the mouth of the Yellow Emperor, such as in *The Classic of Su Nü* [*Su Nü jing*], “My *qi* is weak and out of harmony. There is no joy in my heart, and I live in constant fear”; or a generalized health syndrome, such as in the *Benefits of the Bedchamber* [*Fangzhong buyi*], “It has been said that before the age of forty men give free rein to their passions, but after forty suddenly become aware that their strength is declining.”

The bedroom-arts narratives now proceed to a section proclaiming the paramount value of

sexual essence, such as in *The Dangers and Benefits of Intercourse with Women* [*Yunu sunyi*], “The dao [of longevity] takes jing as its treasure,” or in the *Benefits of the Bedchamber*, “After forty, a man must constantly strengthen his jing, nourish and not waste it.” Generally, this is bolstered by a warning of the consequences of incontinence, as in the *Prescriptions of Su Nü* [*Su Nü fang*], “Because of the danger of shortening one’s life, a man must practice self-control and not think only of lust for women,” and *Dangers and Benefits*, “A single act of intercourse causes one to lose a year of life, which cannot be regained by any amount of self-cultivation.”

The next question usually posed by the mythical interlocutor is how to go about securing one’s sexual essence. The answers include having partners who are not too beautiful, who are ignorant of the *dao*, and who are frequently changed, as well as the following general advice from the *Classic of Su Nü*: “Settle the *qi*, calm the mind, and harmonize the emotions. When the ‘three *qi*’ are awakened and the spirit is focused, then when you are neither cold nor hot, neither hungry nor full, completely settle the whole body. Now relax, penetrate shallowly, and move slowly with infrequent thrusts and withdrawals. In this way the woman will be satisfied and the man will retain his vigor.”

The texts next take up the question of emotional harmonization between the partners and the need for artful foreplay. The *Dong Xüan zi* says, “He clasps her slender waist and caresses her jade body. Expressing their joy and speaking of deep attachment, of one heart and one mind, they now embrace and then clasp, their two bodies beating against each other and their lips pressed together.”

Progressing to the more technical side of foreplay, the texts now begin to address the question of how the man should prepare himself for intromission, how to fully stimulate the woman, and how to monitor the signs of her arousal. The stages of arousal in the man are analyzed in one of our earliest received texts, the *Discourse on the Highest Dao Under Heaven* [*Tianxia zhidao tan*], and echoed in similar formulations in the later literature, “If the penis is enraged but not large, the flesh has not yet been aroused. If it is large but not stiff, the sinews have not yet been aroused. If it is stiff but not hot, the *qi* has not yet been aroused.” The signs of arousal in the

woman are analyzed in even greater detail. Beginning with the *Uniting Yin and Yang* [*He yinyang*] in the second century BCE, the observable phenomena of arousal are usually formulated as the “five signs”: facial flushing, erection of nipples, salivating, vaginal secretion, and parched throat. Beyond these are the “five desires,” including breath retention, flaring nostrils and parted lips, quivering, perspiration, and stiffening of the body, which tell the man that his partner seeks greater intensity. The “ten movements” allow the man to read the woman’s body language and respond appropriately; for example, “Fifth, when she raises her legs to encircle him, it means that she desires deeper penetration.” Some formulations of the signs of arousal are more medically based; for example, the “nine *qi*” trace the arousal process through a sequence of organ systems, as in *The Classic of Su Nü*, “When her ‘yin gate’ becomes slippery and wet, it means that her ‘kidney *qi*’ has arrived. When in the throes of passion she bites the man, it means that her ‘bone *qi*’ has arrived.” There are also audible cues that are catalogued in *Uniting Yin and Yang*, including suspension of breath, inhalation, exhalation, panting, and teeth gnashing.

The signs of arousal are typically followed by a menu of postures, angles, depths, and tempos for intercourse. These are often presented as zoomorphic choreography, such as the “nine methods” or “thirty-six postures”: flying dragon, tiger stance, monkey’s attack, and so forth. The *Dong Xüan zi* also describes a number of modes of “attack,” such as, “a fierce general breaking through the enemy’s ranks,” “rising and suddenly plunging like a wild horse that has jumped into a mountain stream,” or “rising slowly and pushing deliberately like a freezing snake entering its hole.”

Next comes a catalogue of the advantages and disadvantages of various kinds of congress, usually summarized as the “eight benefits” and “seven ills.” The “benefits” are often couched as therapeutic prescriptions, as for example in *Uniting Yin and Yang*: “One arousal without orgasm makes the ears and eyes sharp and bright. Two and the voice is clear,” and the *Classic of Su Nü*: “The fourth benefit is called ‘strengthening the bones.’ Have the woman lie on her side, bend her left knee and stretch out her right thigh. The man lies on top and stabs her. Carry out five times nine strokes and, when

the count is finished, stop. This regulates the joints of the man’s body and cures blocked menses in women. Practice five times daily for ten days, and one will be cured.” The “seven ills” document and address various conditions arising from untimely relations. For example, “The third ill is called ‘weak pulse.’ Those who suffer ‘weak pulse’ force themselves to ejaculate even though the penis is not hard. If one engages in intercourse when the *qi* is exhausted, or one is full from eating, this injures the spleen and causes digestive problems, impotence, and insufficiency of *jing*. To remedy this, have the woman lie on her back and wrap her legs around the man’s thighs... Have the woman perform the movements herself, and when her *jing* comes forth, stop. The man should refrain from orgasm.” Some versions are based on concrete physiological changes, such as the *Classic of Su Nü*’s “five signs of a man’s decline,” which gauge the man’s condition from the consistency of the semen or the force of ejaculation. For example, the third sign is that “[t]he semen turns foul smelling, which indicates damage to the sinews.”

This, in turn, is followed by an argument for the advantages of *coitus reservatus*. *The Wondrous Discourse of Su Nü* [*Su Nü miaolum*] states, “By regulating the breath and ‘borrowing water to control fire,’ one can strengthen the ‘true treasure’ and go the whole night without ejaculating. After long practice one can achieve longevity and be free of illness.” The consequences of violating this advice are luridly described in *Benefits and Harm*, “Licentiousness shortening a man’s lifespan is not the work of ghosts or gods, but the result of base and vulgar impulses. When they feel the *jing* aroused and the urge to ejaculate, they try to please their partners. They expend all their strength insatiably. This does not promote their mutual health, but rather engenders harm. Some are shocked into insanity or experience ‘emaciation-thirst’ disease.”

Ejaculation-control techniques range from mental abstraction and visualization, to practicing self-control with “ugly stoves,” to modulating stimulation by the “nine shallow–one deep” thrusting pattern, to acupuncture at the perineum, to breath synchronization with thrusts and withdrawals, to microcosmic orbit *qi* circulation. Beyond this, all of the bedroom-arts texts prescribe tables of optimum ejaculation frequency. There is a progression from the

*Ma Wang dui* texts in the second century BCE, which state, “When the *jing* is replete, one must ejaculate”; to the Sui dynasty’s *Classic of Su Nü*, which allows twice per day at sixteen and twenty and once per day at thirty; to the *Wondrous Discourse* of the Ming, which allows once in thirty days at twenty. Thus there is a steady shift to lower frequency and from regarding a man’s highest sexual power to be in adolescence and early manhood to regarding his peak to be in early middle age.

Eugenics and taboos go hand-in-hand in the sex manuals. The *Classic of Su Nü* documents the “nine misfortunes,” which are based primarily on astrological and environmental factors, such as, “The third is children born during eclipses of the sun, who will suffer deformity or injury. The fourth is children conceived during thunder and lightning, when heaven is angry and threatening. These will easily succumb to insanity.” *The Prescriptions of Su Nü* correlates the taboos with the ills, so for example, “The first set of taboos relate to the last or first days of the moon, the first or last quarter of the moon, the full moon, and the six *ding* days of the sexegenary cycle. Intercourse on these days will damage the *jing* of one’s progeny, make a man impotent in the face of the enemy [women], [and] cause frequent spontaneous erections, red or yellow coloration of the urine, spermatorrhea, and early death.” There are also positive steps one can take to enhance conception and secure fit heirs. The *Wondrous Discourse of Su Nü* lists three causes of infertility in men and three in women, including cold and deficient *jing* in men and sealed cervix in women.

One of the minor topics taken up in these texts is sexual physiognomy, or the art of ascertaining a woman’s sexual fitness from her outward appearance. The *Secrets of the Jade Chamber* says, “One must choose young girls who have not yet borne children and who are amply covered with flesh. They should have silken hair and small eyes, with the whites and pupils clearly defined.... Their private parts and underarms should be free of hair, but if hair is present, it should be fine and glossy.” The list of traits to be avoided is even longer, and includes “tangled hair, a fearful countenance, malletlike neck, prominent larynx, irregular teeth, husky voice, large mouth, high nose bridge, lack of clarity in the eyes, facial hair, large joints, yellowish hair, scant flesh, and pubic hair that is

copious, coarse, and growing contrariwise. To consort with these types of women can only rob a man and do him harm.”

How can women use the art of the bedchamber to their advantage? The *Secrets of the Jade Chamber* says, “It is not only *yang* that can be cultivated but *yin*, too. The Queen Mother of the West cultivated her *yin* and attained the *dao*. As soon as she had intercourse with a man, he would immediately take sick, while her complexion would become radiant.... If a woman knows the way of cultivating her *yin* and causing the two *qi* to unite harmoniously, then it may be transformed into a male child. If she is not having intercourse for the sake of offspring, she can divert the fluids to flow back into the hundred vessels.”

One of the medical problems traceable to unbalanced sex life is “ghost sex.” This condition afflicts involuntary celibates who are seduced by incubi and succubi that surpass mortal partners in their charms. Addictive and frequently fatal, ghost sex can be cured by sexual therapy involving prolonged, gentle intercourse without orgasm.

Appended formularies conclude most of the bedroom arts texts with prescriptions for various kinds of sexual dysfunction or general health problems traceable to sexual excess or abstinence. The *Prescriptions of Su Nü* offers five formulas, one for each of the four seasons and one for the whole year. More specific formulas treat impotence; premature ejaculation; spermatorrhea; diminutive penis; hypotonia, or trauma of the vagina; and lumbar pain.

## Conclusion

Sex is not sinful, but a microcosm of the mating of Heaven and earth. The *History of the Former Han* calls sex “the highest expression of natural feeling, the realm of the highest *dao*,” placing sex at the very center of human experience and spirituality. Surveying the bedroom-arts literature, there are no richer documents for the study of traditional Chinese culture. All the intellectual assets of the civilization are deployed here: medicine, meditation, mythology, philosophy, military science, alchemy, and poetry. The epicurean ideal that pleasure is the goal of life, and moderation maximizes pleasure, led the Chinese to make a yoga of sex. Written in a celebratory but cautionary tone, and containing equal parts

of science, art, and argument, this literature vibrates with the tension between joy and phobia. Predating the *Kama Sutra* by centuries and exerting an unmistakable influence on Tantric practices, the Chinese bedroom-arts literature holds a unique place in the history of world sexology. Though perhaps too transpersonal for some modern Western tastes, there is much in the realm of both technique and transcendence that can expand the sexual imagination.

DOUGLAS WILE

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## ARTAUD, ANTONIN

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1896–1948

French dramatist

In 1920, suffering from nervous disorders that had plagued him since childhood, Antonin Artaud went to Paris, where he was placed in the care of psychiatrist Dr. Toulouse. He received great support and encouragement in Paris. He was even made coeditor of Dr. Toulouse's own periodical *Demain*, which enabled him to develop his critical writing. With an aim of becoming a film actor, he took small roles in various Parisian theatrical productions. Through theater, he met Romanian actress Génica Athanasiou, with whom he had his first serious, sexual relationship. The relationship ended in 1927, due to his increasing drug addiction and unsuccessful attempts at detoxification. Athanasiou eventually left him for filmmaker Jean Grémillon. Artaud was devastated.

In 1924, Artaud joined the surrealist movement. He became the director of the *centrale surréaliste* and was involved in the group's periodical *La Révolution surréaliste*. After contributing to the second issue, he was made editor of

the third issue, writing the majority of it himself. As a surrealist, he was "associated with a group that despised rationalism" (Hayman, 9). He viewed surrealism as a means to liberate the human spirit and everything that resembled it. Moreover, surrealism, he believed, was a revolt against language and traditional literature: "He felt nothing but contempt for the literary artistry which disguises human misery by hanging ornaments on it" (Hayman, 11).

Much of Artaud's work is characterized by its anti-Catholic nature (in 1930 he even wrote his own version of Lewis's *The Monk*). Earlier examples of his anti-Catholic writings can be found in the third edition of the *Révolution surréaliste*. This edition addressed the end of the Christian era. Along with other works, Artaud included his new version of the *Adresse au Pape*:

1. I repudiate my baptism.
2. I shit on the name Christian.
3. I masturbate on the holy cross....
4. It was I (and not Jesus Christ) who was crucified at Golgotha for rising up against god and his christ, because I am a man and god and his christ are only ideas which, besides, have been marked by

## ARTAUD, ANTONIN

humanity's dirty hands.  
(Hayman, 11–12, citing Artaud).

In July 1931 Artaud saw a production by a group of Balinese actors. This sparked a major event in his career, as he began to formulate ideas for his *Le théâtre de la cruauté* [*The Theater of Cruelty*], arguably his greatest achievement. With the emphasis on the director rather than the playwright, his aim was to explore the relationship between life, theater, and cruelty. His concept was that theater should embrace a nonverbal language, one of gesticulation and physical movements. He wanted to enact the release of emotion through theater with actors crying out and screaming during performances. The overall effect was surrealist, with the focus on the body.

Artaud was “drawn to the non-human—as a means of sterilizing fantasies that were erotic in origin” (Hayman, 95). He explored the darker side of human nature, often breaking social boundaries and moral codes. In *Les cenci* (1935), his first major production for *Le théâtre de la cruauté*, his own character says, “There is no life, no death, no God, no incest, no contrition, no crime in my existence. I obey my own law, of which I am my own master—and all the worse for those who are caught and sunk without trace in my inferno. My rule, my intent, is to seek out and to practise evil. I cannot resist the forces burning with violence inside me” (Artaud, *Collected*, 4:123). Perversion and brutality are also characteristic, as is the violation of the body and soul. For example, having been raped by her father in *Les cenci*, Beatrice says, “Everything is tainted. Everything. My body is sullied, but my soul is defiled. There is no part for me where I can hide” (Artaud, *Collected*, 4:139).

Artaud greatly admired the writings of the Marquis de Sade. In his first manifesto of *Le Théâtre de la cruauté*, he expressed a desire to stage a de Sade story, hoping to project all its eroticism on stage. In a review of *Les cenci*, it was also observed that “[t]he combination of furious blasphemies with atheism were reminiscent of the Marquis de Sade” (Hayman, 98). The Sadean aspect of Artaud’s work is characterized by its sadistic nature. For instance, his production *La pierre philosophale* [*The Philosopher’s Stone*], which bears the date 1930–31, portrays limbs being supposedly dismembered

and dummies being butchered by a psychotic doctor. Direct references to parts of the body, particularly the female reproductive organs, are also reminiscent of de Sade, and are one of the main reasons why Artaud’s work has often been labeled as erotic.

In 1937, Artaud suffered a nervous breakdown and was subsequently institutionalized. He remained in various mental institutions until 1946. During this nine-year period, he was at times confined to a cell, suffering from malnutrition and subjected to over 50 electric shock treatments. After his discharge, he deplored the cruelty and violence that he had experienced in the name of psychiatry, even claiming to have been physically assaulted by a male nurse. He composed *Aliénation et magie noire* [*Madness and Black Magic*] as a testimony to his experiences.

### Biography

Antonin Artaud was born in Marseilles in 1896. In early childhood, he survived a severe attack of meningitis but was left with serious nervous disorders. He was admitted several times to a sanatorium for depression throughout his adolescence. During these stays, he became familiar with the works of Baudelaire and Poe, whose influence can be seen in his early writings. In May 1919, Artaud was prescribed opium, which led to a lifelong addiction. By January 1948, Artaud’s health was rapidly declining, and after seeing a specialist he was diagnosed with an inoperable cancer. Two months later, he was found dead. His death was suggested as suicide, although this was never proved. Subsequently, he received a non-Catholic burial service, which he would have preferred.

SARAH BERRY

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## ARTSYBASHEV, MIKHAIL

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1878–1927

Russian novelist, short-story writer, and playwright

Powerfully influenced by Dostoevskii, Tolstoi, and Andreev, Artsybashev's fiction offers an awkward yoking of suicide, murder, and sexual violence to an optimistic love of nature. His first important story, "Pasha Tumanov" (1901), in which a high school student who fails an exam shoots the headmaster and then himself amidst the beauty of a summer's day, was suppressed by the censor and did not appear until 1906. "Kuprian" (1902) concerns a horse thief whom the author admires for his strength and passion; "Uzhas" [Horror 1905] describes a brutal rape in hair-raising detail.

Artsybashev finally caught the attention of the greater reading public with his first novel, *The Death of Ivan Landé* [*Smert' Ivana Lande*] (1904), a derivative attempt to create "a perfectly beautiful human being" à la Dostoevskii's Prince Myshkin. Like his best-known novel, *Sanin*, a charge of pornography was also lodged against the novel *On the Brink* [*U poslednei cherty*] (1911–12), which tells of a suicide epidemic among the intellectuals of a provincial town. Other works, *Millions* [*Milliony*] (1908), a Dostoevskian study of a millionaire's isolation, and *The Worker Shevyrëv* [*Rabochiy Shevryrev*, 1911], were treated respectfully by the critics.

Artsybashev achieved widespread if controversial fame from his novel *Sanin*, begun in 1902, originally published in installments in *Sovremennoe Mir* in 1906–7, and then quickly distributed in a separate edition. The second edition was confiscated, and the author accused of pornography. Translated into many

languages, *Sanin* caused a sensation wherever it was read. Criminal proceedings in Berlin and Munich ended in acquittal, however, and the Russian courts never got around to the case.

In its time a sensational best seller, read and discussed avidly by the intelligentsia, the bourgeoisie, and especially students, not only in Russia but throughout central and eastern Europe, *Sanin* is an uneasy blend of realism, eroticism, and tendentiousness. It echoed the calls for radical individualism, personal freedom from morality, and sexual nihilism that came in the wake of the failed revolution of 1905.

The protagonist Sanin is an amoral Nietzschean superhero, above the common herd, who spurns both emotional and intellectual ideals. A crude materialist with powerful muscles and strong appetites, he subscribes to Zarathustra's apothegm, "You're going after women? Don't forget the whip." In his cynicism and lechery, he also resembles the antiheroic underground man of Dostoevskii. Sanin's message is that only natural impulses, untainted by social convention, are pure and real. Anything else, especially hypocritical bourgeois codes of respectability and honor, is specious and artificial. To be true to oneself is to set no limit to one's desires. Individualism is to be sought in sensual pleasure, peasant customs, nature, and death.

The action unfolds in and around stifling provincial towns, populated by disaffected and indolent young men and repressed, yet superficially emancipated young women. Although many readers view Sanin's aggressive behavior toward women as misogynistic, Artsybashev sometimes portrays these relations as a comradely complicity in erotic transgression. Sanin's



actions occasionally belie the conventional pattern of sexual dominance and subordination he preaches in his long-winded discussions, so that the novel has been read by feminists as a condemnation of ruthless male conquest and the degradation of women and as a defense of equality in sexual relations.

Oddly, although it promotes hedonism, *Sanin* steers clear of the pleasure principle in its prose. It is crudely written, regularly bogging down in tedious, didactic dialogues which belabor the author's points. The liberal critic Korney Chukovsky complained that its literary quality and erotic appeal were vitiated by the argumentative tone. If its message is individualism, its medium is monotony. The characters are either inhibited or untrammelled. Sanin's final leap from a moving train into an open field "to meet the rising sun" is more the result of Chekhovian boredom than of high spirits.

Nonetheless, *Sanin* proved a provocation to thinkers of all factions. Leo Tolstoi dismissed it as an expression of "the vilest animal impulses," as did Maksim Gorki. Conservatives railed against it as pornography, while the younger generation avidly debated it and tried to put its lessons into practice. As D.S. Mirsky remarked, "The author of *Sanin* cannot be exculpated from having contributed to the moral deterioration of Russian society, especially of provincial school-girls." It was widely circulated among Russia's Jews in Yiddish translation, and Sholem Aleichem's story "Sanny" tells of a Jewish girl whose attempt to live up to *Sanin* leads to her suicide. The novel was dramatized in 1911 as *How to Live*. It was also one of the first books banned by the Bolsheviks after the October Revolution, an action which deeply embittered Artsybashev.

At the height of his popularity, between the Russian revolutions of 1905 and 1917, Artsybashev intuitively condensed the mood of the age, vulgarizing themes and characters from his more illustrious colleagues. A deadly pessimism and stridency crept into his later writing, leading one wag to refer to Artsybashev's characters as "the Club of Suicides."

### Plays

Artsybashev's prewar plays enjoyed some success on Moscow and St. Petersburg stages.

Influenced strongly by Ibsen, Strindberg, and Hamsun, these well-carpentered if morbid melodramas deal with the "sex war" and the double standard. *Jealousy* [*Revnost'*, 1913] concerns the writer Sergei Petrovich, tormented by the provocative behavior of his wife. Owing to her upbringing, she is insufferably wanton without actually being unfaithful. Her loose behavior is misread by a libidinous Caucasian prince, whose advances, though rebuffed, seem to confirm Sergei's suspicions. He strangles his wife, who is blameless in all but appearance. *Enemies* [*Vragi*, 1917] is based on the incompatibility of the sexes—men wishing for a harem, women for an ideal lover. All couples have to lie to make their marriages work and therefore end up hating one another. This idea also animates *The Law of the Savage* [*Zakon dikarii*, 1917], in which a lawyer is killed in a duel he undertakes to safeguard the honor of a wife he doesn't love. Alternately hysterical and preachy in tone, these plays disclose an underlying misogyny and a lugubrious view of human sexual relations.

### Biography

Mikhail Petrovich Artsybashev was born October 24, 1878 (Old Style calendar), in Izium, Russia, into a family of minor landowners—son of the district police captain and, on his mother's side, great-grandson of the Polish patriot Kosciuszko. The lush green forests, sunny fields, and smooth-running river of the southern Russian hamlet of Akhtyrka, where he grew up, are regularly evoked in his writing. Artsybashev's schooling stopped at the fifth grade of the *gymnasium*, and, at sixteen, he began to place stories in provincial newspapers.

After a two-year marriage ended in separation, Artsybashev moved to St. Petersburg, where lack of a diploma prevented his admission to the Academy of Arts. While earning a living as a caricaturist and land-council clerk, he continued to paint and write. He emigrated to Warsaw in 1923, where he became coeditor of an anti-Bolshevik newspaper. Deteriorating health and financial distress kept him from writing anything significant prior to his death on March 3, 1927.

LAURENCE SENELICK

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## ASHBEE, HENRY SPENCER

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1834–1900

English bibliographer and novelist

The author of *My Secret Life*, a 4,200-page narrative purporting to be the sexual autobiography of a Victorian gentleman, is listed as "anonymous" in most reference works. Circumstantial evidence, however, has increasingly pointed to Henry Spencer Ashbee, the Victorian businessman and erotic bibliophile. If Ashbee did not write the text, cultural historians would have to invent someone very much like him to account for its existence: a wealthy member of a male network comprising authors and publishers with the power, privilege, and leisure required for such clandestine projects; a man like the poet Algernon Charles Swinburne, the politician Richard Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton), the Orientalist Sir Richard Burton, or the publisher of *My Secret Life*, "Charles Carrington"

(the pseudonym of Harry Ferdinando)—all of whom Ashbee counted as friends. The ambiguity concerning the book's authorship is in many ways salutary, since it focuses attention where it belongs: on the cultural production, circulation, and significance of pornography in the late nineteenth century. As Michel Foucault observes in "The Author Function," "writing is primarily concerned with creating an opening where the writing subject endlessly disappears". In the case of *My Secret Life*, this gap is filled by a desiring male subject who speaks literal volumes about Victorian ideologies of gender, power, and sexuality.

***My Secret Life***

If Ashbee wrote *My Secret Life*, it is likely he began it in the 1880s. In 1857, when he was in

his mid-twenties and already a connoisseur of erotica, the Obscene Publications Act led to a clampdown that drove the trade underground. As the century progressed, erotica publishing in English shifted to the Continent, particularly Paris and Amsterdam, and there was a brisk trade in smuggling books into Britain. Peter Mendes has established that *My Secret Life* was printed in Amsterdam between approximately 1888 and 1894, most likely by the Belgian publisher Auguste Brancart. It is not possible to establish how many copies were issued, although certainly more than the six claimed in the preface to the book's index: "It is in print in eleven volumes, of which six copies only have been struck off and the type then broken up". In 1901 the so-called Charles Carrington published the first six chapters of the book as *The Dawn of Sensuality* and a year later issued a catalogue announcing for sale the entire book, running to eleven volumes. Today only four complete sets of *My Secret Life* are known to exist apart from the copy in the British Library: one at the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender and Reproduction (Indiana University, Bloomington) and three in the hands of private collectors in London, Hamburg, and Switzerland (Gibson).

The relative sexual openness of the 1960s increased interest in Ashbee and *My Secret Life*. Gershon Legman was the first to argue, in 1962, that Ashbee was almost certainly the author of *My Secret Life* (an expanded version of the essay containing this claim appears as the introduction to the complete Grove Press edition of the book, published in two volumes in 1966). Ashbee's three erotic bibliographies, published in expensive, limited editions during his lifetime and known to only a small coterie of collectors, reappeared in a facsimile edition in 1966. In 1964 Steven Marcus returned their author to prominence in *The Other Victorians*, devoting one chapter to Ashbee's bibliographies and two chapters to *My Secret Life*. Marcus does not identify Ashbee as the author of *My Secret Life*, but he does read the narrative as a true history of its author's erotic life. Subsequent critics of *My Secret Life* depart from Marcus on this point and view the text as fiction. In the words of James Kincaid, who also declines naming Ashbee as author, *My Secret Life* is "a picaresque (or post-modern) novel" which "operates as a subversive version of genteel fic-

tion and its main motor: how sheer tenacity and good luck can overcome the odds, master the obstacles created by class, modesty, and money".

In the 1970s Ashbee's granddaughter granted Ian Gibson access to Ashbee's diaries, and these helped convince Gibson that Ashbee wrote *My Secret Life*. Although no trace of the original manuscript seems to exist, and no confirmatory written documentation has come to light, Gibson finds the circumstantial evidence overwhelming. He presents this case in considerable detail in chapter 5 of *The Erotomaniac*, ranging from stylistic similarities linking the book with Ashbee's diaries and *Travels in Tunisia* to "numerous broad similarities" between Walter, the narrator of *My Secret Life*, and Ashbee himself. Among the latter, Gibson cites their common love of billiards, southern climates, and classification, as well as their shared class arrogance and snobbism: Both men express irritation when the lower classes become too familiar or fail to comply with their desires. In addition, *My Secret Life* constitutes a violent attack against Victorian hypocrisy and sexual repression, against the "ultra-squeamishness and hyperprudery" lamented by Ashbee/Fraxi in his introduction to the *Index librorum prohibitorum*. The author of *My Secret Life*, like Ashbee/Fraxi, is outraged by the British refusal to tell children the truth about their bodies. Twice, for instance, Walter jeers at the "parsley-bed" theory of reproductive biology.

*My Secret Life* implicitly argues the case for uninhibited sex in a society in which "this act of mighty power and eternal endowments" is termed "foul, bestial, abominable!" and "may not be mentioned or talked about." As Walter puts it:

It seems to me, that both men and women may be straight, and fair in all they do, be as good and useful members of society as others, yet take their chief delight in carnal pleasures. I am sure that it is so with hundreds of thousands of men, in the middle and upper classes, who are good husbands and fathers, yet who don't put a half of their sperm into their wives' cunts, and indulge in all the varieties, refinements, and eccentricities of lust habitually. But women can't act similarly without deteriorating.

Like Ashbee's friends Swinburne and Burton, Walter is openly contemptuous of Christianity, holding it responsible for "the absurd finical

notions about nudity and the necessities of nature, which my own countrymen have". He also often employs comic irony in mounting his assaults on conventional pieties. Following a long treatise on copulation, he proposes that this passage "may be read usefully after evening family prayers also, by older members of the family as well, to whom at times it may serve as an aphrodisiac, and it will spare many young, but full grown people, trouble and loss of time in searching for knowledge which ought to be known to all, but which owing to a false morality, is a subject put aside as improper". Elsewhere he adapts the Anglican liturgy to his own vision of eternal concupiscence: "As in the beginning, now and ever it will be—Fucking".

Once readers step outside his masculinist and upper-class frame of reference, of course, they discover that Walter lives in a world of unequally distributed carnal pleasures. As Kincaid has written, "[E]xcept for the time with prostitutes, he is pretty much devoting his life to a career of sexual harassment; when he isn't, that is, actually committing rape". Of the 1,200 women Walter says he has had intercourse with, many are from the lower classes, many are poor, and many would qualify as children under current legal definitions (the age of consent for females in Britain was thirteen until 1885, when it increased to fifteen). In this connection it is worth mentioning that *My Secret Life* was being compiled while a four-part investigation into child prostitution was appearing in the *Pall Mall Gazette*. "The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon," written by the paper's editor W.T. Stead, appeared in the issues of July 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10, 1885, and contained two sections headed "Why the cries of the victims were not heard" and "Strapping girls down." Although Walter does not directly refer to Stead's revelations, he does dismissively allude to the series. After deflowering Phoebe, Walter informs us, "She'd felt my stiff prick, I'd fucked her again, she had given down her maiden tribute to mix with her ravisher's, and our spendings had mingled in our pleasure". This passage also captures the narrator's unthinking and misguided assumption, expressed throughout *My Secret Life*, that females automatically experience orgasms through the kind of penetrative sex that is pleasurable to the male—and that their orgasms are always accompanied by ejaculation.

In addition to its status as erotic fantasy, *My Secret Life* is an important document in Victorian social history. Walter may be a fictional persona, but many of his observations correspond to those recorded by such urban sociologists as Henry Mayhew and Bracebridge Hemming. Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (1861–1862) contains a chapter on prostitution written by Hemming that reports on an interrogation of an Irish brothel keeper:

She was intensely civil to the inspector, who had once convicted her for allowing three women to sleep in one bed, and she was fined five pounds, all which she told us with the most tedious circumstantiality, vowing, as "shure as the Almighty God was sitting on his throne," she did it out of charity, or she wishes she might never speak no more. "These gals," she said, "comes to me in the night and swears (as I knows to be true) they has no place where to put their heads, and foxes they has holes, likewise birds of the air, which it's a mortal [*sic*] shame as they is better provided for an against than them that's flesh and blood Christians".

Walter too has an acute ear for dialogue, as in this description of his reunion with the Irish prostitute "Big-Eyed Betsy Johnson":

She was always lascivious. "Your fucking is delicious, me dear. You still do it well." On my preparing to leave, "Why sure, and you're not going after doing it once, and all these years since I've seen you? I recollect you, when I had to tell you you had done enough for your money. Ah, I'm older, but sugar me if you go yet," said she, clutching hold of my prick. So we fucked again, and again, for I could not resist her.

Except for the self-glorifying detail that Walter embeds in his account, the two passages are remarkably similar.

When Walter is in his twenties, he records that his "erotic fancies took the desire for a young lass," and his extended account of his meetings with the fifteen-year old Kitty is one of the most revealing in the book. He says of her that "there was a frankness, openness, and freshness ... which delighted me" and records their many conversations, beginning with this one:

"How long have you been gay?" "I ain't gay," said she, astonished. "Yes you are." "No I ain't." "You let men fuck you don't you?" "Yes, but I ain't gay." "What do you call gay?" "Why the gals who come out regular of a night, dressed up, and gets their livings by it." I was amused. "Don't you?" "No.

Mother keeps me." "What is your father?" "Got none; he's dead three months back,—mother works and keeps us. She is a charwoman, and goes out on odd jobs." "Don't you work?" "Not now," said she in a confused way; "mother does not want me to; I takes care of the others." "What others?" "The young ones." "How many?" "Two, —one's a boy, and one's a gal." "How old?" "Sister's about six, and brother's nearly eight, —but what do you ask me all this for?" "Only for amusement, —then you are in mourning for your father?" "Yes, it's shabby, ain't it? I wish I could have nice clothes. I've got nice boots, —ain't they?" —cocking up one leg— "a lady gived 'em me when father died, —they are my best."

For the privileged Walter, Kitty's situation is mainly a source of "amusement," but when she explains her motives in entering prostitution, her perspective is more sobering:

She said, "I buy things to eat; I can't eat what mother gives us. She is poor, and works very hard; she'd give us more, but she can't; so I buy foods, and gives the others what mother gives me; they don't know better, —if mother's there, I eat some; sometimes we have only gruel and salt; if we have a fire we toast the bread, but I can't eat it if I am not dreadful hungry." "What do you like?" "Pies and sausage-rolls," said the girl, smacking her lips and laughing. "Oh! My eye, ain't they prime, —oh!" "That's what you went gay for?" "I'm not gay," said she sulkily. "What, what you let men fuck you for?" "Yes." "Sausage-rolls?" "Yes, meat-pies and pastry too."

The contrast between Walter's leisured pursuit of Kitty and her own more urgent economic needs casts a harsh light on class divisions and the sex trade in Victorian London.

Beyond its importance as social history, *My Secret Life* has great value for students of the Victorian novel. Many of the passages in the narrative literally flesh out the sexual subtexts in Dickens's novels—for instance, from the activities of the prostitute Nancy in *Oliver Twist* to the coarse appetites of Major Bagstock in *Dombey and Son*. Moreover, the nonchalance of Walter concerning Kitty's plight highlights the extent to which the novel as Dickens and others conceived it was a moral instrument, meant to rouse middle-class readers from such complacency. In chapter 15 of *Bleak House*, the governess Esther Summerson and her employer John Jarndyce visit a family of orphaned children whose father they had known and whose lives parallel those of Kitty and her siblings in significant ways. Charley, the older sister in

*Bleak House*, goes out to do washing rather than prostituting herself; but aside from this difference, her life of poverty and privation is identical to Kitty's. The difference between the two tellings is one of affect: Dickens has Esther and Jarndyce identify with these children and express outrage at their situation, whereas Walter feels vaguely superior to Kitty and is happy that she is at his disposal. Dickens emphasizes the web of moral causality and responsibility that unites the most cosseted with the most destitute; Walter is untroubled by the disparity between his economic condition and that of Kitty (Marcus, p.105–09).

In this sense, *My Secret Life* exists in a supplementary relationship to the mainstream Victorian novel generally, and to Dickens's novels in particular. Self-interest predominates in the narrative, just as the laissez-faire economic theory that alarmed Dickens and many of his fellow novelists predominated in the nineteenth century. Walter is thus more representative of prevailing social attitudes than are the Oliver Twists and Esther Summersons of Dickens's fictional worlds, who oppose utilitarian calculations in all their forms. "Fucking is the greatest pleasure of life, and the woman who delays getting it for years, loses much", Walter avers, and he sets about producing his version of the greatest good for the greatest number. He approaches sex like Ashbee himself approached free trade—with an enthusiastic entrepreneurial spirit, energetic productivity, and an eager willingness to exploit women, children, and the working class. Like David Copperfield, Walter turns out to be the hero of his own life—a confessional hero who turns sex into text, extracting the maximum surplus value from his erotic experiences. If the nineteenth century witnessed "the transformation of sex into discourse," as Michel Foucault writes in *The History of Sexuality*, Ashbee and Walter were two of its greatest alchemists.

### Biography

Born in 1834 in Kent, Henry Spencer Ashbee was a successful London businessman, travel writer, and family man. He left school at sixteen and went straight into trade. After making a financially advantageous marriage at twenty-eight, he became manager of a profitable textile business, a member of several City companies,

London clubs, and national societies, and an extensive traveler. In 1865 he moved with his family to 46 Upper Bedford Place in Bloomsbury, just off Russell Square, where he remained for 20 years. The British Library was only a few minutes away, which must have appealed to Ashbee, who became a confirmed bibliophile in his thirties. Distinguished by a passion for genteel flagellation, he became his era's preeminent bibliographer of forbidden literature, beginning with the lavishly produced *Index librorum prohibitorum* (1877), published under the scatological pseudonym "Pisanus Fraxi." This volume was followed by *Centuria Librorum Absconditorum* in 1879 and *Catena Librorum Tacendorum* in 1885. By the time Ashbee published his *Bibliography of Tunisia from the Earliest Times to the End of 1888* under his own name in 1889, it was an open secret that he was also Pisanus Fraxi, Britain's reigning authority on erotica. Indeed, as Ian Gibson demonstrates in *The Erotomaniac: The Life of Henry Spencer Ashbee*, the only thing that made the activities of Ashbee and his like-minded friends "secret" was that they took place out of the view of wives, children, and economic subordinates—except those prostitutes and mistresses who serviced their fantasies. When Ashbee died in 1900, he bequeathed to the British Museum a library running to thousands of volumes, which included the most extensive collection of private erotica ever to come into the public domain.

JAMES DIEDRICK

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## AUDEN, W.H.

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1907–1973  
British poet

### “The Platonic Blow”

“The Platonic Blow” (or “A Day for a Lay” or “The Gobble Poem,” as it has also been called) is the best-known and most substantial of a small number of erotic poems Auden wrote, not for publication but for the private amusement of close friends. In a letter to Chester Kallman on December 13, 1948, Auden wrote: “Deciding that there ought to be one in the Auden Corpus, I am writing a purely pornographic poem, *The Platonic Blow*. You should do one on the other Major Act. Covici would print them together privately on rubber paper for dirty old millionaires at immense profit to us both. (Illustrations by [Paul] Cadmus?)”

The poem is about Auden’s favourite sexual activity, fellatio; the “other Major Act” he refers to, more to Kallman’s taste, was anal intercourse. One reason for his writing it was to show Norman Holmes Pearson of Yale University, with whom he was about to coedit a poetry anthology, the kind of person he was. In this sense, it is a clear statement not only of personal interest, but even of basic identity.

After the poem had been published, against his will, by the arts magazine *Fuck You*, in New York in 1965, Auden complained to Monroe Spears: “[I]n depressed moods I feel it is the *only* poem by me which the Hippies have read” (November 18, 1967). It was also published by a magazine more appropriately called *Suck*. Among friends, Auden openly acknowledged authorship of it. The British politician Tom Driberg recalled an occasion when, visiting the poet for lunch in New York, he was given a privileged reading. Auden also read part of it from a hot tub at a spa on Ischia to the visiting German student Peter Adam, later a distinguished broadcaster. Auden even once admitted to the mainstream press that the poem was his (*Daily Telegraph Magazine*, August 9, 1968). However,

when *Avant-Garde* magazine published it in March 1970, again without permission, and even had the courteous nerve to send the poet a fee, Auden returned the check and repudiated authorship.

Like so much of his verse, “The Platonic Blow” is a technical tour de force. It adopts a syncopated measure Auden found in the Arthurian cycle *Taliessin through Logres* (1938) by the British Roman Catholic poet Charles Williams. He made more polished use of the form, later, in the second section of “Memorial for the City” (1949), which is dedicated to the memory of Williams. Auden’s obvious pleasure in the erotic poem derives as much from the wickedness of its sexually explicit parody of a deeply serious, spiritual book as from the sexual narrative itself.

The poem consists of 34 stanzas of four lines each, rhymed ABAB. The lines range in length from 10 to 16 syllables, but they all have five insistent stresses. The vocabulary combines unexpected archaisms (“lofty,” “beheld”) and apparently inappropriate formal expressions (“sutures,” “ineffably,” “capacious,” “indwelling,” “voluminous”) with the erotic demotic (“cock,” “arse,” “knob,” “hard-on,” “spunk”). The insistency of his internal rhymes (“fresh flesh,” “the charms of arms,” “the shock of his cock,” “quick to my licking,” “sluices of his juices,” “the notch of his crotch,” “spouted in gouts”) and half-rhymes (“slot of the spout,” “curls and whorls”) seems clumsy at first, but soon gathers momentum in vivid mimesis of the act they represent.

The narrative itself is entirely conventional, in a literal sense slavishly following pornographic precedent. Spoken from the point of view of the adoring fellator, it follows a familiar route from the picking-up of an attractive stranger to consummation and ejaculation. Faced with the body of a young man, the speaker is at a rhapsodic pitch throughout. The object of his attention corresponds with Auden’s ideal image of the American dreamboat: “Present address: next door. / Half Polish, half Irish. The youngest

From Illinois. / Profession: mechanic. Name: Bud. Age: twenty-four." He is blond. To an extent, it does not matter whether this boy is actually homosexual. Auden believed, in any case, that straight American men did not really care for sexual intercourse with women: they just wanted to get blown while reading the newspaper. His fantasy was to be the one who did that favor.

In this written version of the fantasy, however, the blown man reciprocates. Before the speaker can begin sucking him, without being asked, Bud undresses fully. When the speaker, too, has undressed, they kiss. He fucks the speaker intercrurally. The speaker then explores the whole of his body, including his armpits and arse. Bud even has a voice of his own: When the speaker finally gets around to sucking him, he "hoarsely" says: "That's lovely! ... Go on! Go on!" Later, he whimpers expressively, "Oh!" and as he is about to ejaculate, "O Jesus!" This man is, then, a cooperative version of Auden's American stereotype, a young man who seems unashamed to involve himself in a mutual homosexual act but who ultimately submits to the imperative of the exploring mouth and becomes completely passive in the face of its unrelenting onslaught.

According to Harold Norse, who had firsthand experience, Auden was actually an inept fellator, regardless of his enthusiasm for the act: "The more feverishly he labored, the less I responded." There is no such discomfort in "The Platonic Blow." Only the gay Japanese poet Mutsuo Takahashi's long poem "Ode" outdoes it in exuberant celebration of the fellator's art.

## Biography

Wystan Hugh Auden was born on February 21, 1907, and was educated at Gresham's School, Holt, and Christ Church College, Oxford. He was actively, if discreetly, homosexual from an early age. Although in 1935 he married Erika Mann, he did so to help her escape Nazi Germany, and the marriage was never consummated. In January 1939, he left Britain for the United States with Christopher Isherwood. Chester Kallman, the eighteen-year-old boy who would become his lover, met him after attending a poetry reading he gave in New York on April 6, 1939. Auden died in Vienna on September 29, 1973.

GREGORY WOODS

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# AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A FLEA

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The subtitle of this work is: *Recounting all his Experiences of the Human, and Superhuman, Kind, both Male and Female; with his Curious Connections, Backbitings, and Tickling Touches; the whole scratched together and arranged for the Delectation of the Delicate, and for the Information of the Inquisitive, etc., etc*

The initial press run of *The Autobiography of a Flea* was limited to 150 copies, under the false imprint of "The Phlebotomical Society, Cytheria, 1789"; in reality: c. 1885 for Lazenby/Avery. A question hangs over its authorship. *Galitzine* refers to its author as "un avocat anglais, bien connu à Londres" [an



advocate well known in London], suggested to be Frederick Popham Pike (Mendes, p. 128), the only barrister known to be writing pornography at this time, and a member of William Dugdale's coterie (which included Sellon, Campbell, Potter, and Sala) from the 1860s until his death in September 1877. Other contenders for its authorship include Frederick Hankey, who died in 1882, Henry Spencer Ashbee, and Stanislas de Rodes.

Written from the view of an onlooking flea, the work tells the exploits of the libidinous adventures of Bella, a young girl, and a monastery of corrupt monks, the work being essentially anti-Catholic. The novel is quite well written, with detailed full-length descriptions, good scene setting, and tension buildups.

The story starts with descriptions of the fourteen-year-old Bella. She is introduced in the terminology common to its genre: "her soft bosom was already budding into those proportions which delight the other sex," "her skin as soft and as warm as velvet," her head held "coquettishly as a queen." Particular attributes are admired, with the writer venerating her "pretty little foot," "swelling thighs," "beautiful belly," and "mystic grotto."

Bella follows the path of other inquisitive protagonists of the period, yet she shows little of the modesty often portrayed in fictional virgins. "When are you going to explain and show me all those funny things you told me about?" she asks. Although a virgin, when her paramour, Charlie, kisses her, Bella makes no resistance; she even aids and returns her lover's caresses. He puts his hand up her petticoats, all the while encouraged by Bella. "Touch it," she whispers to him, "you may." She throws back her head and abandons herself to enjoyment of the experience, telling him, "What delightful sensations you give me."

Although she wants to explore her sexuality, is described as "glowing with the unwonted impulse stealing over her," and is an active participant, she is still described as submissive: "[S]he lay the delicious victim of whomsoever had the instant chance to reap her favours and cull her delicate young rose."

Through a "raging torrent of desire" she loses her virginity, but the unlucky lovers are caught by an irate priest, a handsome man of forty-five, with "a pair of brilliant eyes, which, black as jet, threw around fierce glances of passionate

resentment." His torrent of rhetoric serves to make him look ridiculous and pious: "For you miserable girl, I can only express the utmost horror and my most righteous indignation. Forgetful alike of the precepts of the holy mother church, careless of your honour, you have allowed this wicked and presumptuous boy to pluck the forbidden fruit! What now remains for you? Scorned by your friends from your uncle's house, you will herd with the beasts of the field, and exiled, as by Nebuchadnezzar of old, shunned as contamination by your species, you will be glad to gather a miserable sustenance in the highways." This initial indignation by the priest highlights the later hypocrisies of the church and its clergy as they introduce Bella to frenzied sex.

The priest, Father Ambrose, arranges for Bella to come to his sacristy the following day; meanwhile he will consult with the Blessed Virgin. The next day he tells Bella how she can atone for her sins:

You will swim in a sea of sensual pleasure, without incurring the penalties of illicit love. Your absolution will follow each occasion of your yielding your sweet body to the gratification of the church, through her ministers, and you will be rewarded and sustained in the pious works by witnessing—nay, Bella, by sharing fully those intense and fervent emotions the delicious enjoyment of your beautiful person must provoke.

Bella feels pleasure and surprise while "she became fully aware of the enormous protuberance of the front of the holy Father's silk cassock." She did not seem at all abashed when he uncovered it, and in her face "there was nothing mingled with it of alarm or apprehension."

The scene then explores cunnilingus and fellatio and the tale moves on to a full penetration scene, which is described as torture to her: "With a faint shriek of physical anguish, Bella felt that her ravisher had burst through all the resistance which her youth had opposed to the entry of his member, and the torture of the forcible insertion of such a mass bore down the prurient sensations with which she had commenced to support the attack."

The following week, she goes back to do more "penitence." At the end of her copulation with the priest, two more priests spring forth, the elder one stating, "This is against the rules and privileges, which enact that all such game shall

be in common.” They had been watching through the keyhole and now want her for themselves. The younger newcomer was unattractive but this only increased her passion: “He was short and stout, but built with shoulders broad enough for a Hercules. The child had caught a sort of lewd madness; his ugliness only served further to rouse her sensual desires.”

Following a path of increased sexual degradation, scene by scene, sodomy, homosexuality, and incest are explored. Bella’s uncle masturbates Father Ambrose: “[D]eliberately taking it in his hand, he manipulated the huge shaft with evident satisfaction,”—then, taking Bella, the uncle spells out the incestuous nature of his act: “Yes, Bella, into the belly of my brother’s child.”

Once her uncle is involved, Bella experiences fear, dread, horror, and disgust. Despite enjoying the priests, she does not want her uncle’s advances, but she cannot escape his clutches. He enters her bed at midnight suddenly and with vigor, increasing the feelings of intrusion into her private space. It takes 80 pages and many scenes before Bella’s own sexuality eventually awakens; she has “become a woman of violent passions and unrestrained lust.”

In another scene, we see the farcical Father Clement floating around clandestinely at night in his flowing monk’s robe with its ample cowl. During Father Clement’s attempts to seduce Bella, he accidentally finds himself with a Madame Verbouc. As he assaults her, Monsieur Verbouc enters and we are given a somewhat comic descriptive scene of the monk being caught midflow. Fleeing as fast as he can, he is pursued by the irate husband: “Dodging as well as he could the cuts which Mons. Verbouc aimed at him, and keeping the hood of his frock over his features to avoid detection, he rushes toward the window by which he entered, then taking a

headlong leap he made good his escape in the darkness, followed by the infuriated husband.”

In a later scene, Bella returns to the young farming lad she encountered earlier, and he and his father want to have sex with her. She is frightened but does not put up much resistance. The boy exclaims: “I want you to see father’s cock; my gum! you ought to see his cods, too.” The tale explores homosexual incest between father and son. After his father has taken Bella, “Tim, with true filial care, proceeded to wipe it [his father’s penis] tenderly and return it, pendant and swollen with its late excitement, within his father’s shirt breeches.” The father masturbates the son before he enters Bella—this seems to happen frequently, and the boy enjoys it, as he explains, “Father frigs me and I like it.” Even stranger, after having Bella, Tim cannot “spend.” The father blames himself for masturbating the boy too frequently: “It’s the frigging. I frig him so often that he misses it now.”

This book incorporates the gamut of sexual experience—fellatio, cunnilingus, and incestuous relationships: between father, son, and daughter, and including incestuous homosexuality and sodomy.

JULIE PEAKMAN

### Editions

First edition, London. “1789” [1885]; reprints c. 1886, c. 1887, c. 1890, c. 1895, 1901, c. 1915, c. 1921, “1901” [c. 1930].

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## AVANTURES SATYRIQUES DE FLORINDE, LES

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1625

Anonymous

Who wrote *Les aventures satyriques de Florinde habitant de la Basse Région de la Lune* (hence *Florinde*)? It is usually catalogued as having an anonymous author. However, Bertrand Guégan, in the introduction to the 1928 edition, discusses possible authors. The three most interesting of all these possibilities are discussed below.

Certain elements of the text suggest to Guégan that *Florinde* is not by a French writer, and he suggests the name of Henry de Codony (or Codoni). This is based on the initials *C* and *I* before the text, which Guégan interprets to stand for Codony, Italian. Also, in the text, the author mentions that he is Italian and a favorite of the French king Louis XIII. This also fits with what is known of Codony's life. He was acquainted with Tristan l'Hermite, who led a picaresque life reminiscent of *Florinde*'s. Additionally, he spent some time in jail. This may indicate why *Florinde* remains an anonymous text, because its author did not want to risk further punishment.

It so happens that in 1625 a ballet (*Les fées de la forêt de Saint-Germain*) was performed at the Louvre. This ballet included the character of an aged fairy, as does *Florinde*, danced by a certain Delfin (a name most assuredly based on the Italian anagram, R. Delfino, or *Florinde* in French). Nothing else is available about Delfin.

Of all the possible authors suggested by Guégan, the best known is Charles Sorel (1599–1674). Sorel wrote *Histoire comique de Francion* (1623), a text he modified, corrected, and toned down in subsequent editions from 1626 (the year following the original publication of *Florinde*) to 1641. Attributing *Florinde* to Sorel stems from the language and scenes found in the *Histoire comique de Francion*, which can remind one of some of those found in *Florinde*. The similarity in the structure of the titles has certainly

contributed to this suggestion. Yet, vocabulary selection seems to indicate that different authors wrote the two texts.

*Florinde* is divided into five parts (*livres*) written in prose and in verse. It tells the adventures of *Florinde* as he travels through a country that evokes a bucolic Greece in an undetermined age. *Florinde* himself is compared to Ulysses and, at some point, seeks the help of the goddess Diana. At times, one is also reminded of the landscapes described in the French *romans précieux* of the same period. Additionally, *Florinde* is not a common name. It appears in Voltaire's *Essai sur les mœurs* (chapter XXVII) as the name of the daughter of Count Julien who may have been raped by Rodrigue.

Most of *Florinde* takes place around the town of Ephèse, as well as the castle of Assotie, where the witch (*magicienne*) Upérorque reigns. In the first part, *Florinde* runs into trouble because of his many feminine acquaintances. What starts as jealousy will bring upon *Florinde* the wrath of Upérorque wherever he may be. He must flee but cannot avoid the attack of a monster on a beach.

In the second part, the forces of evil organize against *Florinde*. He is able to escape through a tunnel with the help of a gentle nymph. In the process, he meets an old hermit who will protect *Florinde* from Upérorque and one of her accomplices by giving him a holy reliquary.

In the third book, as a storm rages by, *Florinde* finds refuge with his traveling companions in a cave, where they meet three nymphs and an old woman who turns out to be a witch. They escape and later are attacked by demons. They spend the night in an inn. *Florinde* befriends the wife of the absent innkeeper and they retire to her bedchamber. Her husband returns unexpectedly, and as often happens to *Florinde*, his lovemaking is interrupted. He manages to escape again.

Several conversations take place at the beginning of the fourth part. The initial one discusses

how a virgin makes love for the first time. Another mentions what happens when a woman finds her lover in bed with her maid. As for Florinde, he wonders whether he should get involved or wait for a better opportunity. He decides to get involved with Coryne. They meet in Gontade. The text then provides a detailed description of their lovemaking.

In the last book, Florinde spends a fair amount of time with his friend, Piston, who lives in a beautiful house with exquisitely designed gardens. Florinde overhears the conversation between a mother and daughter. She wants to sell her daughter's virginity several times and turn her into a whore. Florinde eventually reaches the residence of witches. Inside, he finds several young women and an old witch who fills the room with a foul-smelling vapor. Florinde apparently kills a lion that attacks him, but he soon discovers that he has killed a man wearing a lion's pelt. Soon thereafter, Florinde is visited in a dream by a woman. He realizes that she is Philosophy. She has come to cure him of deep-rooted, unpleasant-smelling ulcers. She also convinces Florinde that "he must reform his life and despise the dirty voluptuousness the seeking of which, so filled with difficulties, sometimes gives repentance at the same time as sexual release" (*Florinde*, p. 139. Translated from the French by Claude Fouillade).

Florinde resolves to leave all this bitterness behind. When he finds himself close to Ephèse, his reason overcomes his heart and he decides to return to France. He sails around the *Isles Aériennes*. In the end, Florinde decides to settle in

Paris, a town in which he finds that life is pleasant to live, and has himself naturalized "a true Frenchman."

The author of *Florinde* is undoubtedly a learned *libertin* (P. Pia suggests that *Florinde* contains reminiscences of the *Dialogues des courtisanes* and the *Euphormion*). To this list should be added the sixteenth-century classic *Lazarillo de Tormes*. Both poems and prose in this work are filled with double entendres, whose meaning has been lost through the centuries, the allusion to the *basse région de la lune* notwithstanding. It has also been suggested that *Florinde* hints at the attacks that were made against the "libertine scoundrels" of the time. Yet, *Florinde* research proposes that Upérorque is a personification of the Roman Catholic Church; it further suggests that other *magiciennes* are muses that work to bring about the ruin of mankind.

CLAUDE FOUILLADE

### Selected Works

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# B

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## BABEL, ISAAC EMMANUILOVICH

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1895–1939

Russian-Jewish short story writer, dramatist, and screenwriter

Isaac Emmanuilovich Babel, author of many short stories, two plays, several screenplays, and numerous newspaper articles, must be considered, after Chekhov and Bunin, one of the greatest, if not the greatest Russian short story writer of the 20th century and arguably the greatest Russian erotic writer of that period. His prose style combines laconism with bright, original imagery, and his stories from all periods are suffused with a playful and provocative eroticism that takes many forms. In several stories there is a clear link between seduction and the act of artistic creation.

In “Guy de Maupassant,” 1932, the narrator uses Maupassant’s story “L’aveu” together with a made-up story about himself as means of seducing Raisa Benderskaia, whose only passion in life is the French author. “My First Fee,” 1939, also features a made-up story. The narrator tells about himself as a male prostitute to overcome his initial inability to perform and win the sympathy of the prostitute Vera, who is so taken

with the story that she engages him in a night of lesbian sex. The switching of sex roles is ironic, as the narrator, who was looking for his first sexual engagement, ends up pretending he is a male prostitute and receives the love a woman gives to another woman. Babel’s description of their night of love is perhaps the most exuberant of its kind in all of Russian literature: “Now tell me, I would like to ask you about this—have you ever seen how country carpenters build a house for their fellow carpenter, how hot and fast and gaily the chips fly from the log they are planning? That night a thirty-year old woman taught me the tricks of her trade. I learned secrets that night you will never learn; I experienced a love you will never experience; I heard the works of a woman meant for another woman. I have forgotten them. It is beyond us to remember them” (my translation from *Sochineniia* 2, 252).

Sex by transaction figures prominently in Babel. In “Fee” the narrator in effect trades his story for sex, as Vera refuses the fee they had agreed on. In “A Hardworking Woman,” 1928, Anelia makes a deal to have sex with three officers for two pounds of sugar but stops in the middle with the third man. In a related story,

## BABEL, ISAAC EMMANUILOVICH

“At Our Father Makhno’s,” 1923, however, violence takes the place of transaction, as six men rape a young woman. “The Kiss,” 1937, an echo of a Chekhov story with the same title, ends when the narrator, whose lover keeps asking when he will take her and her family away with him from the front, does not hold up his end of an implicit bargain and leaves her after a night of love.

Voyeurism is found in a number of stories, most graphically in “Through a Crack,” 1917, where the narrator arranges with the proprietor of a brothel to watch young women and their clients having sex. In later stories voyeurism appears in a subtler form, as for example in “My First Love,” 1925, in which the ten-year-old narrator is in love with his neighbor’s wife. As is evident from titles such as “First Fee” and “First Love,” initiations, sexual and otherwise, are an important theme in Babel.

Some of Babel’s best erotic passages are associated with a woman taking pity on a man, as happens in “First Fee.” In “Doudou,” 1917, a French nurse has sex with a dying officer as a kind of final act of tender mercy. She is fired for this but does not regret her action. The reader may sense the motive of male sexual wish fulfillment in passages like this one.

Heterosexual eroticism is predominant in Babel, but there are some fascinating instances of homosexual eroticism as well. In “My First Goose,” 1920, the narrator is entranced with the beauty of Savitsky’s gigantic body. “He smelled of perfume and the cloying cool of soap. His long legs looked like girls sheathed to the shoulders in shining jackboots” (*Sochineniia* 2). The image of girls may act here as a heterosexual cover for the homoeroticism that would have been considered more “risky” by contemporary readers and critics. Similarly, at the end of the story the narrator lies sleeping, legs entangled with those of the other soldiers, all the while dreaming of women. “The Awakening,” 1931, also contains suggestions of homoeroticism, as the narrator is envious of the bronze tans of the local boys and their ability to swim. He loves their coach and mentor Smolich, “as only a young boy who is sick with hysteria and headaches can love an athlete” (*Sochineniia* 2).

The sudden switches in sexual roles in Babel are emblematic of his whole fictional world, where one’s identity is always being tested, and

where it may be revealed in the most unexpected ways. Eroticism is an essential feature of Babel’s prose, and as with his other central themes, he continually plays variations on his various erotic themes in all kinds of different contexts.

### Biography

Born in the largely Jewish Moldavanka district of Odessa, June 30, 1894. Studied English, French, and German at a commercial school and Hebrew at home; read a great deal, especially French literature. Wrote his first stories in French. Graduated from a commercial institute in Kiev, 1915. Charged with writing pornography (“Through the Window”), 1917 (charges mooted by the Revolution). Married Evgenia Borisovna Gronfein, 1919; father of scholar Nathalie Babel. Wrote sketches for Maxim Gorkii’s newspaper, 1919. Worked as a newspaper correspondent during the Civil War on the Polish front with the Red Army’s First Cavalry, 1920. First became known with publication of *Red Cavalry* stories, 1923–24. Had relationship with Tamara Kashirina (later Tamara Ivanova), 1925–26; father of artist Mikhail Ivanov. Visited France, where wife Evgenia emigrated, from 1927 to 1935. Set up household with Antonina Nikolaevna Pirozhkova, 1935; father of Lydia. Knew French writers André Gide and André Malraux. Offered contract for collected works, 1938. Arrested May 15, 1939; falsely charged with spying for France and Austria and being a terrorist. Shot in prison January 27, 1940. Exonerated, 1954.

VICTOR PEPPARD

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## BAI, XINGJIAN

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?–826 CE

Chinese poet and novelist

### *Tiandi yinyang jianohuan dale fu* [Prose Poem on the Supreme Joy of the Sexual Union of Yin and Yang, Heaven and Earth]

The text of the *Tiandi yinyang jiaohuan dale fu*, quite apart from its unique content, has had a long and checkered history. Written in the late eighth or early ninth century by Bai Xingjian, the only received copy was immured around 1000 CE in the Cave of a Thousand Buddhas at Dunhuang on the Silk Road. Temple guardian Wang Yuanlu (d. 1931) discovered the work in a secret cache of thousands of scrolls, selling many to Aurel Stein (1861–1911) in 1907 and Paul Pelliot (1879–1945) in 1908, a fact regarded as an act of cultural preservation in the West and cultural piracy in China.

Spirited to the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, the text was kept under lock and key by Pelliot, much to the chagrin of other Sinologists, until a visiting Chinese dignitary, naval secretary and Hebei viceroy Duan Fang (1861–1911) was allowed to examine and photograph it. Shortly thereafter, in 1913, Lo Zhenyu (1866–1940)

published a collotype reproduction in Beijing as part of his *Manuscripts from the Dunhuang Caves* [*Dunhuang shishi yishu*]. Ye Dehui (1864–1927) published an annotated edition in 1914 in his *Twin Plum Tree Shadows* collection [Shuangmeijinga congshu], and Robert van Gulik made further emendations in his 1951 *Erotic Colour Prints of the Ming Period*. The Dunhuang manuscripts bear the name Bai Xingjian (d. c. 826), younger brother of major Tang poet Bai Juyi, an attribution questioned only by the pseudonymous author of the colophon appended to the 1913 collotype edition.

As a literary genre, the fu—a prose-poem or poetical essay—was gestated during the Warring States period (475–221 BCE), perfected during the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE), and continued into the Tang dynasty (618–907) to serve as a vehicle for extended meditations in an elegant yet loose verse form. Although the *fu* sometimes degenerated into mere literary tour de force, the *Prose Poem on the Supreme Joy* is original in its subject matter and serious in its purpose, and in spite of numerous scribal errors, rewards the reader with many vivid passages evoking the entire scope of sexual experience. It offers a rare alternative to the didactic purpose of sex handbooks and sexual alchemy on the one



hand and the often cynical and perverse tone of pornographic novels on the other.

The first two sections set the stage by proclaiming the cosmic, social, and psychological significance of the sex act. Sex is the microcosmic enactment of the mating of heaven and earth, yin and yang; it is the most fundamental of human bonds, the object of our greatest desire, and the source of our highest pleasure. Section 3 describes the conception, constitutions, and maturation of males and females. At puberty, "her warm moist complexion resembles jade ... her hands are as pure as snow," and with thoughts turning to love, it is time to consult a matchmaker. Painted in auspicious red tones, the fourth section describes the wedding night, on which as bride and groom repair to a room suffused with "red light," the groom reveals his "crimson bird" and loosens his bride's "vermilion trousers." As he "raises her feet and caresses her buttocks," she clasps his "jade stalk" and the couple consummate "the union of yin and yang" that will bind them together forever.

The fifth section, the longest, is an exposition of the infinite possibilities in lovemaking. Temporally, it may be moonlight or daylight, spatially a tall pavilion or open window, and inspiration may come from the handbooks of sex or erotic paintings. Her gossamer and embroidered garments are shed and the gentleman drinks in her beauty with hands and eyes. He may place her feet on his shoulders or pull her skirt above her belly. Deep kisses and tight embraces cause his "jade stalk to be enraged" and her "nether lips to part." As her scented secretions flow, he thrusts from above and below, left and right, from the "zither strings" at one-inch depth to the "grain seed" at five inches. He may penetrate shallowly, "like a suckling infant," or deeply, "like a freezing snake slithering into its hole." When she makes purring sounds, her skin is flushed and hair disheveled, he will be moved to even greater efforts as his seminal essence penetrates all the way to her womb. Languid and lubricious with secretions, maidservants wash her with scented water, help her change her gown, and repair her coif and makeup.

The sixth section displays the more varied palate of pleasures that the gentleman of leisure may explore with his seductive and talented concubines. He experiments with more acrobatic positions, anal intercourse, and fellatio, together

with female prone and female superior postures. But in the end, he observes the bedroom arts' injunction to "return the essence and withhold emission; inhale a breath and swallow the saliva."

The seventh section is a sexual symphony in four movements based on the four seasons. In spring, couples sport in the women's quarters, like orioles and swallows mating in the woods. In summer, nature's luxuriance casts its reflections on the bedchamber, or the couple may dally in the gardens or pools. In autumn, fans are put away, bed curtains are drawn, and strings play a somber tune. In the winter, lovers surround themselves with embroidered quilts, woolen carpets, sandalwood incense, hot wine, and charcoal braziers. In the season of old age, though weak and withered, couples find it even easier to perfect the bedroom arts.

The eighth section describes the sex life of the emperor amidst his legions of secondary wives, concubines, courtesans, musicians, dancers, singers, and slave girls. As a diversion, his Majesty randomizes his favors by riding about the palace grounds in a goat cart, while eager women hang bamboo leaves on their door latches to attract the goat. The author mentions that the ancient ideal of the emperor sporting with nine lesser wives each night, culminating in coition for procreation with the empress at the end of each month, had lapsed by Tang times and that in the absence of protocol, all 3,000 women openly vied for the privilege of his bed, adding wryly that "the bodies of these myriad women are served up to this or that man."

Section 9 describes the loneliness of single men and the longing of travelers for lovers far away, their loss of appetite, wanness, pining, sleeplessness, and dreams. Section 10 describes forbidden fruit and stolen moments, when bold men steal into the women's quarters to find shy virgins too frightened to cry, married women who feign sleep and offer no resistance, and welcoming women who come to a bad end. These unceremonious assignations and surreptitious trysts in unconventional settings, for all their fear and trembling, can be far more exciting than tamer sessions in one's own bed. The eleventh section describes the love of lower-class women, citing famous men like Guo Pu and Ruan Xian, who were not ashamed to proclaim their love for their maidservants. Section 12 describes ugly, unkempt, foulmouthed, and

malodorous women, such as the wives of men like Liang Hong and Xu Yun. Section 13 describes temptations of nuns who forsake their vows and willingly accept the advances of noblemen, famous scholars, priests, and tall foreign monks with great members. The fourteenth section deals with male homosexual relations by chronicling notorious emperors and their famous favorites. The truncated last section begins with the lives of rough country people before ending in lacuna.

Summarizing the significance of the *Prose Poem on the Supreme Joy* in Chinese literature and in the history of world erotic literature, it is the only received full-length treatment of human sexuality in a literary form from the imperial period. Philosophically, it accepts sexual desire and sexual behavior as natural, without any suggestion that repression or abstinence has a legitimate role in ethical or spiritual practice. As a literary work, its main theme is the celebration of sex for all strata, all ages, and all circumstances, but its panoramic sweep also takes in the suffering of deprivation, though remaining mute on the subject of widowhood. While not questioning the institutions of polygamy, concubinage, and slavery, it focuses mainly on mutually pleasurable relations but does not neglect the vulnerability of women preyed upon in their quarters by opportunistic men. There is implied criticism of the hypocrisy of Buddhist monks and nuns and the irony of the imbalance of thousands of women serving one emperor. As a typical literatus of the period, the author demonstrates a grasp of the language and

principles of the handbooks of sex, a knowledge of the sexual peccadillos of famous persons in earlier times, and mastery of poetic descriptions of lovemaking against the background of nature and the refined lifestyle of the upper class. The work confirms the scholarly consensus that the Tang was a period of relative sexual freedom that preceded the Song, when the Neo-Confucian cult of chaste widowhood and prudery held sway for the next thousand years.

### Biography

Younger brother of major Tang poet Bai Juyi, Xingjian was an outstanding author in his own right. According to his biographies in the *Old Tang History* and *New Tang History*, he was a *jinshi* licentiate, holder of numerous official posts, and author of the famous Tang novel *The Story of Li Wa* [*Li Wa zhuan*].

DOUGLAS WILE

### Editions

“Tiandi yinyang jiaohuan dale fu,” in *Dunhuang shishi yishu*, 1913; *Shuangmei jingan congshu*, 1914; *Erotic Colour Prints of the Ming Dynasty*, 1951; *Sexual Life in Ancient China*, 1961.

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## BALZAC, HONORÉ DE

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1799–1850

French novelist and dramatist

Throughout his writings, Balzac’s literary allusiveness reveals a deep fascination with the Western erotic canon. He claimed that the *Satyricon* was the Roman equivalent of one of

his own *scènes de la vie privée*, while lamenting in the *Avant-Propos* to *La comédie humaine* (1842), that Petronius’s satire excited his curiosity more than it satisfied it. One of his most memorable creations, Valérie Marneffe in *La Cousine Bette* (1846), is described by him in the wake of Laclos’s erotic masterpiece *Les liaisons dangereuses* as a

“bourgeois Madame de Merteuil.” Other works recalled by him from the eighteenth-century libertine tradition include Louvet de Couvray’s *Les amours du chevalier de Faublas*. One of his early pseudonymous works of fiction, *Jean-Louis, ou la fille trouvée*, was devised in conscious imitation of Pigault-Lebrun’s licentious *romans gais*. The features of Laurence Sterne’s writings that made them such an important source of inspiration for Balzac were several but included Sterne’s gift for witty sexual innuendo. The practice of Sterne and of Balzac’s acknowledged predecessor Rabelais (Balzac’s fellow native of Touraine) were explicitly recalled in many of his early works and were the predominant literary influence on the *Physiologie du mariage* (1830), a composition the scabrous nature of which made it necessary for it to be attributed to a “young bachelor” and to be preceded by the warning “Ladies not admitted.” This was followed by a series of tales (*Les contes drolatiques*, 1832–37) which imitated Rabelaisian subject matter and attempted to revive, albeit with scant philological exactitude, Rabelais’s sixteenth-century French. Only the first three *dixains* were ever completed.

Balzac’s exploration of sexual love and desire was, however, by no means restricted to a continuation of established erotic genres. In *La fille aux yeux d’or* (1835), the voluptuary and dandy de Marsay proclaims: “Everyone speaks of the immorality of *Les liaisons dangereuses* and that other book that has a maid’s name for its title [the transparent reference here is to de Sade’s *Justine*, a novel responsible for the name borne by the maids in both *La peau de chagrin* (1831) and *Petites misères de la vie conjugale* (1842)], but there exists a horrible and appalling book that is sordid, corrupt and always open, a book that will never be closed, the vast book that is the world we inhabit, to say nothing of another book a thousand times more dangerous and which consists of all the things men whisper, or ladies utter behind their fans, to each other every evening at the ball.” There could hardly be a more eloquent description of Balzac’s *Human Comedy*, which, in addition to highlighting the economic and political workings of early-nineteenth-century France, is a vast sexual comedy. To the fore is the author’s unrivalled insight into feminine psychology. (His great objection to Walter Scott, whose work in other respects he so admired, was his puritanical depiction of

passion.) The institution of marriage and its social and psychological significance are dissected by him with unerring dexterity. The contrasting female types in the *Comédie humaine* are remarkable for their range. There are studies of naive virgins and wives devoid of sexuality, as well as sexually aware wives who are unhappy or unfaithful. In the provincial novel *La vieille fille* (1837), the middle-aged Mademoiselle Cormon’s virginity is an encumbrance to her. The sexual ignorance she displays in her desperate hunt for a husband is treated in a comic mode, though there is a sting in the tail: She ends up choosing a suitor who is impotent. The unwilling sexual repression of the eponymous protagonist of *La cousine Bette*, on the other hand, leads to paroxysms of jealousy and a violent expression of hatred and spite, while in *Le lys dans la vallée* (1835) Félix de Vandenesse is ensnared by de Marsay’s mistress, the man-eating Lady Dudley. Lesbianism is hinted at in *La cousine Bette* and treated more explicitly in *La fille aux yeux d’or*, a work that may well have its origin in George Sand’s relationship with the actress Marie Dorval. The courtesans who play such a prominent part in the *Comédie humaine* come from different backgrounds and each possess a distinct character. As the contemporary critic Jules Janin put it, with all the venom of professional envy, “Woman is Monsieur de Balzac’s invention.”

While many of Balzac’s male characters have a public life in business, politics, journalism or letters, they too are remarkable for their sharply differentiated sexuality. The range of sexual appetite and attraction they exhibit is knowingly communicated to the reader. Both individually and collectively, Balzac’s heterosexual males are condemned never to find satisfaction. They oscillate in their attraction to complementary female types, thereby situating the sexual ideal in promiscuity rather than a monogamous relationship. The extreme cases include Baron Hulot’s priapism (not pedophilia, as is sometimes stated) in *La cousine Bette*. The bourgeois parvenu, in contrast to his libertine seniors, is, on the other hand, pilloried for seeking value for money. Male homosexuality features prominently. In the closing pages of *Illusions perdues* (1837–43), a scene much admired by Proust, the central figure in the *Comédie humaine*, the eloquent and predatory ex-convict Vautrin, picks up the suicidal Lucien de Rubempré. His homosexual nature, already apparent from his

befriending of Rastignac in *Le père Goriot* (1835), becomes more explicit in *Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes* (1845–55). *Le cousin Pons* (1847) features the homosocial bonding of Pons and Schmucke. Balzac is no less suggestive in his depiction of sexuality's twilight zones, as can be seen from the numerous examples of a transference of gender characteristics. M. de Valois's studied art of flirtation in *La vieille fille* might be thought to place him in opposition to his impotent rival, yet the contrast is subtly complicated by the ambiguity present in the depiction of him as a "ladies' man." The short story *Sarrasine* (1831) depicts the indeterminate sexuality of a castrato, while the Swedenborgian *Séraphita* (1835) features the ideal figure of the androgyne. *Une passion dans le désert* (1837), which relates a soldier's infatuation with a female panther, has been seen as a study of sexual aberration but, as Herbert J. Hunt has pointed out, is much more likely to be "a [humorous] comparison between the felinity of women and the femininity of panthers."

There emerges from all of Balzac's novels, but in the complex myth that is constructed around sexual excess and sexual abstinence in *La peau de chagrin* (1831) in particular, an acute sense of the problematic nature of sexual desire and its incompatibility with the fabric of society's institutions. Examples of virtuous or idealized love are rare and, in the exemplary case of Henriette de Mortsauf in *Le lys dans la vallée*, ends, revealingly, in her death. *La muse du département* (1843) has a bitter lesson for Dinah de la Baudraye, who misreads the significance of the journalist Lousteau's vacation affair with her and duly pays the price: The relationship is doomed, and she has no choice but to return to her impotent husband.

There are signs that incestual feelings (brother/sister in *la fille aux yeux d'or*, father-daughter in *Le père Goriot*) enjoy a privileged status in the author's *imaginaire*. The novels indeed offer rich pickings for the psychoanalytic critic, who will also find much to ponder in the author's own biography. Beginning with his early, requited, passion for Madame de Berny, Balzac was attracted to women who were more than old enough to be his mother (his relationship with his actual mother remained notoriously difficult). His affair with Madame Hanska was conducted more by correspondence than in the flesh. She was already in her ninth year of

widowhood when, in the year of his own death, they were married. There were contemporary rumors that he enjoyed at least one homosexual relationship (for example, with Jules Sandeau; or with his groom Anchises, of whom there is a telling reflection in the pretty groom who appears in *La maison Nucingen*, 1838).

### Biography

Born in Tours, May 20, 1799. Boarded at *pen-sion* in Tours, 1804–07; educated by the Oratorians in Vendôme, 1807–13; at the Collège de Tours, 1814; the Institution Lepitre, Paris, 1814; and the Lycée Charlemagne, Paris 1815–16; enrolled Faculty of Law, Paris and worked as lawyer's clerk, 1816–19. Gained law degree but abandoned law for literature, 1819. Completed first literary work, *Cromwell*, a five-act verse tragedy (unpublished), 1819. Began lasting relationship with 45-year-old Laure de Berny ("La Dilecta"), 1822. Published popular fiction with Liberal overtones under pseudonyms Lord R'Hoone and Horace de Saint-Aubin (partly in collaboration with others), 1822–24. Began love affair with the 42-year-old Duchesse d'Abrantès, 1825; helped her write the first volumes of her memoirs. In business as printer, 1826–28; ended in financial ruin. Publication of *Le dernier chouan*, the earliest of his works to be included in *La comédie humaine*; death of father (Bernard-François Balzac), 1829. Prolific output as journalist and author of short stories ("scenes of private life" and philosophical tales), 1829–32, after which devoted increasingly to novels. Failed relationship with the Marquise de Castries, 1831–32. Began correspondence with admirer from Ukraine, Mme Eveline Hanska ("L'Etrangère"), 1832. Converted to neo-legitimism, partly to please Mme de Castries, 1832. Met Mme Hanska in Switzerland, 1833. Relationship with Maria du Fresnay; second meeting with Mme Hanska (now his mistress) in Geneva, 1833–34. Birth of daughter by Marie, 1834. Met Mme Hanska in Vienna, 1835 (eight years elapsed before they met again). Birth of probable son (by Sarah, Countess Guidoboni-Visconti); death of Mme de Berny, 1835. Visited Italy with Caroline Marbouty disguised as pageboy, 1836. Extensive travels in Italy, 1837. President of the Société des gens de lettres, 1839 (honorary president, 1841). Staged *Vautrin* (immediately banned) in Paris, 1840. Relationship

## BALZAC, HONORÉ DE

with housekeeper, Louise Breugnot (known as Mme de Brugnol), 1840. Visited Touraine and Brittany, probably with Hélène de Valette, 1841. Publication of the “Avant-Propos de *La comédie humaine*,” 1842. Met recently widowed Mme Hanska in St Petersburg; returned via Germany and Belgium, 1843. Chevalier de la Légion d’honneur, 1845. Traveled extensively with Mme Hanska in Europe, 1845–46; stillbirth of their child, 1846. Lived with her in Paris for part of 1847; and in Ukraine, 1847–48. Returned to Paris alone; failed to be elected to the Académie française, 1848 and 1849. Returned to Ukraine, 1848–50. Severe bouts of illness, 1849–50. Married Mme Hanska, 1850. Died in Paris, August 18, 1850, survived by wife and mother.

MICHAEL TILBY

### Selected Works

(date of publication is that of the first edition in book form)

- Jean Louis, ou la fille trouvée*. 1822  
*Physiologie du mariage*, 1830; as *The Physiology of Marriage*  
*Sarrasine*. 1831; as *Sarrasine*  
*La peau de chagrin*. 1831; as *The Magic Skin, The Fatal Skin*, or *The Wild Ass’s Skin*  
*Etude de femme*. 1831; as *Study of Woman* or *A Study of a Woman*  
*Le curé de Tours*. 1832; as *The Abbé Birotteau* or *The Vicar of Tours*  
*Les contes drolatiques*. 1832–37; as *Droll Stories*  
*La femme de trente ans*. 1832–42; as *The Woman of Thirty*  
*Eugénie Grandet*. 1833; as *Eugénie Grandet* or *Eugenie Grandet*  
*La duchesse de Langeais*. 1834; as *The Duchesse de Langeais*  
*Le contrat de mariage*. 1834–35; as *A Marriage Settlement* or *The Marriage Contract*  
*La fille aux yeux d’or*. 1835; as *The Girl with the Golden Eyes* or *The Girl with Golden Eyes*  
*Le père Goriot*. 1835; as *Daddy Goriot*, or *Unrequited Affection*, *Père Goriot*, *Old Man Goriot*, or *Old Goriot Séraphita*. 1835; as *Séraphita*  
*Le lys dans la vallée*. 1836; as *The Lily of the Valley* or *The Lily in the Valley*  
*Une passion dans le désert*. 1837; as *A Passion in the Desert*  
*La vieille fille*. 1837; as *An Old Maid* or *The Jealousies of a Country Town*  
*Illusions perdues*. 1837–43; as *Lost Illusions*  
*La maison Nucingen*. 1838; as *The Firm of Nucingen* or *Nucingen and Co.*  
*Une fille d’Eve*. 1839; as *A Daughter of Eve*  
*Béatrix*. 1839–45; as *Béatrix* or *Beatrix: Love in Duress*  
*Autre étude de femme*. 1842; as *Another Study of Woman*

- Mémoires de jeunes mariées*. 1842; as *Memoirs of Two Young Married Women, Letters of Two Brides*, or *The Two Young Brides*  
*La muse du département*. 1843–44; as *The Muse of the Department*  
*Honorine*. 1844; as *Honorine*  
*Modeste Mignon*. 1844; as *Modeste Mignon*  
*Petites misères de la vie conjugale*. 1845–46; as *Pinpricks of Married Life*  
*Splendeurs et misères des courtisanes*. 1845–55; as *A Harlot’s Progress* or *A Harlot High and Low*  
*La cousine Bette*. 1847; as *Cousin Bette*, *Cousine Bette*, or *Cousin Betty*.  
*Le cousin Pons*. 1847; as *Cousin Pons*

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## BAN, JIEYU

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c. 48–6 BCE

Chinese poet

Ban Jieyu, a poet of Han dynasty (202 BCE–9 CE), is accredited with two *fu* poems, although Kang-I Sun Chang and Haun Saussy have recently cast doubt on her authorship of "Dao su fu" [Rhapsody on Pounding Silk] in *Women Writers of Traditional China: An Anthology of Poetry and Criticism*. The traditional *fu* poem is usually referred to as "rhyme prose" or "rhapsody": Its introduction is in prose, the main body of the poem is based on rhymed verse most of the time, and the conclusion reverts to a prose format. Both introduction and conclusion can take the form of a question or an answer. It is not limited to descriptions and can be used to express philosophical ideas as well as personal emotions. Her "Zi dao fu" [Rhapsody of Self-Commiseration] recalls happy episodes ("Basking in the sage sovereign's generous grace" and "I received highest favor in the Storied Lodge") and sad ones ("Where, still in swaddling clothes, my infant sons met disaster" and "My lord no longer favors me with his presence—who could feel honor in this?") of Ban Jieyu's life. It also harks back to the time when she moved to the Palace of Eternal Trust with the Empress Dowager ("I am hidden in the

dark palace, secluded and still") and mentions titles of poems that hint at her displeasure with the ruthless conduct of the ones she considers usurpers, Zhao Feiyan and her sister. She also expresses her desire to please and fulfill the emperor and repay her devotion when she states:

Whether awake or asleep, I sighed repeatedly;  
I'd loosen my sash and reflect on myself.  
I spread out paintings of women to serve as guiding  
mirrors. (ll. 11–13)

The third poem, attributed by some to Ban Jieyu is known as "Yuan ge xing" [Song of Resentment]. In it one finds allusive language that shows Ban Jieyu's regret at having lost the affection and interest of the emperor when she recalls a "fan of conjoined bliss" which "goes in and out of my lord's breast and sleeve." Her sorrow at losing his sexual attention is expressed in metaphoric terms that are reminiscent of the process often used in later Chinese erotic anthologies such as *The Jade Terrace Anthology*, commissioned by Emperor Jianwen Di (503–551 CE) of the Liang dynasty.

### Biography

Ban Jieyu (Pinyin transcriptions rather than the old Wade-Giles are used throughout; Ban

Jieyu replaces Pan Chieh-yu) is related to Guwutu (604 BCE-?), “nurtured from tiger” in ancient Chinese. Later on, the family chose the Chu name Ban (“striped”) for its close association with the same animal. The Ban family eventually moved to an area north of the Great Wall, where its descendants prospered and gained fame; thus the Ban family was able to acquire official ranks at the court. In *Lienu zhuan* [*Traditions of Exemplary Women*], Liu Xiang (79–8 BCE) describes Ban Jieyu as a woman with penetrating intelligence who could write well. She attracted the attention of Emperor Cheng Liu Ao (32–7 BCE), was given an important position in the palace, and was eventually elevated to the rank of consort: *Jieyu* describes her as the imperial concubine. The emperor liked to chat with her when he visited the inner circle and felt comfortable to be around her, especially as he had his mother’s approval for doing so. As she was so talented, many people wished for several generations that their daughters might be as bright and intelligent. She came to the favorable notice of the Grand Empress Dowager Wang.

In his introduction to the chapter in the *Han shu* [*The History of the Former Han Dynasty*], written by the historian Ban Gu (32–92 CE), that deals with Emperor Cheng, Homer H. Dubs provides additional information about the life of Ban Jieyu in the imperial palace. As Emperor Cheng’s children with his first wife, Empress Xu, all died in infancy, he started to spend more time with his concubines, because according to Confucius, one of the most important duties of a filial son was to father a male heir, even more so in the case of an emperor. First among his concubines he favored Ban Jieyu, a relative of Ban Gu, who had entered the harem as a junior maid but soon rose to the second rank of *favorite beauty*. She remained the emperor’s prime favorite for many years and bore him two children. Although sources available agree that one was a male child, there is disagreement regarding the sex of the second child. Both died at a very early age.

Ban Jieyu had to be concerned about how the emperor would be seen, as many sources comment on her refusal to ride with the emperor in his cart; she based her decision on ancient

paintings that showed decadent rulers of the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties spending most of their time riding with their concubines when they should have been seen with famous people.

As the emperor wished to secure an heir, Ban Jieyu introduced him to one of her maids, who also became a favorite beauty. Thereafter, Emperor Cheng became so attracted to a dancer known as Flying Swallow (Zhao Feiyan) that he made her part of his harem and she soon replaced Ban Jieyu for the affection of the emperor.

Toward the end of the reign of Emperor Cheng, palace intrigues and accusations increased. The empress became estranged from the emperor, and Zhao Feiyan accused her of performing sorcery against him. Eventually, several members of the court, including the empress’s sister, were executed. Ban Jieyu, although accused of being an accomplice, was able to prove through her eloquence that she had not been a participant. In 16 BCE, Zhao Feiyan became empress, and Ban Jieyu came to realize that life at court would soon become untenable for her. She asked permission to leave the harem and to be allowed to care as a lowly servant for the empress dowager in the Palace of Eternal Trust. After the death of Emperor Cheng, she was further removed from the intrigues of the court when she became part of the staff of his funeral park, a position she held until her death.

CLAUDE FOUILLADE

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## BARBEY D'AUREVILLY, JULES-AMÉDÉE

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1808–1889

French novelist and critic

### *Les Diaboliques* [*The She-Devils*]

Upon its publication in 1874, Barbey d'Aurevilly's collection of novellas was threatened with prosecution for outrage to public morality. Barbey withdrew the volume from sale, not wanting what he saw as a metaphysical challenge to contemporary attitudes to be bracketed with pornography. It was republished in 1882 after the end of the period of "moral order" of the 1870s and with the relaxation of censorship in 1881.

The six stories all present variations on a conversational frame: an aristocratic salon, a bedroom, in which a speaker gradually unfolds a tale set in a closed world; a small town in Normandy, a Spanish castle, that leads to a violent and surprising climax.

The opening tale, "Le rideau cramoisi" ["The Crimson Curtain"], sets the pattern: The narrator is traveling by night with the vicomte de Brassard, renowned for his military heroism and amorous conquests. As their coach pauses in a small town, a lit window prompts Brassard to retell his first affair. At the age of seventeen, inexperienced in love and war, he was billeted with an elderly couple; their young daughter initiated an intensely physical but totally wordless affair with the officer, crossing her parents' bedroom to visit him every other night until, after six months, she died abruptly in his arms, leaving him panic stricken. The other tales evoke similarly transgressive passions: In "Le Dessous de cartes d'une partie de whist" ["The Underside of the Cards at a Game of Whist"], the aloof Scotsman Marmor de Karkoël has an affair not just with the comtesse de Stasseville, but with her daughter; after the death of both women (the daughter perhaps poisoned) and the departure of Marmor, adultery and incest are completed

with the implication of infanticide when a child's body is found concealed in a flower-tub. The women are strong-willed but deceptive in appearance. A prostitute in a sordid quarter of Paris reveals herself to her client as a Spanish duchess, seeking revenge on her husband by degrading his name: In a jealous rage he had had his cousin, for whom she was consumed with an idolatrous but unconsummated passion, strangled before her and his heart thrown to his dogs. The final scenes are excessive in their combination of physical violence and symbolic profanation. In "A un dîner d'athées" [At a Dinner of Atheists], set in a French garrison in Spain, major Ydow is provoked by his mistress, nicknamed La Pudica because of her virtuous blushes but in reality predatory, sensual, and promiscuous; they fight over the embalmed heart of the child he had thought was his; then, in a possessive rage, he uses the pommel of his sabre to seal her vulva with the wax with which she had been sealing a letter—refusing her sexual autonomy, punishing her with a male symbol of power—and then is run through by Mesnilgrand (a former lover of La Pudica) who has overheard the scene hidden in the cupboard.

Barbey's preface to the first edition claimed that the morality of the collection lay in evoking horror for the scenes depicted. But what Barbey achieves is rather to challenge what he sees as the tepid conformity and banality of the nineteenth century, with its confidence in progress, democracy, and science. His lucid, passionate figures, untroubled by guilt, notably the virile women, defy the limiting conventions of their world. Their "hideous energy" arouses a paradoxical admiration and underlines the persistence of the diabolical in "this time of progress and civilisation." The physical horrors remind the reader that for Barbey the true horrors are in the mind and the soul. Transgression, as Mesnilgrand points out to a diner who has entertained the atheists with a tale of how he threw the

consecrated host into a pigsty, has no force without a framework of belief.

The recurrent references to the devil and the diabolical (the French title could mean “Diabolical Tales” as well as “She-Devils”) point to the element in human nature that reason cannot pin down: Sexuality and death are intertwined, and at the heart of the stories lies an enigma. Whose is the child whose body is hidden in the flower-tub? What drives Alberte in her reckless affair with Brassard? The narrative offers only “a glimpse of Hell through a cellar window,” carefully prepared and delayed, as the narrator constructs a series of stories within stories. In the climax the details (in “A un dîner d’athées,” allusions to candles, to porches and openings, to sabres) fall into place, as in a jigsaw. The tales end abruptly, precluding any attempt to find out “what happened next” or to fill in the gaps.

### *Ce qui ne meurt pas*

Barbey completed his novel *Germaine* in 1833 but failed to find a publisher both in 1835 and, after revision, in 1845; a third reworking, *Ce qui ne meurt pas* [*What Never Dies*], was published in 1884. It explores through analysis and dialogue the developing passions between three characters in an isolated Norman chateau: Allan de Cynthry, a beautiful orphan of seventeen; the aloof widow Yseult de Scudemor; and her tomboy daughter of thirteen, Camille. Out of pity, Yseult yields to Allan’s adolescent passion, knowing that it will not last; indeed, within two years Allan falls for Camille, whose pregnancy precipitates their marriage. But Yseult is also pregnant by Allan: The discovery of Yseult’s child (both half-sister and husband’s child) destroys Camille’s happiness and precipitates Yseult’s death. For all the characters love proves impossible, as it transgresses barriers (age, kinship, marriage); for each character a previous love (for Yseult, a schoolgirl lesbian attachment and an affair with her husband’s nephew) undermines reciprocity in a present relationship; and, unlike sterile pity, which “does not die,” passion is sensual and transient. Although essentially psychological, the variations on semi-incestuous passion and certain scenes—Allan’s desire reawakening as he watches Yseult in bed, Camille undressing for an unmoved Allan on their wedding night—proved audacious in 1835. They were no longer shocking by the 1880s.

### Biography

Born in Saint-Sauveur-le-Vicomte, Normandy, November 2, 1808. Educated in Valognes, staying with a liberal and freethinking uncle, then at Collège Stanislas, Paris, 1827–29; studied at the Faculty of Law, Caen, 1829–33. Moved to Paris. Struggled with little success to gain a living as a political and literary critic, collaborating with several reviews and newspapers; became known as a flamboyant dandy, but rapidly exhausted an inheritance. From 1846 his initial rebellion against his backward-looking family shifted to ultraroyalist and Catholic views, and his controversially reactionary and provocative political and literary journalism brought him notoriety; he gradually became known as a novelist (*Le Chevalier des Touches*, 1863). From 1871 stayed increasingly in Valognes. Suffering from liver disease, he fell seriously ill in 1888 and died after a hemorrhage, in Paris, April 23, 1889.

PETER COGMAN

### Editions

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## BATAILLE, GEORGES

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# BATAILLE, GEORGES

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1897–1962

French novelist and philosopher

Georges Bataille is impossible to categorize as a writer: Whatever the subject or the discipline to which a particular work of his may be said to belong, Bataille could not really be categorized as a sociologist, a philosopher or an economist, since his whole work emerges from the same source and responds to similar demands. Underlying all of his concerns is a fascination with the dynamic between the life force (represented most particularly by the erotic impulse) and the pull of death. His teachers were the Russian philosopher Leon Chestov, who stimulated in him above all an interest in Nietzsche; the sociologist Marcel Mauss, who caused him to question conventional views of the economic relationships between people in society; and Alexandre Kojève, the Hegelian philosopher, who encouraged his interest in the social organization of society. He was above all influenced by Nietzsche, not simply philosophically, but in the way he lived his life: Like Nietzsche, Bataille considered philosophy as emerging from the experience of life and not from the contemplation of abstract theories. In addition, he was notable as an editor of journals, being responsible for *Documents* (1929–30), *Acéphale* (1936–9) and *Critique* (1946–62), having founded both *Acéphale* and *Critique*, the latter of which was still being published in 2002.

Bataille was also the author of several novels, or perhaps more accurately, narrative texts, in which eroticism is to the fore and which contribute to what may be considered pornographic literature. It is important to insist on the fact that they are "pornographic" rather than "erotic," since Bataille insisted on their unrespectable quality; indeed, he regarded literature itself as accursed, and its works as being "evil," a theme explored in his study *Literature and Evil* (1955). It would be wrong, however, to see these works as set apart from his theoretical texts. Rather, they explore the same themes in different ways, enriching and sometimes commenting upon the themes he raised in his more "respectable" works. Having said this, though, a tension is still maintained between the "respectable" and "unrespectable" texts: During his lifetime, Bataille published most of his novels under pseudonyms and never publicly acknowledged having written them. This tension is central to his understanding of the basis of the erotic relation.

It is important to appreciate that Bataille was a serious writer concerned with fundamental issues. This is as true of his supposedly pornographic literature as it is of his theoretical texts. His novels are "pornographic" not in the sense of being titillating or exploitative, but because they are rending and unbearable and speak of things that should not be spoken of, yet have to be spoken of—a paradox that is central to Bataille's philosophy. Sex is obscene because it

is linked to death, which cannot be spoken about and is itself obscene because it undermines the stability and security of life. The fundamental framework of all of his writing is an exploration of what it means to be human and the nature of existence, especially in terms of how people live with one another. His work as a whole may be said to be concerned with one overarching question: How do we come to terms with the fact of our limits and live with the realization that we are discontinuous beings ultimately consigned to death and oblivion?

Central to this is the notion of communication. In order to survive in society, we need to communicate with our fellow beings. Bataille was firmly opposed to the doctrine of individualism that informs so much of Western thinking. He believed that the individual is no more than a concretization of forms and has no existence in and of itself. We are fundamentally social and material beings whose reality is formed by the demands society makes of us. We may accept or fight against such demands, but we cannot ignore them. Birth is a violent process, tearing us from the continuity of the universe, where all things are undifferentiated, and casting us into a world marked by difference. We need to come to terms with the fact that what surrounds us is alien to us. It imposes conditions on us, forces us to take certain paths while disqualifying others, and never allows us to relax into what we are, whatever that may be. We are therefore separated, at a fundamental level, both from ourselves and from others.

Sexual relationships are the locus of experience in which this separation is most acutely and intensely felt. In sexual union, we are drawn to what will annihilate us. It is important to realize that Bataille is not at all an advocate of sexual freedom. Far from it, sexuality is anguish; it defines our torment even as it promises to alleviate it. In its most intense form, in love, this anguish becomes unbearable, especially when we are faced with the loss of what we have loved. The sexual act itself encapsulates this sense of anguish: Drawn into a momentary unity with the other, we are paradoxically forced to confront the essential separateness against which this apparent unity is measured. This is the essential meaning of the “*petite mort*” experienced in orgasm. “Sexual satisfaction,” for Bataille, could be only a fundamental evasion, if not a contradiction in terms.

Eroticism is therefore the cornerstone of Bataille’s thinking. It is, far more than language or culture, what distinguishes us from beasts, who experience only functional sexuality and remain within a relative continuity of being. Eroticism is thus linked with death, or rather with the consciousness of death: It is because we, unlike other animals, are aware of the fact that we shall die that our being is so fundamentally anguished. Consciousness itself, then, is founded in knowledge of death: We become aware of ourselves as separated beings when we learn that one day we shall no longer live, that we shall return to the continuity from which we were expelled in being born and that, in the process, all sense of ourselves as individualized, integral beings—so important to us in our existence as social beings—will be lost.

A fascination with form and materiality therefore lies at the heart of Bataille’s interrogation. In a very short early text, he posited the idea of the “formless” as that which defies meaning and so subverts everything we cherish in the world. Matter in itself is in fact formless and assumes a form only through the human engagement with it. But there is something accursed about this engagement, since by transforming matter in this way, we become uneasy about the real nature of the material world, which escapes us (this is the conventional separation between nature and culture, but conceived in such a way that culture is seen as a deception we tell ourselves to hide from our true nature, which is brute matter). His materialism emerges from this notion: He was not a common materialist in the sense that he believed that there is only one material world, but rather he asserted materialism as the condition of our existence as human beings, in the process brandishing materialism as a weapon against all “idealism” (by which he meant any belief that makes it possible to transcend the human condition). He termed this conception “base materialism,” since it takes us to our roots, which are precisely what we try to deny through a concern for the future and some form of “salvation”: These are simply vain attempts to evade the inevitable. This notion, subversive of cultural forms, strips us of our dignity: We are nothing but formless matter pretending to be something we are not.

From this perspective, sexual desire in Bataille is traumatic and overpowering. Its

basis is to be found not in an instinctive will to propagate the species (indeed, eroticism is even the antithesis of the will to reproduce), nor is it a libidinous urge for pleasure or power. Not that these do not exist, but they are not of its essence. Desire, rather, is something akin to the death drive of Freudian psychology: an elementary urge to return to the lost continuity of existence and to experience the baseness at the core of our reality as material beings. As such, it challenges our sense of personal identity and the responsibility we owe to society.

Eroticism is thus transgressive of social norms, bringing into question what binds us together in society. In this, like all transgressive forms—festivals, initiation rituals, sacrificial practices, wars—it affirms, even as it challenges, social structures: It does not, as such, represent a rebellion against society. Indeed, for Bataille, the whole social structure relies precisely upon such transgressive moments that bring it into question only in order to strengthen it.

These are the themes that are worked through, in interweaving ways, in both Bataille's theoretical and literary writings, which represent a powerful interrogation of what it means to be present in the world and how our identity is formed through an engagement with forces that are alien to us (these may be social forms, other people, or the life force itself).

### ***The Story of the Eye* (1928)**

*The Story of the Eye* was Bataille's first major published work, but never during his lifetime did he publicly acknowledge having written it. It appeared clandestinely in 1928 under the name of Lord Auch in an edition of only 134 copies. Yet it is probably now the book for which he is best known.

Like most of Bataille's stories, it is a tale of sexual initiation. In it, his own adolescent fears and desires are projected onto an imagined scenario. The unnamed narrator and his girlfriend Simone are sixteen at the beginning of the story. They indulge in sexual games together, though without actually copulating. One day while they are on a cliff top, a pure girl, Marcelle, happens by, and they draw her into their games. Marcelle becomes a kind of touchstone for their desire, almost an emissary whose mission is to quicken and extend their transgressive instincts. In the end she seems to offer herself as something of a

sacrificial victim, who, in dying, through suicide, finally allows the young lovers to consummate their love, which they do before desecrating the corpse of the young woman. Escaping to Spain, the narrator and Simone encounter a rich Englishman, Sir Edmund. Together, they attend a bullfight in Madrid. Sir Edmund offers Simone, at her request, a plate containing bull's balls. As she inserts one of them into her vagina, the bullfighter Granero is struck by a bull, and his eye is cast out of its socket. Still intoxicated with the horror of this scene, they travel next day to Seville. Passing by the church of Don Juan, they decide to enter and Simone enjoins a priest to hear her confession. While confessing, Simone is also masturbating and then challenges the priest, whom she sexually abuses. Finally, while in the process of fucking Simone, the priest is martyred by Sir Edmund. After having performed profanities with the corpse of the priest, including cutting out one of his eyes, which Simone tries to insert into her anus, they make their way incognito through Andalusia, the two men dressed as priests, before setting sail at Gibraltar.

Like all of Bataille's fictions, *The Story of the Eye* is about sexual fascination taken in its most disturbing aspects. It is fundamentally the story of Simone, a capricious young woman who carries the events along by her refusal of all constraint. The unnamed narrator is enraptured by Simone's immorality. Saying that she is immoral, however, tells only half the story: This is an "immorality" that is active and contagious, going beyond human bounds; it serves no ends but is a disinterested immorality, an immorality that immolates. Like a devouring sun goddess (almost all of Bataille's heroines share the quality that they are as much forces of nature as women), she consumes everything in her path.

There is a childlike quality to *The Story of the Eye*—and this because of, rather than despite, its erotic qualities. The cruelty, at least, is that of children, or perhaps of children emerging into adolescence while retaining the innocence of childhood. For it is—and this is not the least of its qualities—a profoundly innocent book, an innocence which is that of fairy stories (and of course, fairy stories can be written only by adults).

At the same time, this innocence is marked by trauma, the trauma that faces all humans as they learn of the reality of sex and death. Simone confronts this trauma—and she alone is an active

character in the story, the others being either victims, observers, or catalysts—not by adapting herself to it, but by following the logic of its realization to its extreme. It is this that makes her a goddess as well as retains her as a child: She refuses the injunction to become a human by restraining her urges in the interests of society.

But the story is at the same time the dream, or the nightmare, of the narrator, who is carried along rather than seduced by Simone. This has an element of Nietzschean eternal return, for it is an adolescent dream; not the dream of an adolescent, but rather a dream that recurs and repeats itself throughout the life cycle, presenting a temptation (which is the temptation of adolescence) to enter the realm of the impossible, retaining the innocence of childhood within the framework of adult desires, while rejecting the responsibilities that come with adulthood.

A curious thing about this is that it is so totally contrary to Bataille's own adolescence. Far from living a life of extreme libidinous unconstraint, Bataille appears not even to have sowed any conventional wild oats. On the contrary, he seems to have gone to the other extreme, devoting himself to a life of pious rectitude with the intention of becoming a priest. Having been brought up without religion, his adolescent rebellion was to become a Catholic. He appears to have renounced Christianity sometime around 1922, when he was already twenty-five (Bataille later said that he rejected Christianity because it had caused "a woman he loved to shed tears"), but the crucial event may have been when he witnessed the death of the bullfighter Granero in the ring, an event that plays a key role in *The Story of the Eye*. Bataille wrote *The Story of the Eye* at a time of personal crisis. Turning violently against religion and plunging into a life of debauchery, having become fascinated by the works of Nietzsche, Bataille had perhaps in one bound reached the point Nietzsche reached in 1889 when he went insane. Faced with a void, he did not, however, become mad. Instead he became a writer, and *The Story of the Eye* was the first fruit of this new confidence. It might even be said, developing the theme of eternal return, to be Bataille's attempt to rewrite his adolescence, or perhaps, more accurately, to write it over, like a palimpsest, so re-creating his own identity.

Bataille credited the psychoanalyst Adrien Borel, under whom he undertook analysis, with

providing him with the assurance necessary to write a book. He had previously, in 1926, written *W.C.*, a work at once "of violent opposition to any form of dignity" and "a shriek of horror," as he described it, which he had destroyed. *The Story of the Eye* has the sense of deliverance, but it is a deliverance through laceration. Bataille could come to terms with his "sickness"—a sickness of the soul that could never be cured or even communicated because it was a sickness of existence itself—only by means of violent catharsis, which is precisely what writing meant to him and of which *The Story of the Eye* sets the standard.

### ***Blue of Noon* (1935)**

*Le bleu du ciel* was written at the beginning of 1935 (though published only in 1957) at a moment of transformation in Bataille's life, when his first marriage was breaking up and he was losing any hope in political solutions to the problems of existence.

It begins in London, where the narrator, Henri Troppmann, having split up with his wife, Edith, leaving her and the two children in Brighton, is staying at the Savoy with a rich German woman called Dorothea, whom he calls Dirty. Dirty, drunk, calls for the maid and elevator attendant and, giving them a massive tip, subjects them to a nauseous performance in which she urinates on the carpet and verbally abuses them. Back in Paris, Troppmann meets up with Lazare, a young revolutionary, "ugly and conspicuously filthy," with whom he constantly argues but who becomes his confidante. Later, he is introduced to another woman, Xenie, at dinner. Caressing her thigh, he digs a fork into her leg, drawing blood. The next day, he feels ill. He visits Lazare, who is with her father-in-law. The three of them discuss politics before Troppmann, disgusted by their conversation, which seems meaningless to him, leaves, walking home in the pouring rain. He becomes seriously ill and is confined to his room. Xenie visits him and agrees to stay with him, to the annoyance of his mother-in-law, with whom he is living. Their talk is mostly of death: she is drawn to him but feels that their relationship will cause her to die. Troppmann speaks of his necrophiliac urges, confiding in her that when his mother died he had performed an obscene act in the presence of her corpse. He seduces

Xenie but has the feeling that he is making love with a corpse.

We next encounter Troppmann in Barcelona, a city on the point of insurrection. He meets a friend, Michel. They talk about Lazare, who is planning to attack a prison with a group of revolutionaries. Being terrified at the thought of meeting Lazare, Troppmann calls Xenie, asking her to join him in Barcelona. While she is on her way, he receives a letter from Dirty. Trying to contact her, he learns that she is catching a plane to Barcelona to be with him. The next day, he meets Xenie at the train station but leaves her with Michel while he goes to meet Dirty at the airport: She looks terrible and is apparently seriously ill. In his room, she tells him of going into a church in Vienna and lying outstretched on the ground, arms outstretched. Xenie comes to the room in a frantic state. He is desperate to prevent her from disturbing Dirty and has to force her to leave. Next day, Xenie returns, accompanied by Lazare. He learns that Michel has been killed in street fighting. Troppmann and Dirty remain in Barcelona for some months until her money runs out, when he accompanies her to Germany. Near Trier, they make love in a graveyard. When they reach Trier, disheveled and covered in mud, a little boy stares at them. He imagines that this little boy might have been the young Karl Marx (who was born in Trier). The next day they travel on to Frankfurt, where they will part. Against the background of Nazi regimentation, he catches the train back to Paris.

*Le bleu du ciel* is marked by a sense of impending tragedy. All hope appears to have been abandoned. The characters all seem to be on the point of crying, when they are not about to vomit, and all seem to be contemplating death. The only exception, Lazare, the fanatical revolutionary, is portrayed as dangerously naive. The most “realist” of Bataille’s novels (at least to the extent that it takes place in a recognizable locale with direct links to events and characters in Bataille’s life and can, although misleadingly, be analyzed as a *roman à clef*), it eludes any easy categorization. In a world on the point of collapse, sexuality is the only thing that vivifies life, but the characters are impotent, destined to a sterile future in which death alone has sovereignty.

*Le bleu du ciel* is a tormented book. If all of Bataille’s fiction has a tormented quality, no others are so unrelenting in their treatment of

it. As his most directly autobiographical story, we are justified in regarding this torment as being carried over from his own life at the time. The story is also distinguished from his others insofar as the crisis to which it gives voice emerges from the problems of everyday living rather than from anguish over the predicament at the heart of human existence. His other books may more accurately be described as lacerated rather than tormented, and the distinction is fundamental to understanding the significance of *Le bleu du ciel*.

The eroticism of the book cannot be detached from its political content. While not at all a work of “sexual politics,” the breakdown in sexual relationships the story details seems to parallel the breakdown in the political situation. Bataille had apparently taken the name of Troppmann from a murderer executed in 1870 for having killed his parents and his six brothers and sisters. As “too much of a man,” in his impotence and lack of purpose, he appears to reflect an inability to act that would characterize the politics of the time, a crisis of virility that would lead to the terrible conflagrations of the Spanish civil war and world war. Even the women (in virtually all of Bataille’s other fiction, the women are the active characters, who make things happen) seem strangely subdued and lacking in energy, despite the political engagement of both Lazare and Xenie.

The book is also a record of separation; not only had his marriage failed, so too had his belief in the efficacy of political activity been shattered. Bataille would continue to be politically active until the beginning of the Second World War, but his political activity would henceforth be drained of hope: The rising clouds of fascism—ever-present throughout the book—were largely responsible for this crisis, since, as Bataille analyzed it, fascism responded to elemental human compulsions that could lead to only the worst and which communism appeared unable to satisfy (and of which capitalism was incapable even of perceiving the necessity).

After he had written *Le bleu du ciel*, the double crisis that had given rise to it would be temporarily resolved in Bataille’s life, or at least put on hold. During 1935, he fell in love with Colette Peignot, with whom he had his most intense relationship, both sexually and intellectually. In the same year, he also formed Contre-Attaque, an antifascist, anti-Popular

Front political group. When this collapsed, he established the College of Sociology and a secret society, *Acéphale*, devoted to strange rituals to confront the lack of significant myths in contemporary life. With the coming of war, these groups fell apart. Even more significantly, Colette Peignot died in 1938, leaving Bataille bereft and in solitude.

*Le bleu du ciel* is a portent of this collapse. Troppmann seems oppressed by the immensity of the sky, something emphasized by the fact that the story takes us across a Europe about to be devastated, as Bataille's personal life too was to be devastated.

### ***Madame Edwarda* (1941)**

*Madame Edwarda* tells the story of a meeting with God, in the guise of a whore, or, quite simply, a woman. It was another book that Bataille never publicly acknowledged writing and which was published under the name of Pierre Angélique (the first two editions were issued with false dates and places of publication). Wandering through the deserted streets around rue Poissonnière and rue Saint-Denis, with solitude and darkness completing his drunkenness, the unnamed narrator desires to be as naked as the night. Attracted by the light of a brothel, he enters and chooses Madame Edwarda from among a group of prostitutes. As he caresses her, he feels himself abandoned, as though he is in the presence of God. In this moment when he feels enclosed by night, Madame Edwarda opens her legs and her "tatters [hardly a euphemism, but rather an intensification of the obscenity of revealing her sexual parts] looked at me, hairy and pink, full of life like a repulsive octopus." She forces him to look at her sexual parts and then to kiss them, telling him that she is indeed God. When he has paid the brothel keeper, Madame Edwarda takes him upstairs to a room lined with mirrors. They may or may not have sex, then Edwarda insists they go out. In the streets, beneath the porte Saint-Denis, a strange ritual takes place between them. This culminates when a taxi comes by. Edwarda, naked, reveals her sexual parts to the driver, and they have sex, watched by the narrator.

*Madame Edwarda* is one of the most intense and concentrated stories ever written. Barely ten pages long, it contains more real content than

most stories of ten times its length. Its intensity is such that it is difficult to write about: In writing the text, the author (and we should recall that this is Pierre Angélique, who should not be confused with Georges Bataille, who wrote a preface to the 1954 edition—Bataille's play upon authorship takes its most complex form with this book) is describing the "impossible," something that can be only experienced and dissolves if subjected to discursive language. Consequently, his writing here is troubled and becomes incoherent in places.

Like all of the characters in Bataille's work, the narrator is interested neither in pleasure nor in satisfying a physical urge in the sexual encounter. He enters the brothel to get away from the solitude of night, attracted by its light. His experience there is comparable to that of the Hindu devotee who enters a temple to be in the presence of divinity; to be *seen* by the deity. It is also an encounter with the mother goddess—she might be Medusa or Durga—in her terrible aspect. But the invitation to look directly at her most intimate parts, recalls ancient mystery cults, or Tantric practices, in which the female sexual organs are worshipped, and looking upon them is part of an initiation ritual. This impossible encounter on a Parisian night is all the more powerful for having been unanticipated.

### ***The Dead Man* (1944)**

All of Bataille's work is marked by death. In this story (if that is what it can be called), death takes its most explicit form. Published only in 1967, the story concerns a woman, Marie, whose lover Edouard has just died. Naked as he had asked her to be when he was dying, she keeps vigil over his body. Putting on an overcoat, she goes into the forest and then to the village inn. Hesitating for a while, she enters and orders a drink, offering herself and getting drunk. She dances and has sex with a farmhand, Pierrot, but is more drawn to a diabolical, ratlike dwarf, the Count, who appears in the inn later. She urinates over him for his pleasure, and at dawn they leave for her home to rejoin the corpse of Edouard. On the way, Marie listens to the singing of the birds in the forest. In the house, the Count undresses. He goes to join Marie in the room with the corpse of Edouard, but as he does so she electrocutes herself. After



watching the hearse with the two coffins pass by, the Count throws himself into the canal.

*The Dead Man* essentially recounts an initiation ritual into death. The structure of the story appears to be established as a sacrilegious parody of the stations of the cross to Calvary, with Edouard and the Count, respectively, representing the aspects of Christ dead and resurrected—although it is actually Marie who is the crucified one, subject to self immolation. A variation on Bataille's familiar themes, in this story the woman acts as an emissary of death, initiating it and making it active (here she too may be compared to Christ, but a reversed Christ, offering oblivion rather than salvation).

Like *Madame Edwarda*, a short but intense story, *The Dead Man* is the most obscene and unbearable of Bataille's narratives, with an obscenity that is the obscenity of death. Although the war is not mentioned in it, the story is permeated by the atmosphere of war and ends with all three of the main characters dead.

### ***L'Abbé C. (1950)***

In *L'Abbé C.* we are again confronted with a triad of characters. In this story we actually have twin brothers, Charles and Robert, and a woman, Eponine. Set in 1942 under the Nazi occupation (although this presence is barely hinted at in the story), we are given a narrative fragmented in its structure. The main part of the story is written by Charles, prefaced by an unnamed editor, a friend of the brothers. This unnamed editor concludes the story.

We are introduced to the characters some time after Robert (the Abbé C. of the title) has returned to his hometown, where his brother still lives. As a child, Robert had been close friends with a girl, Eponine. When, aged thirteen, she had started to sleep around, Robert had broken off his friendship with her and refused even to acknowledge her existence. This also estranged him from his brother. The story starts some ten years later. Robert has become a priest, while Charles lives a debauched life, and Eponine is a prostitute. In her hatred of Robert ("if she saw him on the street she would laugh and, like someone gaily whistling for his dog, click her tongue and call out to him: 'Virgin!'",), Eponine is determined to seduce him, and enlists Charles to help her. They meet when climbing a tower next to the church. The climb is precipitous, and

Charles almost falls, nearly taking Robert with him; the temptation of suicide, causing the death of his brother in the process, is not far away from his thoughts. Isolated from the world in the tower, the tensions between them are exacerbated with the arrival of Eponine's mother, who berates her daughter for going out naked under her coat. When a gust of wind momentarily blows open her coat, Robert is traumatized by a glimpse of her nudity. Next day when he visits him, Robert tells Charles that he is seriously ill, but Charles insists he must go to Eponine. He refuses, and Eponine, furious with Charles for having failed in his task, gives herself to the local butcher.

The following Sunday, Robert is persuaded to perform high mass. Charles attends, as does Eponine, along with two prostitute friends, Rosie and Raymonde. They sit in the front row. While taking mass, Robert is seemingly so disturbed by their presence that he collapses. Apparently gravely ill, Robert is cared for by nuns. One evening, while Charles and Eponine are making love, someone relieves himself on her doorstep. At first it is believed that the butcher is responsible, but they discover that it was Robert who did it while secretly watching their lovemaking. Robert vanishes, and Charles later discovers that Robert went on to live a debauched life with the two prostitutes, Rosie and Raymonde, until arrested by the Gestapo for his resistance activities. Tortured, he betrays Charles and Eponine immediately but gives away none of his resistance comrades under the worst tortures before he dies. The Gestapo arrests Eponine, who dies at their hands, but Charles left home and so evades capture. Having discovered the truth of his betrayal from Robert's former cellmate, Charles deposits the manuscript with the editor, insisting that he must arrange for it to be published. A few weeks later, Charles commits suicide.

*L'Abbé C.* is a closed narrative. It "conceals the very thing it was supposed to make known". As much might be said of most of Bataille's writing, but in this book the "concealing what was supposed to be revealed" is most fully realized within narrative terms. At the end, we know that the three central characters are all dead. If we are struck by the capriciousness of the characters, it is a caprice marked by compulsion; there is nothing arbitrary about it: Their tormenting of one another is a form of

love. In tormenting one another, too, they are tormenting themselves. As with all of Bataille's characters, they are bound together by some mysterious pact of which they know nothing, other than that they cannot resolve it and consequently it tears them apart.

The two brothers mirror and complete one another; as twins they have chosen different paths, but no matter what they do, they are inseparable. If Robert is a coward, a sanctimonious and hypocritical man with desires he is unable to control, at least he has the imagination to recognize his weaknesses, whereas Charles, in surrendering to libertinism, seems to surrender any active life, being at the mercy of events and unable to act in any direction, even as a hypocrite. They represent a similitude of characteristics, not an opposition, manifesting incompatible feelings that nevertheless make up a perfect whole. This makes each of them individually incomplete, but, more than this, uncompletable, since what each lacks is contained within the other: Charles, the libertine, is impotent; Robert, the priest who has given himself to God and to chastity, is a surging mass of desires. Neither has a genuine identity but is defined by an absent self which is unknowable to them. In consequence neither man is able to respond to the challenge Eponine issues to them. This woman, *eponymous* as she is, is defined in relation to the two men (L'Abbé C. is "the abc" and may refer to both men, since besides being two halves of the same person, they seem to be rudimentary people, containing the essential elements of what constitutes a human being, but in an underdeveloped form), who together sum up the trepidation of men confronted with the principle of femininity. At one point, Charles even imagines himself as Eponine in bed with Robert, and there is a certain suggestion that the characters, at some level, are interchangeable with one another, since none has a clear identity but seems to act only on an imperative of or to bring forth a reaction from the others. It is this that gives the story its particular quality: There is no opposition between the characters, but rather a similitude that holds them bound to one another and unable to act on their own behalf.

### ***My Mother* (1955)**

*My Mother* was written in the mid-fifties but remained uncompleted and was published only

posthumously in 1967. It appears that had Bataille published it, it would have been under the pseudonym of Pierre Angélique (the author of *Madame Edwarda*), whose story it tells. At the beginning, Pierre's father has just died. Pierre, seventeen years old, is a pious young man, who has largely been brought up by his grandmother and has lived with his parents for only the previous three years. He does not regret the death—he even rejoices in it—as his father, whom he saw as a drunkard, abused his wife, Héléne, Pierre's mother. On the evening before the funeral, Héléne reveals a side of herself that Pierre has never seen before: she shows that she is a debauched woman, as she wants him to know that she is repugnant and yet, in spite of this, to love her to the point of death. He learns that she had been a child of nature, running naked in the woods, and that his father, coming across her there, had raped her. When she became pregnant, they were forced to marry. But it was she who had corrupted him, and they lived a debauched life together, of which Pierre was completely unaware. She undertakes to initiate her son in the same way. First she shows him obscene photographs, at which he masturbates. This is an act that exposes to Pierre a side of himself he had kept hidden or been unaware of and it overpowers all of his pious thoughts. Unable to go to his confessor (something which would have been a betrayal of his mother), far from feeling ashamed, he is "proud as a savage" at his sins. Recalling a maxim from La Rochefoucauld that "neither the sun nor death can be looked at directly," he has the sense that knowledge of his mother's crimes, far from repelling him, had caused him to elevate her into God. Another character enters upon the scene, forming the triadic relation that is characteristic of virtually all of the situations in Bataille's fiction. This is Réa, Héléne's lover, who acts as the intermediary between Pierre and his mother, engaging him in sexual excess. Réa also serves to provide a breakwater, something like the sword that lies between Tristan and Iseult, preventing physical consummation with his mother, which was really the sign of the impossible. Another of Héléne's lovers, Hansi, enters the picture when Héléne and Réa leave together for Egypt. A new triad is formed by the introduction of Loulou, Hansi's maid. One day, Héléne and Réa return unexpectedly, finding Hansi and Pierre naked. This makes possible

## BATAILLE, GEORGES

the final transgression, when Pierre and his mother make love. Afterward, Hélène kills herself, Réa becomes a nun, and Hansi marries another man. Pierre is left alone in his loss.

Bataille planned that *My Mother* would constitute, with *Madame Edwarda* and another story, *Charlotte d'Ingerville* (of which only a fragment remains), a trilogy providing a kind of autobiography of Pierre Angélique, which Bataille intended to call *Divinus deus*.

It would be wrong to think of *My Mother* as a novel about incest. There is no sexual desire between Pierre and his mother; their physical relations are rather determined by the rules of an initiation ritual, the necessary culmination of which is a transgression which is an experience of the impossible. Hélène, although she is his mother, is not a mortal woman, she “was of another world,” and it is their final coupling, like that of the devotee of a mystery cult, that serves to give Pierre a glimpse of the “other world” that is the impossible. She is less his mother than a succubus who responds to his hidden temptations, and he is less her son than a fact of nature tied to her by something more powerful than any biological link: “You are not my son, but the fruit of my anguish in the woods” she says at one point.

Pierre himself is torn between two worlds. This “angelic stone” combines, like an alchemical emblem, the elements of earth and air, for, as always with Bataille, names are significant and imbue characters with an identity that constrains them within certain limits which they need to understand if they are to learn to unravel the secret paths that lead toward the impossible. The initiation is necessary to draw Pierre away from the path of piety and righteousness, in which he is trapped in illusions, seeking a perfection he projects upon his mother. Revealing her true nature, the mother also separates Pierre from Christian illusions of transcendence and salvation. This mother is not simply a god, but a *sun god*, giving with no expectation of return but implacable and terrifying in her demands. Like Madame Edwarda she has many of the characteristics of Durga, or Kali, in her ferocious form.

But there is also a sense in which the relation between Pierre and Hélène is itself an illusion, one more puzzle in a quest for self-realization. Pierre comes to accept that he does not love his mother; he adores her. The distinction is crucial. This adoration, in fact, stands in the way of love.

The woman he loves is Hansi, and he realizes that this love is something his mother will never accept. This makes the ultimate transgression all the more crucial: Pierre must “know” his mother completely, in order to kill her within himself. This is his betrayal of her: He casts her out of himself and she must die. Even this is insufficient to realize his love for Hansi: She will marry another. In the final analysis, he is alone.

But not for long. In the sketch of the next part of the trilogy, another initiatrix will appear: Charlotte d'Ingerville, who seems to be something of an amalgam of Hansi and Hélène; indeed, she too has been initiated by the latter. He meets her in a church, where he has gone to “acknowledge” his sins (his debauchery with Réa, Hansi, and Loulou; his making love with his mother). This is not a confession, but another transgressive act: to acknowledge crimes that were more divine than the church. Charlotte tells him to leave a light on in his room and she will come to him at midnight. She informs him about the form by which his mother “initiated” her in the woods. Later, in Paris, Charlotte is arrested when drunk and appears to be dying. The story ends there and we can only conjecture how it would have continued.

Clearly *My Mother* and *Charlotte d'Ingerville* were conceived by Bataille as leads into *Madame Edwarda*. Pierre is led through a whole series of stages of initiation by different women whose overall trajectory is difficult to discern due both to the fragmentary nature of the narratives and to the fact that as the final stage of the process, *Madame Edwarda* is so perfectly formed and yet seems to have an existence to the side of the other stories, being rather a culmination of them.

In his stories, Bataille explores a world of “lacerated” being, a favorite word of Bataille's referring to the identity of people and their relationships with one another, indicating that we are not secure in the nature of what we are and that it is our erotic relationships that reveal this most starkly. There is an unsparing quality to Bataille's work. For him eroticism is nefarious, having a violent and shattering quality—certainly nothing about it is reassuring. As has been emphasized, it is indissolubly allied with, and indeed is an intimation of, death, even setting itself up against life. There is something of the Chthonic quality to Bataille's viewpoint, which brings him close to the Manichaean attitude that

saw the world of matter and everything associated with it, including life itself, as the product of evil. Eroticism does not serve fertility, but dissolution, tearing open the person and revealing the absence of being that lies at its heart.

At the same time, however, there is a plenitude and expansiveness in Bataille's conception. In perhaps his most widely quoted passage, he defined eroticism as "assenting to life up to the point of death"; it is "the assenting to life even in death." This is the curse that is placed upon sexuality, which makes the sexual act both rending and desirable, since it reveals our vulnerability just as it seems we are satisfying our yearnings. And yet it is at the same time a profound affirmation of being. If eroticism strips us bare, it also opens us up to something greater, to the universal flow, making it possible for us to live. In eroticism, we dissolve our personality within that of another. In this respect, the Manichaeic element in Bataille's thinking is overturned, for if Bataille considers matter evil, he does not seek escape from it, but rather to plunge into it, since it is part of the principle of life that must be accepted on its own terms.

This goes against that received wisdom of genetics which asserts that life serves life and that the purpose of life is to reproduce itself. On the contrary, Bataille asserts that life serves death and that far from wishing to preserve itself, life has a stronger urge to expend itself; this marks its complicity with death. Here is the horror of being—more deeply inscribed than that with which Conrad concluded *Heart of Darkness*—but it is a horror that, far from repelling Bataille, attracts him, for it is horror only because it violates our sense of personal security, tearing us apart and revealing what we truly are. Instead of denying the evil of the universe or striving to overcome it, the need, for Bataille, was to confront it.

These themes are extensively developed in various theoretical works. In three books conceived of as a kind of trilogy, to be called *La Somme athéologique*, there are no "characters" as such and the themes are approached in a way that is fundamentally philosophical in nature, but the same issues are raised as in the novels, and in a similarly digressive form, so that to draw a distinction between them and the novels is not always a simple matter. These books are *Inner Experience* (1943), described as a "journey to the ends of the possible"; *Guilty* (1944); and

*On Nietzsche* (1945), which pays homage to Bataille's spiritual mentor. All were written during wartime and give voice to a deep anxiety that is less connected to the war as such than to Bataille's inner state, in which the nature and force of sexual attraction and the erotic relation are central. Rather than being a participant in a war, Bataille once said that he was himself war.

One of the most striking aspects of Bataille's work was the link he made between eroticism and the economy. He first made this link in an essay published in 1933, "The Notion of Expenditure," in which he asserted that society (at least modern society) was founded in a denial of the natural exuberance of the world. Instead of accepting this natural exuberance, we try to master it in order to provide ourselves with security and shelter from the hostile world surrounding us. This leads us to make scarcity the principle that determines not simply our economic activity, but every aspect of our behavior. Bataille, in contrast, believed that our productive activity naturally created surpluses, and the principal problem was how to expend such surplus. He developed this argument further in his book *The Accursed Share*, published in 1949, in which he looked at the ways in which societies had historically sought to control this natural exuberance of which eroticism—an example of pure expenditure—was one of the main expressions.

*The Accursed Share* was also conceived as a trilogy, but like so many of Bataille's projects, it was never completed (although we do have texts of the two other parts that appear to be almost in a finished form). The second volume, *The History of Eroticism* (written in 1951, but unpublished in Bataille's lifetime), directly ties eroticism into his argument and was the first of three works in which Bataille directly confronted eroticism sociologically. It was followed by *Eroticism* (1957), arguably Bataille's masterpiece, and *The Tears of Eros* (1961), his last work, which largely applies the argument of *Eroticism* to the history of art. These books work as theoretical elaborations of the themes to be found in his novels and need to be read in conjunction with them. Bataille's work as a whole is marked by its probing and unflinching quality, and he explored eroticism, both in his fictional works and in his theoretical texts, not as something salacious or titillating, and certainly not as something distracting, but in a way that placed

## BATAILLE, GEORGES

its understanding at the heart of existence and of what it means to live in the world. His conclusions are hardly comforting, but nor are they derisive. He believed that looking at the horror of existence full in the face was the only way to be able to come to terms with it.

### Biography

Born in Billon, Puy-de-Dôme, in central France, Georges Bataille was a largely self-taught philosopher and sociologist who wrote works on economic and political theory, religion, and the history of art.

MICHAEL RICHARDSON

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# BAUDELAIRE, CHARLES (PIERRE)

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1821–1867

French poet, short story writer, and essayist

Baudelaire is remembered for his art and literary criticism, his translations, and his experimental prose poetry (the *Petits poèmes en prose*), as well as for his verse poetry. His essay on the phenomenology and aesthetics of urban life (*Le peintre de la vie moderne* [*The Painter of Modern Life*], 1863) has made his name synonymous with the philosophy of modernity.

## *Les Fleurs du mal* (1855)

As well as providing a unique bridge between the Romantic and Symbolist aesthetic and philosophical schools, and pioneering innovation in poetic form and subject matter, Baudelaire's verse collection, *Les fleurs du mal* [*The Flowers of Evil*] stands as an encyclopedic and imaginative catalogue of the varieties of sexual feeling, desire, and expression. Echoing de Sade's impressive catalogue of perversions in *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* [*The Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom*] (1749–50) and anticipating works of sexology such as Krafft-Ebing's by three decades, Baudelaire's work exemplifies the mid-nineteenth-century European taste for perverse and extreme expressions of the erotic imagination.

Baudelaire's writing, like that of de Sade before him, is fueled by a desire to challenge the delusions of the complacent reader (in this case the educated middle classes) regarding the "good" in human nature. *Les fleurs du mal* opens with Baudelaire's famous address, "Au lecteur," which invites the reader to suspend moral judgment of what follows in favor of unflinching self-examination. Baudelaire suggests that the forbidden desires of which he will speak ("le viol, le poison, le poignard, l'incendie" [rape and poison, the blade and arson]) are not foreign to the average reader, but indeed central to the human condition. For their refusal to confront their own propensity to crime, Baudelaire's

bourgeois peers are denounced in the final line of the poem as "hypocrites lecteurs" [hypocrite readers].

Baudelaire's contention that the middle classes would be shocked by his work proved apt. On publication of *Les fleurs du mal*, the poet faced a charge of outraging public decency and was fined 300 francs by the Sixième Chambre Correctionnelle. Six of his poems, treating the themes of lesbianism, morbidity, sadistic wounding, and fetishistic sex, were condemned by the court for their salacious and blasphemous content. All six poems were subsequently published in Belgium in 1866 under the title *Les épaves* and were included in subsequent editions of *Les fleurs du mal*.

Baudelaire's erotic poems feature a dizzy array of sexual personae and protagonists. The figure of the lesbian is a particularly important one for Baudelaire, reflected by the fact that early drafts of *Les fleurs du mal* went under the working title *Les lesbiennes* (1845–7). As indicated by the title of the poem "Femmes damnées" [Damned Women], the lesbian woman was a figure rejected by society and God, a marginal subject. In this, she provides (like beggars, widows, and the poor in other poems) a figure of identification for the self-styled *poète maudit* [cursed poet], who saw himself as both rejected by, and superior to, the common herd. As well as being a figure of identification, the lesbian is a source of fascination for Baudelaire in her role of erotic adventurer. She is seen to be capable of infinite pleasures, about which he is pruriently curious. Predictably, perhaps, of the three poems that Baudelaire penned about lesbians, "Femmes damnées," which focuses on their outcast and wretched status and "soifs inassouviés" [unslaked thirsts], was not banned, while "Lesbos" and "Femmes damnées: Delphine et Hyppolyte," which treat instead the incomparable pleasures of lesbian sex, provoked the condemnation of the court.

In other poems, Baudelaire's ambivalent attitude toward the female sex is revealed in scenarios of domination, torture, and punishment.

## BAUDELAIRE, CHARLES (PIERRE)

As the title of Georges Blin's 1948 study of Baudelaire would suggest, sadism and its counterpart masochism are central thematic features of Baudelaire's verse. The poetic "I" of *Les fleurs du mal* explores and expresses at different moments desires that are both sadistic and masochistic. In poems such as "A celle qui est trop gaie" [Against Her Levity] and "A une madone" [To a Madonna], he fantasises about inflicting murderous sexual wounds on the beautiful women he desires. In the latter case, he mixes blasphemy with sadism, as the woman described embodies the qualities of the Madonna. In a powerful climax, the poet unsheathes seven knives, representing seven sins, which he plunges into her heart.

On the other hand, in "L'Idéal" [The Ideal], the poet masochistically desires a strong, punishing woman, a *femme fatale*, seen when he declares: "Ce qu'il faut à ce cœur profond comme un abîme, / C'est vous, Lady Macbeth, âme puissante au crime" [This heart is cavernous and it requires / Lady Macbeth and an aptitude for crime]. Baudelaire's poetry demonstrates an extraordinary awareness, then, of the ways in which the two desires are the flip sides of each other, inextricably linked in the human psyche. In "L'Héautontimorouménos" [The Self-Tormentor, after a play by Terence], we see this idea expressed in the striking formulation "Je suis la plaie et le couteau ! / Je suis le soufflet et la joue !" [I am the knife and the wound it deals / I am the slap and the cheek]. The erotic ideal of being simultaneously the one who inflicts suffering and the one on whom suffering is inflicted is a theme that runs through Baudelaire's writing.

Not all of Baudelaire's poems are so charged with the violence of desire, whether sadistic or masochistic. In "Une nuit que j'étais près d'une affreuse juive..." [I spent the night with a gruesome Jewish whore] and "Je t'adore à l'égal de la voûte nocturne..." [Urn of stilled sorrows, I worship you], the erotic encounter is described in terms that are suggestive of coldness, sleep, or death; a barely disguised necrophilic fantasy. Similarly, perhaps, in poems which focus fetishistically on body parts, such as "La chevelure" [The Head of Hair], or on inanimate objects, such as "Les Bijoux" [Jewels], the erotic experience described is to all intents and purposes solitary, inward-looking, and masturbatory rather than concerned with sexual intersubjectivity.

Traditional scholarship on Baudelaire's erotic poems tended to group them into cycles corresponding to his love affairs or periods of infatuation with three women (Jeanne Duval, Mme Sabatier, and Marie Daubrun). Psychoanalytic scholars have been drawn instead to analyze the varieties of perverse desire visible in the collection, as explored briefly above, as revelatory symptoms of the neurotic fantasies of both the poet and his culture. In an important work of 1977, Leo Bersani reads *Les fleurs du mal* as exemplary of a certain kind of erotic subjectivity characterized by "psychical mobility," that is, by a series of shifting, self-undermining desires. Such critical works draw attention to the ways in which Baudelaire voices ideas about the self which pave the way for Freud's insights into the unconscious and the privileged place he will accord to the interplay of destructive and erotic instincts.

### Biography

Born in Paris and educated at the Collège Royal de Lyon (1832–6) and the Collège Louis-le-Grand, from which he was expelled in 1839. Traveled to Mauritius and Réunion between 1841 and 1842, after which he returned to Paris. In 1848 he fought on the barricades during the *journées de février* and the *journées de juin* and aligned himself with the resistance against the military coup of Louis-Napoleon Bonaparte in 1851. Left France for Belgium in 1864, after failing to be elected to the Académie française. In 1866, having suffered several strokes, he returned to Paris, where he spent the last year of his life in a nursing home. Died in 1867 of a degenerative illness, probably syphilis related.

LISA DOWNING

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## BÉALU, MARCEL

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1908–1993  
 French novelist

### *Passage de la bête*

The venomous charm of this novel lies in Eva's dark side, which is unknown to her husband Simon, her daughter Carine, or even herself. This aspect of her personality grows until it darkens the character's fate. Indeed, Eva falls in love with Laura, a young rider. A feverish and sudden affair begins, and ends tragically: Simon kills his rival, and then his wife commits suicide. The sapphic relationship lasts more than three years, and Simon suffers from sexual frustration and jealousy. The plot is based on an adulterous love triangle, a classic plot, with a unique variation: It is not the man who betrays, but the woman, who, because her lover is another woman, feels it is not as wrong.

The reasons for Eva's passion for Laura are explained gradually, and the story manages to explore what in 1969 was still the scarcely dealt with theme of lesbian love. Moreover, it is interesting to follow a masculine point of view that does not proclaim lesbianism as a conquest but

presents it as a moral defect, in the strict line of André Breton's opinion of masculine homosexuality. The author does criticize this point of view—clinical and scientific studies do not give any satisfactory explanation for lesbianism. The author emphasizes the shallowness of sexuality in a heterosexual couple where there is no love. In fact, the novel reveals two more important aspects. First, the author finds the best of his inspiration in the evocation of the sensuous relationship that is developing between the two seductive women. The author knows how to communicate the emotions associated with voyeurism to his readers. In particular, the natural sense of ignorance that men feel about a sexual pleasure that can be experienced without them is strongly felt. Secondly, the author demonstrates his mastery of a fantasy art elaborated from an ordinary situation that falls in an apparent unreality. Marcel Béalu is very often inspired by dreams or reverie. Indeed, an obsessive reverie is the starting point of the story, as the heroine, Eva, lets her imagination wander around two disturbing phenomena: She hears a thunderous noise, which is nothing but galloping horses who come from the nearby seafront stud farm. Then, she sees the vision of a beautiful horse being



ridden bareback by a naked, sun-tanned equestrian. This rider is Laura, a daring Amazon and the owner of the stud farm. The lady and the horse ride into the sea foam. The animal and the naked woman are indistinguishable in Eva's mind, but she is not clearly aware of it.

The theme of the beast is repeated in a synthetic way when the husband, Simon, faced with the difficulties of his life with Eva, feels as if an invisible beast were lying on the roof of his house, crushing it little by little. At several points in the story, the vision of the horse is said to be an infernal one, because Eva cannot forget it, and it is at the heart of the crisis that disrupts their conjugal happiness.

Before meeting Laura, it is the horse that Eva sees, just awakening from her reverie. And the encounter with the magnificent horse is for her like a romantic rendezvous. She strokes his fur, and immediately, Laura is in front of her. Laura and the horse are made of the same "carnal gold." The transfer from the horse to the lady is therefore easy. As for Laura, she professes to love men, women, and animals. Laura swims naked in the sea and sucks Eva's shaved armpit. She protects her by laying her body on her and controls her as if she were a stubborn animal. They lie stomach to stomach, and their breasts are compared to four pigeons in a single nest. The sapphic scenes are described poetically—for example, fingers are compared to "a game of quick flames from the offered neck to the breast." Hands and lips are compared to water.

Marcel Béalu is well known for his use of cruel literary games, playing with a mixture of innocence and cruelty. Laura decides to make Simon jealous of the pleasure she gives to Eva, letting him hear his wife cry with pleasure, and she succeeds in giving her "the small pearl," the drop that appears on Eva's lips. This expression was taught to Eva by Simon. He has to wait and sleep near Eva without having sex with her. He desires her body, especially when he looks at her armpit, or feels her shoulder at night. Simon feels like raping his wife and, later on, imagines taking his revenge on Laura by organizing a gang rape of her.

His carnal sufferings are compared to a "blood thorn stuck at the center of him." Spying

on the sexual encounters of his wife with Laura, he accepts becoming the "broken mirror" of their pleasure. He often goes to Paris, in order to read books on lesbianism, and meets prostitutes. Meanwhile, Eva has violent dreams where she takes part in orgies in a church, with other people wearing masks. In another significant dream, a monstrous black-haired beast is killed—and here she may be dreaming of her own body. According to Simon, the body is a beast, but this beast is in quest of a nest and is looking for a soul. He dreams of recovering the perfumed armpits of Eva, and "the rustle of fresh mint around her sex, before she bursts in pleasure." He has not heard or smelled this for three years. One day, he meets the two women on horseback while he is driving his "D.S." and thinks about running them down with his metal beast. He abandons the idea this time, but later on, his jealousy drives him to murder Laura, and as result, he loses Eva.

### Biography

Born in Selles-sur-Cher, in 1908, he died in Paris in 1993. As a friend of Max Jacob, he inherited a love of for style, and an eccentric imagination. André Pieyre de Mandiargues praised his surreal romanticism and his talent for writing fantasy short stories. He was the longtime owner of an antiquarian bookshop, *Le Pont traversé*, near the Jardin du Luxembourg in Paris.

MARC KOBER

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## BEAUVOIR, SIMONE DE

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1908–1986

French novelist, essayist and playwright

Simone de Beauvoir was the leading figure of French feminism. Her lifelong relationship with Jean-Paul Sartre was based on “essential” love and allowed “contingent” love affairs. Her free and open relationship with Sartre, built on intellectual dialogue and freedom, identified her as an emancipated modern woman. During the 1940s, at a time when France was ideologically conservative, she wrote *The Second Sex* (1949). Now hailed as one of the founding texts of French feminism, it provoked many negative reactions at the time; Albert Camus, for instance, considered the book an “insult to the Latin male.”

Two images of me are current, she wrote: “I am a mad woman, an eccentric, my morals are extremely dissolute; in 1945, a communist woman told the story that during my youth in Rouen, I had been seen dancing naked on the tops of barrels. I have assiduously practiced every vice; my life is a perpetual orgy, etc. Or flat heels, tight bun, I am a chieftainess, a lady manager, a schoolmistress (in the pejorative sense given to this word by the right). I spend my existence with books and sitting at my worktable, pure intellect.... Apparently a combination of these two portraits involves no contradiction.... The essential is the figure I cut should be abnormal” (*The Force of Circumstances*, 647–8).

This ironic twofold representation conveys the image of conventional social rigidity and conversely attests to total freedom. This duality reflects the position of Simone de Beauvoir on the question of eroticism; on the one hand, she reduces eroticism to physical coldness in her novels, and, on the other hand, she thoroughly enjoys the theoretical exploration of freedom and looks at the questions of body and sexuality with no taboos.

Her autobiographical novels, along with her memoirs, *Memoirs of a Dutiful Daughter* (1958), *The Prime of Life* (1960), *The Force of Circumstances* (1963), relate the evolution of

woman from teenage to adulthood. In her books, she perceives the relation to the body through a certain degree of puritanism. In *The Prime of Life* she recalls being shocked by the casual way “Camille [one of Sartre’s lovers] used her body. But was it her emancipation, she asked, or my puritan upbringing that should be blamed for this?” (62). She continues, including Sartre in her observations: “We detested the idea of eroticism—which Malraux used so plentifully in *Man’s fate*—because it implied a specialized approach that at once overinflated sex and somehow cheapened it. Hemingway’s lovers were in love all the time, body and soul: actions, emotions, and words were all equally permeated with sexuality, and when they gave themselves to desire, to pleasure, it bound them together in their totality” (144).

This statement makes perfect sense taking into account the striking fact that eroticism is absent in her own fictional or autobiographical works. Such is the case in her first novel, *She Came to Stay*, a love triangle involving Pierre, Elisabeth, and Xavière. The female protagonist is immediately identified by her physical coldness. “How cold you are!” her young lover Guimiot tells her. Physical love is here described as an act with no passion:

Guimiot was consciously doing his job as a male. How could she tolerate these services rendered, ironic as they were?... Guimiot’s mouth wore a grimace of pleasure and his eyes were drawn up at the corners. At this moment, he was thinking only of his pleasure, with the avidity of an animal. She closed her eyes once more, and a scorching humiliation swept over her. She was anxious for it to end. (90)

The female character, persona erotica *a priori*, is portrayed as a passive, frigid woman closed to carnal pleasure. She is also reduced to being a prey. Reading *The Second Sex* brings clarity to this reification. De Beauvoir writes, “woman is always frustrated as an active individual. She does not envy man his organ of possession, she envies his prey.” These words, which reveal the relationship to the desired woman in her rapport

to the masculine world, make her an object of devouring consumption. This devouring process reaches its ultimate end in *She Came to Stay* when Xavière, the centerpiece of the love triangle, is murdered.

In the chapter entitled, “The Sexual Initiation,” the “erotic experience” is depicted as a brutal moment. “It is a decisive event that makes a break with the past” (*The Second Sex*, 371). The erotic experience for man is defined as an act for which erection is the principle and coition the end. Taking as premise the opposition between the two organs, the clitoris and the vagina, she comes to the conclusion that “at the stage of childhood the former is the center of female sex feeling... and woman retains her erotic independence all her life.” De Beauvoir then takes a step further and develops the fairly questionable concept of a “becoming woman”: “Woman is penetrated and fecundated by way of the vagina, which becomes an erotic center only through the intervention of the male, and thus always constitutes a violation. Formerly it was by a real or simulated rape that a woman was torn from her childhood and hurled into wifehood.” The female erotic experience is thus for de Beauvoir an inescapable fate imposed upon woman. “This world, she claimed, always belonged to males: none of the justifications brought to us appeared satisfactory”; the only way out for women is freedom.

If in her novels, she veils her relation to flesh and eroticism behind a restrained language, she alludes rather crudely to eroticism in her epistolary works. The glutinous metaphor de Beauvoir uses to describe a night she spent with a young lover is edifying in this respect: “Pathetic night—passionate, sickening like foie gras” (*Letters to Sartre*). De Beauvoir was indeed not shy about her bisexuality and had affairs with her female students. She writes:

If I were a man, maybe I should be a very wicked one, because I surely should enjoy to make love to young girls and having them love me.... When I was a teacher, they often fell in love with me and sometimes I enjoyed it a bit and even three or four times, I really cared a little for it and I happened to behave very badly. (*Letters to Nelson Algren*, 135)

The absence of, or silence on, eroticism in her novels compared with the frank sexual freedom she demonstrates in her letters is striking. The

discrepancy between her private life and the ideological stances she endorses (i.e., her total silence about the question of lesbianism) could be construed as existential materialism. How could woman, being *a priori* the Other of man, possibly construct her own identity as a free subject by way of her love for another woman? This untenable situation, along with the burden of social conventions, made it impossible for existentialist Simone de Beauvoir to express herself clearly on the question of lesbianism. De Beauvoir proceeded with veiled words, as she did when, for instance, she recalled her friend Zaza for whom she “felt noncodified feelings.”

Even if her fictional work is far from describing a paradise of pleasures, her epistolary and theoretical writings tackle the questions of the body and its meanings. By expressing her views on these questions, she overturns the received ideas of society and rethinks the locus of the body, in particular the female body. As such, the work of Simone de Beauvoir paves the way to contemporary feminism, while subverting bourgeois moral values.

### Biography

Simone Lucie-Ernestine-Marie-Bertrand de Beauvoir was born on January 9, 1908, in Paris to Georges Bertrand and Françoise (Brasseur) de Beauvoir. She studied at the Sorbonne, where she met Jean-Paul Sartre in 1929. In the coming decades she became revered as one of the foremost thinkers in French history and one of the most influential figures in 20th-century feminism. De Beauvoir died of pneumonia on April 14, 1986.

AGNÈS VANNOUVONG

Translated from the French by Nadia Louar

### Selected Works

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# BECKFORD, WILLIAM

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1760–1844

English novelist and travel writer

## *Vathek*

William Beckford claimed in 1838 that he had rushed off *Vathek* in three days, inspired by his twenty-first birthday and Christmas celebrations in 1781. There is evidence to suggest, however, that there were experimental drafts of *Vathek* (originally written in French) by 1778 and that the draft, which was begun immediately after the Christmas festivities, was not completed until the summer of 1782.

Beckford entrusted the translation of *Vathek* into English to the Reverend Samuel Henley, an orientalist, whom he first met at his Christmas party, whilst he continued working on the *Episodes*, intended as an epilogue to *Vathek*. In these, five royals who appear at the end of the novel recount in turn why they were to suffer everlasting torment. Losing patience with the delays caused by Beckford's absorption in the *Episodes*, Henley published *Vathek* himself in 1786 without mention of Beckford's authorship. Rather, he offered it as a translation of an authentic Arabian tale and provided copious sets of scholarly footnotes to accompany and validate the text. Beckford published an inferior French version in Paris in 1787 that lacked Henley's careful and sensitive editing of Beckford's original.

Vathek, son of Carathis, is the ninth Caliph of the Abassides. The Giaour, an evil Indian magician, offers to guide Vathek to the Palace of Subterranean Fire of Elbis, where he could possess the treasures of the Pre-Adamite Sultans and the Talismans of Soliman that control the world, in exchange for renouncing his God, Mahomet [*sic*]. With an insatiable desire for the knowledge of all things, Vathek readily agrees and, having first sacrificed 50 beautiful boys as proof of his fealty, sets off with his entourage for the ruins of Istakhar, which lead to the Halls of Elbis.

En route, he stays with the Emir Fakreddin, a devout follower of Mahomet, and falls in love with Nouronihar, the Emir's daughter. Nouronihar is betrothed to the Emir's thirteen-year-old exquisitely beautiful nephew Gulchenrouz. Determined to keep Vathek from his daughter, the Emir arranges for the betrothed couple to be given a powder that gives them the appearance of death. In this state, they are taken to the cave of Meimoune, where their servants trick them into believing that they are really dead and must do penance for their indolent lives. Believing Nouronihar dead and broken by grief, Vathek renounces the Giaour and begs forgiveness of Mahomet, vowing to pay daily homage to Nouronihar. Yet Nouronihar and Vathek meet by accident and, discovering that Nouronihar has also been offered the riches of the subterranean palace in a vision, the pair set off for Istakhar, spurning one last opportunity to return to Mahomet. Punished in the subterranean palace for their unrestrained passions and desire for divine as well as mortal knowledge, the lovers are condemned to hopelessness and an eternity of solitary wanderings in hatred and anguish, unable to enjoy the knowledge of all things or the possession of the treasures that surround them. As Nouronihar and Vathek await the final torment of having their hearts eternally engulfed in flames, they listen to four princes and a princess tell what has brought them to the same fate (the stories intended for the *Episodes*). By the end of the novel, only Gulchenrouz finds happiness, for he, like the 50 sacrificial boys, is saved by a Genius who loves and protects children. Living above the clouds, the boys and Gulchenrouz are blessed by the Genius with the happiness of everlasting childhood and innocence.

The eroticism of *Vathek* lies in the air of eighteenth-century Western orientalism and decadence that pervades the novel. Vathek, like his subjects, is addicted to sensuality, overindulgence, sexual pleasure, and gourmandizing. In order to gratify his senses, Vathek builds five palaces overlooking his city of Samarah, each

## BECKFORD, WILLIAM

dedicated to one of the senses and including the Retreat of Mirth, where seductive women pleasure whomever the Caliph commands. The novel abounds with reference to opulent furnishings, mouthwatering delicacies, heady fragrances, and sexual pleasure. Yet alongside this hedonism lies a casual indifference to suffering, as when Carathis, described as the wickedest of women, commands her one-eyed Negro mutes to strangle citizens of Samarah as part of her oblation to the Giaour.

The novel also contains strong homoerotic and pedophilic elements, which find resonance in Beckford's own sexuality. In 1779, Beckford fell in love with William, the eleven-year-old son of the 2nd Viscount Courtenay, becoming his lover in 1781. This has led some critics to regard *Vathek* as a *roman-a-clef*, with Vathek and Gulchenrouz as fictional counterparts to Beckford and William Courtenay. Another reading has seen *Vathek* in terms of an "autobiographical allegory" that enabled Beckford to explore his feelings of guilt over his recent seduction of Courtenay (Timothy Mowl, *William Beckford*).

The homoeroticism in *Vathek* works on two levels. There is simple admiration of youthful beauty, as when the Caliph sleeps on silk cushions with two young pages beside him. It also finds expression in the descriptions of Gulchenrouz's girlish effeminacy and the grace and suppleness of the 50 naked competitors as they prepare for the games preceding their oblation. The homoeroticism also works at a more sinister level. Vathek is himself naked as he plays with the boys, having given parts of his dress to them as prizes before sacrificing the innocents to the Giaour's voracious appetite. As Carathis recognizes, the Giaour finds "nothing so delicious... as the heart of a delicate boy palpitating with the first tumults of love," and it is for this reason that she wishes to offer Gulchenrouz as a supreme sacrifice to him. A careful reading of *Vathek* reveals a subplot in which the powers of Good and Evil do battle for the lives and bodies of these sacrificial victims. Good, in the form of a Genius whose life is devoted to the protection of children, wins, keeping the children forever safe above the clouds. There is something uncomfortable, however, about Beckford's fantasy of a Genius with a "fondness for the company of children" and the power to grant eternal boyhood. Denied their manhood,

the youths merely exist to satisfy an older man's desire to be always surrounded by beautiful and loving boys.

### Biography

Beckford was born September 29, 1760, probably at Fonthill in Wiltshire, where he was also educated. In 1783, Beckford, a bisexual, married Lady Margaret Gordon, by whom he had two daughters. Beckford wrote novels, biography, and retrospectives on his youthful travels. He traveled widely in Europe, including Switzerland, Portugal, Spain, and Italy, prompted in part by a self-imposed exile to avoid scandal at home over a homosexual affair. At one time, known as the wealthiest man in England, Beckford was an avid art collector and aesthete, who built Fonthill Abbey near Bath, an extravagant mansion which famously fell down in 1825. Beckford died at Bath on May 2, 1844. His first novel, *Vathek*, an Arabian/gothic-style tale, was published in England in 1786.

BARBARA WHITE

### Editions

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### Selected Works

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*Azemia*. 1797  
*Italy, with Sketches of Spain and Portugal*. 1834  
*Recollections of an Excursion to the Monasteries of Alcobaca and Batalha in 1794*. 1835  
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## BELEN (NELLY KAPLAN)

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1936–

Argentine short story writer and novelist

Passionate about the cinema, Nelly Kaplan became the assistant to legendary director Abel Gance, working with him on his monumental films *Magirama* (1955–6) and *Austerlitz* (1960), and was second-unit director of *Cyrano et d'Artagnon* (1963). She also became close friends with André Breton and Philippe Soupault.

Publishing three slim volumes of short stories under the name Belen in the early 1960s, which were gathered in one volume, *Le réservoir des sens* in 1966, she also became a filmmaker in her own right in 1961, with a short film, *Gustave Moreau*. A series of short documentaries, mostly about painters, followed, notably *A la source, la femme aimée*, which, based on secret notebooks of André Masson, was severely cut by the French censor. In 1968 she made her first feature film, *La Fiancée du pirate* and has since made several other films for the cinema and television. In 1971 she published a “ciné-roman,” *Le collier de ptyx* under her own name. This was followed by a novel, *Mémoires d'une liseuse de draps*, published in 1973 under the name Belen. The latter was revised and reissued in 1998 with a different title, *Un manteau de fou rire*, along with a new novel, *Aux orchidées sauvages*. In the meantime, new editions of *Le réservoir des sens* had appeared in 1988, augmented with new stories, and in 1995, when it was accompanied by a longer story, *La gardienne du temps*. In 2005 she published another novel, *Cuisses de grenouille*.

*Mémoires d'une liseuse de draps* is presented as the autobiography of the young woman who wrote *Le réservoir des sens* (the earlier collection of stories had come with an inserted biographical notice announcing that she was writing her memoirs). Belen is born of a sailor (or pirate) and an unknown mother. Spending an idyllic childhood as a daughter of the sea aboard her father's ship, the *Sperma*, doted upon by the loving crew, her only childhood friend is a lion named Griffy. When she is eight, she receives

her name, conferred on her in the course of a lubricious ritual when she first becomes aware of her sexuality. Reaching the Galápagos Islands, she finds that her friends there have been massacred by agents of the sinister CIA (Company of American Indies), thus destroying the revolutionary community devoted to erotic and political freedom that had been established by Jaguar Bronstein. When she is kidnapped by the reactionaries, the CIA's evil head José Acero Stalin orders that she be executed by being cast into the sea, but the *Sperma* is following behind and her friends are able to save her. The *Sperma* manages to evade the CIA, and during her formative years, Belen participates in the triumphant revolutionary movement in Angola. Arriving in Amsterdam when she is sixteen, it is time for her initiation as a woman. She is asked to choose the man who will take her virginity and decides that her father should be her first lover. The ritual is performed in a strange apartment in Amsterdam, but as they are returning to their ship, they are apprehended by Acero's men. Belen is captured and her father is killed, while the *Sperma* is set on fire. The other crew members lie low, but Griffy is captured and sent to an animal sanctuary. Escaping to the China Seas after seducing the millionaire Van Ryn Susy, who is in Acero's pay, Belen finds refuge in a pleasure district in Shanghai, where she becomes aware of her strange gift: the ability to read the future in the deposits men leave on the bedclothes. Her fame spreads and she becomes fabulously rich. Learning that Griffy is held prisoner in Persia, she goes to try to rescue him. Persia at this time is under the control of the Great Matriarchy, whose representatives are sympathetic but unable to help as Griffy is being held by a group of religious fanatics, who intend to sacrifice him. Belen, therefore, must rescue the lion on her own, in which task she succeeds. Momentarily united with Griffy (woman and lion couple in their excitement at being together again) and the other members of the crew, she discovers that José Acero is in Buenos Aires and travels there, in the guise of

## BELEN (NELLY KAPLAN)

the adventuress Léonie d'Ashby, and lures him into a seductive trap in order to kill him. Her mission accomplished, she retires to an island in the Sargasso Sea, where she writes the stories contained in *Le réservoir des sens*.

*Mémoires d'une liseuse de draps* (reissued in 1998 under its original prepublication title, *Un manteau de fou rire*) is a novel fully within the surrealist tradition, taking as its point of departure Fourier's proposition that "passions are proportionate to destinies." If it contains a wealth of allusions and references which may not be immediately apparent to the general reader, it can nevertheless be read as a pure adventure story, albeit one that is both provocative and insolent in its tone and situations. Its transgressive aspect is shown in Belen's openness to a range of sexual encounters, which caused some trouble with the censors at the time of its first publication in 1973.

The novel encapsulates the themes that run through all of Kaplan's substantial oeuvre of writing and films. Commitment to freedom means that freedom of the senses as much as political freedom is at stake; it is the freedom of revolt, the freedom not to succumb to anything that is sordid in life. But this freedom is as far as can be from that supposedly defended by our political masters in today's world. It is a freedom that bears the black flag and is essentially the freedom to *feel*. It is also a powerful celebration of the possible. *Voyeur* and *voyeuse*, she is equally committed to the pleasures of sight as an opening up of potentialities of existence. "Eroticists of the world unite," she once proclaimed. "You have only your chains to lose and a whole wide sensual world to gain."

### Biography

Born in Buenos Aires, Nelly Kaplan bought a one-way ticket to France in 1952 and has since settled in Paris.

MICHAEL RICHARDSON

### Selected Works

#### Stories

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- Aux Orchidées sauvages*. Paris: La Différence, 1998.
- Un Manteau de fou rire*. Paris: La Différence, 1998.
- Ils furent une étrange comète*. Paris: Le Castor Astral, 2002.
- Cuisses de grenouille*. Paris: Maren Sell, 2005.

#### Films

- Gustave Moreau*. 1961
- Rudolphe Bredin*. 1962
- Abel Gance hier et demain*. 1962
- A la source, la femme aimée*. 1964
- Dessins et merveilles*. 1965
- La nouvelle orangerie*. 1966
- Les années 25*. 1966
- Le regard Picasso*. 1967
- La fiancée du pirate*. 1968
- Papa, les petits bateaux*. 1971
- Néa*. 1976
- Charles et Lucie*. 1979
- Abel Gance et son Napoléon*. 1983
- Pattes de velours*. 1985
- Plaisir d'amour*. 1991
- She has also written several films for TV, directed by Jean Chapot, and wrote the screenplay for *Il faut vivre dangereusement*, a film directed by Claude Makowski.

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## BELOT, ADOLPHE

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1829–1890  
French novelist

Born November 6, 1829, in Pointe à Pitre to a rich Creole family of Guadeloupe, Adolphe Belot came to France to study law. After graduation, he registered as a lawyer with the bar of Nancy but never pleaded a case. In 1855, he launched himself into the literature, publishing a novel, *Châtiment* [*Punishment*], which passed unnoticed. He consequently wanted to try his luck in the theater, initially with a one-act comedy, *A la campagne* [*In the Countryside*], then with a three-act comedy, *Le testament de César Girodet* [*César Girodet's Testament*], which premiered on September 30, 1859, at the Odéon. It played more than 200 times and was included in the repertory of the Comédie Française. This success encouraged Belot to settle in Paris and produce other theater plays: *Un secret de famille* [*A Family Secret*] (1859), *La vengeance du mari* [*Husband's Revenge*] (1860), *Les maris à système* [*Husbands with System*] (1862), among others. During this same period, he also published serial novels and short stories. He was decorated with the Legion of Honor in April 1867. A year later, he presented *Le drame de la rue de la Paix* [*The Drama of Rue de la Paix*] at the Odéon. Up to this point, his career as a successful writer was unblemished by any scandal.

It is then he entrusted to *Le Figaro* his new novel, *Mademoiselle Giraud ma femme* [*Miss Giraud My Wife*], which was serialized in the newspaper in the autumn of 1869. This was the story of a man who marries a young girl but does not succeed in consummating the marriage, for she always refuses him. Suspicious that she has a lover, he follows her and finds that she is having a sapphic affair with an aristocrat, the Countess de Blengy. The story climaxes with the man killing the lesbian seductress and being acquitted.

This novel was no praise of feminine homosexuality; on the contrary, it had an admonitory tone. Nevertheless, when the hero catches his

spouse and the countess in a room, some *Figaro* subscribers protested. The editor had to interrupt the publishing of the serial, on December 22, 1869, apologizing as follows: “It is dangerous to treat such scabrous subjects in a newspaper.” However, he declared in conclusion: “We advise those of our readers whom the adventures of Mademoiselle Giraud did not startle overmuch and who desire to know the end that it will appear in the volume at the end of next month.”

Adolphe Belot could not have wished for better publicity. *Mademoiselle Giraud ma femme* was a triumph that survived the Second Empire and flourished under the Third Republic. This novel has had 63 editions in 15 years. That of 1879 was prefaced by Emile Zola (who signed his preface “Thérèse Raquin,” the name of his recent heroine). Adolphe Belot needed only to continue in this vein, which was what the public henceforth expected of him. He became the urbane novelist of passionate dramas, narrating tragic adulteries that finished with a killing or a suicide. His next novel, *La femme de feu* [*The Woman of Fire*] (1872), which had 47 editions, recounted an adultery the denouement of which was a double death. In two years (1875–1876) he wrote the four novels of his cycle *Les mystères mondains* [*The Urbane Mysteries*], comprising (besides the volume bearing that title) *Les baigneuses de Trouville* [*Bathers of Trouville*], *Folies de jeunesse* [*Madness of Youth*], and *Une maison centrale de femmes* [*A Central House for Women*].

Many bourgeois women readers made him their favorite author, as he dealt with matters of sexuality through allusion, without entering into embarrassing details. The scenes in his novels were situated in environments that captivated this readership: Trouville, a fashionable town for sea bathing, or the prison for women at Clermont, where his heroine Carmen Lelièvre is confined for kidnapping.

The daring reputation of Adolphe Belot increased with *La femme de glace* [*The Woman of Ice*] (1878), the hero of which, Henri Vandelle,



has an ardent mistress he continues to see after getting married; but, from rancor, she no longer responds to his caresses, remaining “straight, impassible in his arms, being content with defying him with her gaze and smiling ironically.” He becomes mad with frustration and kills her, then commits suicide.

Belot knew how to combine love and adventure in his novel trilogy, *La sultane parisienne*, *La fièvre de l'inconnu* [*Fever of the Unknown*] and *La vénus noire* [*The Black Venus*]. Baroness de Guéran, widow of an explorer, suggests to three men wanting to marry her that they accompany her on an expedition to Africa: “What shall I give you in exchange? My eternal friendship to two of you; perhaps my love to the third. Who will be the third? That is what I don't know”. Over the course of their African adventures, until their encounter with Queen Walinda, the baroness falls in love with one of the three suitors. Another of Belot's success was *La bouche de Madame X* [*Madam X's Mouth*] (1882), with 154 editions, in which the male protagonist attempts to conquer a married woman, obsessed by her beautiful mouth. Belot wrote sequels to some of his novels. In 1883, *Reine de beauté* [*Beauty Queen*] had as a sequel *La princesse Sofia*, and in 1885, *Une affolée d'amour* [*Striken by Love*] was complemented by *La couleuvre* [*The Grass-snake*]. In the latter, we find the Duchess de Limour, an exalted and lucid lover, who “loves like a madwoman and thinks like the wisest woman.”

Adolphe Belot was so famous that the Monte-Carlo Casino allocated him two thousand francs per year simply to be there during the season at one of the gaming tables—only his presence attracted a crowd of players. His observations on this environment inspired him to write *Une joueuse* [*A Player*] (1897) and *Une lune de miel à Monte-Carlo* [*Honeymoon in Monte Carlo*] (1887). He traveled to Brazil, to the United States, to Africa and Asia; his voyage to Cambodia allowed him to reveal, in *Cent femmes pour un homme* [*A Hundred Women for One Man*] (1889), numerous details on the harem of King Norodom I.

In 1883, Belot divorced his wife under conditions that amused all Paris. So that his wife could have custody of their two daughters, Belot had to be culpable in the divorce. Therefore, the couple decided that he would be caught

by the police commissioner in bed with another woman. This called for several sessions before it succeeded: Sometimes the commissioner did not appear; sometimes the prostitute hired for the role ran away when ascertaining the adultery. Edmont de Goncourt was scandalized in his newspaper over “this contrived divorce, devised by wife and the husband.”

After his divorce, in a playful mood, seeking new challenge: or needing to express his sexuality more plainly than in his official literature, Belot began to write erotic novels which he signed “A.B.” The first of them, *L'Education d'une demi-vierge* [*Education of a Half-Virgin*] (1883), tells the story of a divorced woman, Lucienne d'Avenel, who decides to become an urbane prostitute, in company with her daughter Edmée, to whom she teaches the advantages of the job. The lavish parties given by the mother and the initiation of Edmée give place to very lascivious scenes with humorous touches.

In 1889, *La maison à plaisirs* [*The House of Pleasures*] (frequently reedited under the title *La passion de Gilberte* [*Gilberte's Passion*]) was one of A.B.'s novels that became a best-seller. The Gay Bibliography gives this abstract: “Voluptuous scenes take place in the boudoirs of one of those urbane rendez-vous houses that abound in Paris, to create easy relations for persons of both sexes in search of love, pleasures.” A catalogue of the same year points out “pictures of an incredible lubricity, the accuracy of which can be guessed in minor details.”

In *La canonisation de Jeanne d'Arc* [*Canonization of Joan of Arc*] (1890), A.B. narrates, in a manner as much spiritual as lascivious, “a soirée fin-de-siècle.” The Countess de Liancourt, with her mother's help, is organizing a prodigious Parisian orgy in honor of Jeanne d'Arc, with the same care for protocol as for a charity celebration. In the middle of the orgy, a one-act erotic play, “L'Art de payer sa couturière” [*The Art of Paying Her Dressmaker*] is enacted by three women and two men, allowing the assistants to take a break and arouse themselves in new frolics.

*La canonisation de Jeanne d'Arc* was the last novel Belot wrote as A.B. before his death on December 17, 1890, in Paris. That same year, as Adolphe Belot, he published his last novel, *Chère adorée* [*Dear Precious*]. It is remarkable

that Adolphe Belot, who during his lifetime had more success than Flaubert and Maupassant, has been almost completely forgotten since then. One does not even find his name in present-day French literary dictionaries.

On the other hand, A.B. continues to be an admired author of erotic literature. At his death, he left some works unpublished, and the efforts of his fans brought to light, in 1894, *Les heures érotiques modernes* [Modern Erotic Hours], including *La petite bourgeoise* [The Petty Bourgeois], *Le rat* [The Rat], and *Bouillie de maïs* [Corn Mash], which the clandestine editor qualified as “pretty short stories of a famous writer”; *Les péchés de Minette* [Minette’s Sins], “by the author of *La passion de Gilberte*” (an indirect manner of designating A.B.) (“A young woman newly married meets the man of her dreams, a man who is at the same time a true lover, and who initiates his charming half in all the practices of libertinism”); and *La Chandelle de Sixte-Quint* [The Candle of Sixtus the Fifth], “by the author of *La maison à plaisirs*,” which told the story of a condom through those using it.

In 1896., *Les stations de l’amour* [The Love Stations], the last novel signed A.B. certainly the best of Belot’s posthumously published erotic novels. The novel consists of the letters of a husband, the engineer Léo, traveling on business in Calcutta, and his wife Cécile, back home in Paris, who inform each other about their adventures, because they want “a modernistic ménage” (as was the expression then). They swear to forgive each other their infidelities, provided that they tell each other “all, with details and without reserve.” Léo narrates his sexual games with Dora, the daughter of Sir Duncan Simpson, general superintendent of the public works, and with her girl friends, Flora and Maud, in four-way lovemaking. True to Belot’s commitment to creating atmosphere in his novels, the manner of describing the customs of India gives the story an exotic charm. For her part, Cécile confesses to Léo how she initiated a sapphic affair with her servant Thérèse and took pleasure with Gérard, a friend of her husband’s, and Adrien, a young man she met in a restaurant.

The first edition of *Les stations* (subtitled *An Amorous Story of A Married Couple Momentarily Separated, and Rendering Their Mutual*

*Freedom in Terms of Love*) had only 125 copies printed, in Holland, accompanied by 62 free prints. This is a jewel of the curiosa of the nineteenth century. Among the editions, that of 1934 has a preface by Louis Perceau confirming that A.B. was Adolphe Belot.

Thereafter, from 1903 to 1912, three more works were speculatively attribute to A.B.: *Toute la lyre* [All the Lyre], *Select-Luxure* [The House of Pleasures], and *La luxure en ménage* [The Lechery in Ménage] (1912). We once again encounter Belot’s first heroine, Lucienne d’Auenel, who in *Toute la lyre* makes love in an automobile with three partners (in the eighth chapter, entitled “In the Car! Chassé-croisé of sexes. An Orgy at 60 per Hour”), but such cars did not exist during Belot’s time. Most of *Select-Luxure* happens in a boarding school, where we once again meet Edmée and where all the pupils devote themselves to sapphism. Lucienne introduces her daughter to her lover Daniel, who teaches her all that a man can offer. At last, *La luxure en ménage* was summarized as a story of “incest without a veil, a research into all voluptuousness, all enjoyment, between brother and sister, mother and daughter, ignoring social conventions, prejudice, scruples.” It is unlikely that the latter two books are by Adolphe Belot. There would not have been a wait of more than twenty years after his death before publishing them. Additional, they lack the elegance of Belot’s style, which rendered his bold stories even more exciting.

The dichotomy of Adolphe Belot/A.B. is not a Jekyll and Hyde. Belot he simply amused himself by writing novels for “aware adults,” so as not to be a prisoner of his conventional genre writing.

SARANE ALEXANDRIAN

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## BÉRANGER, PIERRE JEAN DE

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# BÉRANGER, PIERRE JEAN DE

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1780–1857

French poet and songwriter

### *Chansons érotiques*

Although no precise information is available concerning the composition of this collection of erotic songs by France's best-known *chansonnier*, they almost certainly date from the beginning of his career, i.e., before the catastrophic events of 1815—Waterloo and the ensuing return of the Bourbons—persuaded him to turn to the political satire for which he is now primarily remembered. Since 1813, Béranger had been a member of the *Caveau moderne*, an association of poets and songwriters who held monthly meetings in a well-known café, the Rocher de Cancale, primarily in order to sing the praises of Eros and Bacchus. The first collected *Chansons érotiques* appeared in 1829 as a supplement to the two-volume Baudoin edition of the previous year, i.e., at a time when Béranger was at the height of his considerable fame. He had already been in prison twice, in 1821 and again in 1828, for publishing works offensive to public morality, although not, we should note in passing, for obscenity: On both occasions, what had worried the authorities was his outspoken criticism of the Church and the royal family. (The second prison sentence was accompanied by a substantial fine, 10,000 francs, largely paid for by public subscription.) The contents of this supplement were reissued in a four-volume edition published in 1829 by Tarlier in Brussels and Perrotin in Paris. In 1834, Perrotin issued the first collected

edition of Béranger's complete works in four octavo volumes, shortly followed, apparently without the author's permission, by a new supplement, subtitled *Chansons érotiques*. This volume contained 48 songs, 20 of which had not been collected in earlier editions.

At this stage of his life, Béranger was living in honorable retirement; the liberal cause for which he had struggled valiantly for 15 years had triumphed in the July Revolution of 1830. His best-known song, *Le roi d'Yvetot*, had been praised by no less an authority than Goethe as an example of an almost perfect poem; Stendhal regarded him as France's greatest living poet, and he was on familiar terms with writers of the calibre of Lamartine, Chateaubriand, and, notwithstanding his persistent sniping at the Catholic Church, Lamennais. In these circumstances, as a pillar of *petit bourgeois* respectability and with a reputation in Europe as the authentic "voice of the people," Béranger was understandably reluctant to have his readers reminded of the bawdy songs of his youth. The erotic poems of the 1834 supplement were consequently omitted from all subsequent editions published by Perrotin during his lifetime, notably the two-volume *Oeuvres complètes* of 1847. (Later publishers, after the poet's death in 1857, were less scrupulous; in 1864 and 1875, two collections similarly entitled *Les gaités de Béranger* and containing "the best erotic and satirical songs not included in his so-called complete works" were published purportedly in Amsterdam [actually Brussels] and Villafranca, respectively; but since they contain many songs

not in fact by Béranger, the present discussion will be limited to the contents of the so-called supplement to the 1834 Perrotin edition).

With a century and a half of hindsight, and if we are prepared to admit that Béranger deserved neither the extravagant praise heaped upon him during his lifetime nor the neglect or downright hostility shown toward his poems by later generations, it now seems clear that the poet was being overscrupulous in excluding the *chansons érotiques* from his complete works, since, although cruder in subject matter and expression, they are not fundamentally different in spirit from his better-known and more accessible songs. The opening poem, *La romance de Mademoiselle Justine*, takes a familiar cliché of medieval romance—the knight who embarks on a crusade because he is rejected by a cruel mistress—and inverts it: “Why don’t you come up to my bedroom, gentlemen? I have many, many charms, come, feel them, I’ll be nice to you, I’ll be very, very nice to you.” *Le grand marcheur* [The Great Walker], like many of the songs, depends on a not particularly subtle double entendre in the refrain: “Leste et gai, j’enfile, j’enfile, j’enfile / J’enfile droit mon chemin” (the French verb *enfiler* means both to go or turn down, as in “I went down Regent Street,” and to insert; so, freely translated, our Great Walker says something like: “As I make my way / Down life’s highway / When I meet a maid / Who’s not too staid / I push along [I push it in] / I push along [I push it in].”) *Le lavement*, written in broad peasant dialect, makes far from original play with the administration of an enema: “You needn’t be afraid, all the ladies in Paris do it this way.” The narrator of *La petite ouvrière* discovers that “Mummy was right: True happiness lies in our fingertips.” The abbess of a convent, in a poem of that name, after urging her charges to go forth and fight the good fight, bringing pleasure to all manner of men, as she had done for a good 20 years, proceeds to detail the various ways in which they should go about their task.

Many of the songs depend on this kind of catalogue effect; thus the sentry in *Le tour de ronde*, dutifully patrolling the castle walls, finds a courting couple at every corner pursuing with equal diligence their nightly pleasures, so he can report: “All’s well, we can sleep in peace.” Other songs are structured around a repeated

phrase, often culminating in a volte-face in the closing lines; for example, *Un mot de plus, ou le séducteur indécent* consists of a dialogue between the seducer and the object of his desires: As he makes increasingly improper suggestions, the lady replies, first: “One more word, Sir, and I shall leave,” then “One more word, Sir, and I shall blush,” then “One more word, Sir, and I’ll die,” then, in the penultimate stanza, “One more word, Sir, and I’ll come”; but, not unusually for Béranger, whose men tend to be only human, whereas his women are generally indefatigable, it is he, not she, who comes (“And that’s the end of my song”), giving the final word to the lady: “Ah, said Lison, why finish so soon / Do it again, I want to remember it.”

From this brief sampling, it is clear that puritanical readers as well as strict Catholics would find much to offend them in the *chansons érotiques*. Béranger had an excellent ear for popular speech, as evidenced by the racy exchanges in *L’Anneau de mariage* between the newly wed Joseph and the High Priest, who advises him “not to worry” should an angel happen to turn up at the marriage bedside. But for those who are comfortable with Boccaccio or with Chaucer’s *Wife of Bath* or the text of Carl Orff’s *Carmina Burana*, these little studied chansons are well worth revisiting. The pleasures they describe, admittedly limited in scope and somewhat repetitious, are shared equally by both parties, and, in terms of nineteenth-century French literary history, are a refreshing contrast to the mawkish sentimentality of Lamartine and Musset, or the disturbing and, at least for some critics, fundamentally misogynous sadomasochism of Baudelaire.

### Biography

Pierre-Jean de Béranger was born August 19, 1780, in Paris. He was never formally educated and learned French grammar from a friend who was a printer. In 1802 he became a clerk at the University of Paris and did hack writing for hire. He gained sudden widespread fame after the publication of his own songs and poems, which were highly critical of the government set up under the restored Bourbon monarchy. The controversy they engendered led to his dismissal from his post and three months’ imprisonment. He died in Paris on July 16, 1857.

GRAHAM FALCONER

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Since the *chansons* were intended to be sung rather than read, it should be noted that several selections appeared in the 1970s on the Chants du Monde and Vega/Decca labels, although their availability is now somewhat sporadic.

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## BERG, JEAN[NE] DE

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1930–

French novelist

In 1956, under the male pen name Jean de Berg, Catherine Ratskian published *L'Image* [*The Image*], a novel that echoes *Story of O*, which had been published three years earlier under the pseudonym Pauline Réage: Both are extremely well crafted erotic novels with heavy sadomasochistic themes and multiple descriptive tableaux stemming from these practices. Narrated by the male “Jean” character, *L'Image* describes his gradual involvement in a lesbian sadomasochistic relationship: His friend Claire, a mature woman, has taken Anne, a young woman, as a subservient lover. She invites Jean to assist in Anne’s domination. Jean complies with pleasure and eventually ends up dominating Claire as well. The story closes on that last event. The book was published by cutting-edge publisher Jérôme Lindon from Editions de Minuit. Lindon published the majority of the works of the “new novelist” movement, including those by his friend and leader of the movement, Alain Robbe-Grillet. Like *Story of O*, *L'Image* was not only successful, but also controversial and censored; its preface was written by a famous contemporary intellectual or author; and it was adapted to film in the 70s.

The treasure hunt and guessing game to try and unmask the author of *L'Image* and determine his or her gender fascinated the French literati and literature aficionados until the end of the twentieth century. The preface to *L'Image*

is signed with the initials P.R., which were attributed to Pauline Réage, the author of the then scandalous *Story of O*. The first name of the then pseudonym and main character of the book, Jean, is the first name of Paulhan, Pauline Réage’s famous intellectual lover. Some scholars long suspected in fact that Alain Robbe-Grillet himself was the author of the preface, although current English editions still wrongly attribute it to Pauline Réage. The idea that the book itself might also have been written by him was even considered.

Catherine Robbe-Grillet has finally admitted being the author of *L'Image* under the pseudonym Jean de Berg, and she privately admits that her husband is indeed the author of the preface. Alain Robbe-Grillet confirmed this fact in *Angélique; ou, L'enchantement* in 1986, explaining precisely how the hoax was set as a prank on Jean Paulhan with the help of Jérôme Lindon. In fact Alain Robbe-Grillet had already partially revealed the truth about this literary masquerade when he chose the name Robert de Berg for one of his characters in *Topologie d'une cité fantôme* [*Topology of a Phantom City*], a collage novel from 1976. Robert de Berg’s half-sister’s name is “Djinn,” which is a homonym of the name “Jean” in English and is also the title of another one of his books, which was written as a French teaching method for students of French in California universities in 1981.

Almost 30 years after *L'Image*, in 1985 Catherine Robbe-Grillet published *Cérémonies de femmes* [*Women's Rites*], subtitled *Essays in*

*the Erotic Imagination*. *Cérémonies* is essentially a description and reflection of her own sadomasochistic erotic games, tracking her progress as a dominatrix in New York City and then Paris. It was printed under the pen name Jeanne de Berg, an apparent female counterpart to Jean de Berg. The book describes multiple partners and elaborate theatrical settings and includes a dialogue with a female friend of the narrative voice, Marie, asking questions about Jeanne's sadoerotic games.

*Cérémonies* came to the forefront when a chic, veiled Jeanne de Berg appeared on French television to publicize the book the year of its publication. Catherine played the part of a mysterious guest on the most famous French literary TV show at that time, the very popular *Apostrophes*, watched by millions of francophone people worldwide. By then, the secret was already out—most of the audience already knew that it was indeed Catherine Robbe-Grillet who sat under the veil. However, Bernard Pivot, the fashionable host of the show, decided to play along and pretend that nobody knew the real identity of the veiled woman, even though he announced that this female author was the wife of a prominent contemporary French writer.

Both *L'Image* and *Cérémonies de femmes* have caught the attention of feminist critics. Claudine Brécourt-Villars in 1985 decoded Jean de Berg as an anagram of "Je bande R.G." [I have a hard-on, R.G.] and declared that the novel could not possibly have been written by a female. Both Alain and Catherine Robbe-Grillet have refuted the anagram hypothesis. Susan Sontag in *The Pornographic Imagination* praises both *Story of O* and *L'Image* as belonging to literature and ranking higher than Oscar Wilde's *Teleny, or the Earl of Rochester's Sodom*. In the scholarly article "Performance Anxieties and Theatrical Perversions: Jeanne de Berg's *Cérémonies de Femmes*," Gwendolyn Wells looks for paradoxical intent in the novel, but her study is inconclusive: The book might be read as criticizing pornography as a form but, in any case, does not subvert the traditional phallic signs of power.

## Biography

Born in Paris in 1930, Catherine Robbe-Grillet (née Catherine Ratskian, aka Jean[ne] de Berg) studied in a Catholic high school, Notre-Dame-de-Sion, and then, for her higher education, at HEC (Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commerciales). She married the controversial novel theoretician, novelist, and film director Alain Robbe-Grillet October 23, 1957, in Neuilly-sur-Seine. In 1961, en route to Tokyo, they survived a plane crash in Hamburg.

CHRISTOPHE LAGIER

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# BESTIALITY

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Unlike some other themes of eroticism, such as flagellation, defloration, and the sexual imbroglio of the clergy, whose thematic emergence in erotic literature dominates specific historical periods and well-defined geographical areas, literary representations of sexual intercourse between human beings and nonhuman animals are not restricted to any given time and place. Regardless of cultural and linguistic context, spanning the entire history of erotica and cutting across the three main literary genres (prose, poetry, drama), bestiality, or what is sometimes referred to as *zoophilia*, seems to constitute a universal characteristic of the human sexual imagination. In addition, bestiality is one of the few erotic modalities that has lent itself easily to full integration within the narrative structure and stylistic requirements of all varieties of literary description. From satirical parable to entertaining limerick, from belles-lettres to the cheapest pornography, and from connoisseur edition to mass-market pulp fiction, bestiality has been able to adapt itself effortlessly to each and every niche of expression, often conditioning the erotic qualities of a textual composition all by itself.

One of the oldest documents sporting a scene of bestiality is Apuleius' *Asinus Aureus* [*The Golden Ass*] (second century CE), in which a young man, after being accidentally transformed into a donkey instead of a bird, sees himself faced with the daunting task of satisfying a noble and wealthy lady. The young man's initial anxiety about the size of his organ quickly turns into a fear that he may not be able to fulfil his mistress's ardent desire; but after a long night of adventurous excess, the woman decides to pay in advance for yet another encounter with her favorite lover. Similar examples of women lusting after the sexual prowess of animals abound in the grand symphony of erotic literature and pervade creations as semiotically diverse as the *Thousand and One Nights*, Saint-Just's *Organt* (1789), Andrea de Nerciat's *Le diable au corps* (1803), Jerzy Kosinski's *Steps* (1969), and Alberto

Moravia's *La cosa* (1984). The only variation on the theme of female bestiality in these works is found in the nature of the sexually active animal, yet even here the choice appears to be fairly limited, ranging (in order of preference) from donkeys to horses to dogs to apes.

Whereas the sexological and forensic reports of bestiality consist predominantly of sexual activities between male human beings and female animals, the distribution of gender is inversely proportionate within literary representations, such that women are endowed with irresistible seductive talents and unquenchable sexual appetites. One possible explanation for this remarkable shift of perspective could be that most literary accounts of cross-species sexual acts have been produced by men, so that the theme of a woman enjoying wild sex with animals epitomizes, more than anything else, the creative outcome of a male fantasy, in which the male author may unconsciously identify with the inexhaustible lascivious beast. In Pierre Béarn's *La bête* (1989), a male rendition of the erotic recollections of a woman, the penis of the adult man seducing the twelve-year-old girl is even explicitly designated as "the beast." Yet sometimes the zoophilic woman makes it crystal-clear that animals are much better lovers than their human counterparts, leaving the man in a state of jealousy, anger, and confusion. In Alfred de Musset's *Gamiani* (1833), for instance, Baron Alcide is forced to witness how Countess Gamiani suddenly disappears into an adjacent room in order to surrender herself completely to the frantic movements of an enormous dog. A similar theme occurs in Robinson Jeffers' poem *Roan Stallion*, although here the woman eventually kills her stallion-lover, after the latter murders her husband.

Much less frequent than the vignettes of male animals coupling with female humans are the literary versions of men initiating and enjoying bestial activities. When they do occur, they are often presented as guilt-ridden tales of youthful sexual exploration, as in the celebrated Dutch

writer Jan Wolkers' *De hond met de blauwe tong* [*The Dog with the Blue Tongue*] (1964). Two notable exceptions to this pattern in the prose genre appear in Bernard Noël's *Le Château de Cène* (1969) and, although situated in a completely different league of creation, in Maurice Rheims's *O de mer* (1963). In the former novel, the male protagonist gives in to a forcefully imposed session of mutual fellatio with two dogs, whereas in the latter text a fisherman wallows himself pleasurably in the shiny wet tentacles of a female octopus. In the drama genre, a unique example of a man pursuing a horse appears in Fernando Arrabal's *Bestialité érotique* (1969).

What men seem to appreciate in their female animal partners is less a high degree of sexual performance and more the stereotypical features of the receptive woman: perennial accessibility, lack of resistance, physical warmth, and bodily softness. Whereas bestial women, at least in the male imagination, purportedly enjoy the aggressive beast in the weak man or, slightly more annoyingly, the beast instead of the man, the classic zoophilic man apparently fancies the obsequious woman in the wild beast. In substituting an animal for a human partner, both women and men are in search of the qualities which the opposite sex of their own species does not possess. For women the beastliness of the other triggers a picture of ultramasculinity (vigor and virility), whilst for men this beastliness conceals

a conventional image of suprafemininity (tenderness and commitment).

DANY NOBUS

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## BI YU LOU [THE JADES PAVILION]

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### Medieval Chinese novel

For most Chinese novels written in the vernacular and published during the late Ming (1368–1644) and early Qing (1644–1911) periods, it is difficult, in some cases impossible, to identify the author and the date of publication. *Bi Yu Lou* is no exception to the rule. The writer of its foreword, also unknown, promotes the novel by saying it warns against dissoluteness, but above all contains erotic developments

which are far more elaborate than anything written on the subject ever before. Yet, despite its own undeniable qualities, *The Jades Pavilion* [*Bi Yu Lou*] is still far from outdoing the earlier works it directly draws its inspiration from.

Of the latter, the three most outstanding and obvious ones are definitely the *Jin Ping Mei* [*The Plum in the Golden Vase*], the *Huanxi yuanjia* [*Enemies Enamored*] and the *Rou putuan* [*The Carnal Prayer Mat*, published in 1657]. The first title shows how the names of the three



main female characters can be combined to form title. From the second, a collection of tales published in Hangzhou in 1640, the *Bi Yu Lou* amongst other things borrows the pattern of a husband deceived by the friend in whose care he has entrusted his wife (a plot which serves as the basis of the *Huanxi yuanjia*'s nineteenth tale). And from the third one, it borrows the idea of an ill-endowed husband appealing to a master's *ars erotica* to have his penis lengthened and toned up; but whereas in Li Yu's work the hero was given the transplant of a dog's penis—an operation which turned him into a bedroom athlete—here the main character, Wang Baishun, undergoes a plant therapy which is supposed to enhance his capacities so as to satisfy the legitimate demands of his wife and also allow him some extramarital affairs. The stratagem by which Mrs Feng, the matchmaker, provides her client with a forsaken wife moreover happens to be exactly the same rotten trick as the one used in "The Pearl-Sewn Shirt," the very first tale (and a famous one) to appear in the first of the three collections that Feng Menglong (1574–1646) compiled between 1620 and 1627 under the title *San Yan* [Three Words]. As far as borrowings are concerned in the *Bi Yu Lou*, one may also think of such novels as the *Zhaoyang qushi* [The Lascivious History of Zhaoyang], built on the apparition of a she-fox spirit. Here, these sensual and disquieting characters are not only the cause of men's unrest, but also the instruments of retribution for acts that are often narrated with plenty of shocking details.

When Mr. Wang decides to go to the capital to have his genitalia improved and thus avoid the ire of his demanding wife Zhang Bilian, he entrusts her to his best friend Wu Neng. The latter soon cuckolds him with complete peace of mind, until a righter of wrongs one day catches the lovers red-handed and kills him. The ensuing court trial spares the avenger, who finds himself only banished, while Bilian's honor is also treated gently: She gets away with a mere sermon given by a very open-minded official. Once he's back home after a few months away, Wang Baishun makes use of his new genitals with his wife. He soon ends up unknowingly buying Wu Neng's daughter as a maid, and although the death of his friend fortuitously comes to his ears after a while, its true cause remains concealed from him. In the meantime,

he has an affair with a beauty on the occasion of stirring erotic dreams, and decides to marry her. But as the fiancée happens to be dead already, the matchmaker in charge suggests that he should marry another young beauty (and the neglected wife of a merchant constantly away on business) named Yulou. However, the ghost of the dead fiancée soon comes back to haunt Wang Baishun, demanding care from her originally promised one: She explains that she is a she-fox spirit and expects him to help her avoid the fateful end which is awaiting her. But when the time comes, Baishun doesn't keep his word, thereby dooming himself to suffer the revenge of the evil creature, who has miraculously managed to come back unscathed from her ordeal. And soon the punishment arrives: The return of Yulou's husband seals the tragic fate of Wang Baishun the lover. To cap it all, the once cuckolded merchant ends up marrying the wife of the cuckold whom he has killed; Baishun's former sexual partners will from then on live with the merchant in perfect harmony, as equals. The epilogue, quite lenient toward a woman who has knowingly been unfaithful to her husband, as well as the general tone of the novel, both suggest an author who seems to be particularly well-disposed toward the fair sex. Likewise, he shows great sympathy for the merchant, who is far better treated in the novel than the scholars who are accused of the most reprehensible wrongdoings. Could it be that he was willing to please a specific audience, at a time when novels in vernacular Chinese were starting to be circulated more widely than before?

Indeed, the author of the *Bi Yu Lou* spared no effort to write a novel in which sex scenes are threaded together with steady rhythm: Only four chapters do not contain any explicitly erotic passages. Yet, he nonetheless remains notably moderate, depicting strictly heterosexual love-making between a man and his wife, and between each of them and their lover—the only bending of the rules being the relation between Baishun and the she-fox demon on the occasion of erotic dreams. As for the postures used during the lovemaking, they do not vary much, but leave room for the expression of a certain sensibility: Partners kiss on the mouth, and breasts are caressed and occasionally licked; the wife does not hesitate to blow the flute with her husband's penis so as to enhance her own desire; and all along, men pay special attention to their

partners' small bound feet. Vaginal secretions also play an important part in the economy of love relations, though the author thoroughly avoids indulging in the display of a so-called erotic science. The sexuality here depicted is both healthy and sportsmanlike, and aims entirely at the satisfaction of the legitimate desires of the characters, who make use of their bodies as they like and with whom they please. Their sensual desire arises from the sight of bodies and is heightened by the consumption of alcohol, which literally flows throughout the novel.

The author's account moreover denounces practices that were very common in those days and which sometimes led masters to sexually

abuse their young maids. In the novel, the maid eventually passes away after being roughly deflowered. Those qualities may well have seduced the readership of that time and may also have inspired the writing of the *Huanxi langshi* [The Lascivious History of Pleasure], a short novel in 12 chapters which, as is the case for the *Bi Yu Lou*, remains anonymous and undated.

PIERRE KASER

*Translated from the French by Victor Thibout*

### Translation of the *Bi Yu Lou*

*Le Pavillon des Jades*. Translated by Aloïs Tatu. Edited by Pierre Kaser. Arles: Editions Philippe Picquier, collection "Le pavillon des corps curieux," 2003.

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## BLASONS DU CORPS

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The French word *blason* (blazon) is originally a heraldic term denoting a coat of arms, as well as its description. In the late 15th and 16th centuries, the heraldic meaning was extended to indicate a usually brief versified text, generally accompanied by an illustration, describing a wide range of subjects. The most interesting manifestation of the poetic *blason* is to be found in the 16th-century subgenre of the *blasons du corps féminin*, which evoke separate parts of women's bodies in imaginative, erotically charged, metaphorical terms.

The context for the poetic practice of depicting distinct elements of the female form is situated, for the French poets of the Renaissance, in earlier literary traditions, and most significantly in the new anatomical treatises which stress the importance of dissection—i.e., of fragmentation and penetration—as a tool of exploration and knowledge, not only in the medical field but also in the wider scientific and intellectual sphere. The notion of the fragment, allied with an urge toward discovery and appropriation, partakes of the glamour of the "new" and encourages a titillating intensity focused on a singular, brilliantly appealing object.

The first *blason anatomique* was written by Clement Marot, one of the *Grands-Rhétoriqueurs*, closely connected with the court of Francis I. In 1535 he composed the *Blason du tétin* [*Blazon of the Breast*] and thus launches a literary fashion destined to enjoy an immense popularity through the century. Inspired and solicited by Marot, a spate of poets—some (such as Maurice Sceve) well-known authors from prominent cultural centers, others obscure provincials—follow his example, and already from 1536 on groups of *blasons* are included in larger poetic compilations. For the first time in 1543 a distinct volume under the title *Blasons anatomiques du corps féminin* is published in Paris, comprising 37 poems, by 15 named and 8 anonymous authors. The multiple printings in the 16th century testify to the collection's success. In keeping with the taste for illustrated books, woodcuts accompany a number of the *blasons*, but, artistically rudimentary, they lack the amorous eloquence of the texts.

The *blasons du corps* are astrophic poems, mostly composed in octosyllabic verse. They vary widely in length, tone, and poetic virtuosity, but they all have in common their engagement

with a single part of a woman's body, from the hair to the feet, including the most private parts. Typically the blasoned object is named copiously throughout the text, often at the start of each line, thus suggesting the anaphoric implorations of a profane litany, as the poet addresses himself to his selected idol in terms of adoration and supplication.

It is the presence of the poet/lover that creates the erotic space in which the object of desire is enthroned and, through the use of concatenated metaphors, transformed into multiple avatars of the author's needs and imaginings. Although a comic, occasionally scatological, note may be struck, and a ludic tone is often present, the majority of the poems evince a grave, ardently passionate mode of expression as the poet seeks to lose himself in the dangerous sexual space—images of secrecy, of peril, of entering abound—where he aspires to touch, to smell, to taste the seductive object he has created by seeing and dismembering a woman's body. The poet's implicit stance is both that of the dissecting conqueror and that of the conquered victim, since he must suffer the at times punishing dominance of his self-imposed obsession. Fetishistic, sadomasochistic, and voyeuristic overtones color the texts and confer upon them a manifest aura of sexual daring.

A variant on the *blasons* follows closely upon their invention, namely that of the *contreblasons* (counterblasons), which address the same body parts, but in terms of denigration. Again Marot leads the way with his *Contreblason du tetin*, in which the previously exalted breast is now described as ugly and repulsive. However, this "anti-model" intended by Marot to be read in jocular contrast to "the real thing" is followed by very few poets. Indeed, the greatest number of *contreblasons* are composed by one author, La Hueterie, who seeks not to emulate Marot, but rather to condemn the anatomical *blasons*. In this condemnation he is not alone; not surprisingly, the *blasons* scandalized a number of righteous critics who called them indecent and sinful.

While the known *blasonneurs* are all male, certain women poets of the period, such as Louise Labé and Catherine des Roches, engage in a practice akin to that of the *blason's* detailed amorous description, without, however, the singular focus of the *blason*; at the same time they subvert certain conventions of the genre, and

thus deconstruct the language of male desire in order to reconstruct it in a female mode.

In the second half of the 16th century the use of the designation *blason* affixed to a love poem disappeared, although *Pleïade* poets, such as Ronsard, continue to draw on the thematic possibilities initiated by Marot and his followers. In Renaissance England the lineaments of the French *blason* appear as poetic topoi and figures, embedded in more extensive textualizations of a woman's presence.

Although from the 17th century on the *blasons anatomiques*, now considered a dubious minor genre, tended to be excluded from anthologies and literary surveys, a renewed interest in their textual and historical existence was manifested in the 19th and 20th centuries by a number of editions and studies, and since the last quarter of the 20th century, various critical/theoretical approaches have been applied to them. Psychoanalytical (Freudian, Lacanian) readings have scrutinized the unconscious of the texts; feminist interpretations have examined the misogyny implied in the reification and morselization of the female body; the problematics of gender representation and of sexual politics, intersecting with cultural and rhetorical traditions, have been investigated; New Historicism has analyzed the poems as symptomatic of early modern society, a world marked by fragmentation. The *blasons du corps* thus assume a multiplicity of meanings, all springing from their seemingly simple (descriptive, evocative) as well as from their complex (obsessive, dramatic) discourses, and from their compelling erotic authority.

TILDE SANKOVITCH

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## BLESSEBOIS, PIERRE CORNEILLE

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c. 1646–c. 1700

French novelist and dramatist

Pierre Corneille Blessebois was born with the forenames Pierre Alexis, but later abandoned these. He also abjured his Protestantism, much to the chagrin of his mother. His interest in religion was shared by other libertine writers (such as Théophile de Viau), many of whom were unjustly criticized on the grounds of impiety and atheism, when their attacks were often focused on religious hypocrisy and excess rather than faith itself. Blessebois wrote two religious tragedies, though these may have served as a means of flaunting his Catholic credentials after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (1685) in order to allay any suspicion of attachment to his former religion. He also changed his name to the more literary-sounding Pierre Corneille Blessebois, and its first recorded use coincides with his writing debut with a manuscript entitled *Les aventures dans le parc d'Alençon* [*Adventures in Alençon's Park*] (1668), which was circulated among a select local readership. This novel dealt with the question of whether love is caused by nature or nurture, though this philosophical undercurrent is tempered by the work detailing the sexual peccadilloes of certain inhabitants of the

town of the work's title. The scandal caused by the tale's explicit erotic content and its fundamental critique of a seemingly malicious God, compounded by Blessebois's mother's distress, obliged him to return to Verneuil.

His next novel was also semi-autobiographical, *Le rut, ou la pudeur éteinte* [*The Rutting Season, or Spent Modesty*] (1676), a work of revenge parodying his mistress, Marthe Le Hayer, for having reported him to the authorities. Blessebois thinly disguised her as Amarante, a sexually voracious alcoholic who is a figure of ridicule. The story is set in Alençon's prison, and the hero, Céladon (Blessebois), engages in a relationship with a beautiful female visitor, Dorimène, who is touched by his fate. She introduces him to her two sisters, and together with the jailer, Le Rocher, all engage in a debauched party that inevitably degenerates into erotic acts. In real life, the writer had made friends with Le Rocher, for which he enjoyed favorable treatment, including visits from women curious about the infamous inmate. In the novel, their special relationship comes to an end when Le Rocher discovers he is impotent and releases Céladon out of jealousy of his sexual performance. The newly liberated young man encounters a knight who is really Amarante disguised in

male garb. The couple stop off at an inn and participate in an orgy with the innkeeper, Louis, and his wife. Following scenes depict Amarante persecuting Céladon because he will not marry her, and she has him imprisoned at For-l'Evêque, where his cellmate is the pederastic Baron de Samoi. The nobleman is infatuated with his new cellmate and this provokes Céladon to embrace Amarante when she comes to visit him. She is overjoyed, and believing the baron can assist her to persuade his cellmate to wed her, promises to refuse him nothing, whereupon the baron sodomizes her. At this point, Samoi's brother arrives, and is so pleased to see his brother engaging in heterosexual relations that he secures the release of the two captives. Finally, this brother, M. de La Graverie, marries Amarante. Together they run a school for the instruction of youth, where all the students end up contracting venereal diseases. Bougard judges this novel to be the only fundamentally erotic French novel of the seventeenth century.

He published several works at Leiden, including his first theatrical works. *Marthe Le Hayer, ou mademoiselle de Sçay* is an obscene comedy in three acts, also known as *Le bordel de Mlle de Sçay* [*Mademoiselle de Sçay's Brothel*] (1678) and other titles. This cynical comedy on love is another, more direct, criticism of his former fiancée. The play's central character, Clarice (who represents Marthe Le Hayer according to the preface), together with her maid, Gênevot, wish to acquire Clérumont and his valet, Lubin, for lovers. The men demand that they be paid for their sexual services, and after a period of resistance, the women duly end up rewarding the male pair. Blessebois's last work, *Le zombi du Grand-Pérou* [*The Zombie of Grand-Pérou*] (1697), dramatizes the story of a spurned woman acquiring the power, through voodoo magic, to become invisible and being transformed into a zombie-like state at night in order to spy on the man she is obsessed with. Like all his writings, this is based on his experience—in this case, his efforts to help Félicité de Lespinay seduce Charles Dupont, the writer's master. This affair secured his notoriety in his place of exile and saw him condemned for magic in 1690, for which he was sentenced to be burnt in effigy and to make restitution to God.

Alexandrian labels Blessebois "the most curious erotic author of the seventeenth century," though the writer's influence on his contemporaries was minimal and most of his works were

not widely disseminated or published during his lifetime, nor was he formally associated with other libertine writers. His achievement lies in his uncompromising and defiant attitude to censorship and authority. In particular, a leitmotiv running throughout his work is the belief that men are often the victims of the opposite sex's libidinous cunning. Toward the end of the seventeenth century, some physicians were adopting mechanistic theories of personality which supported the observation that men suffered from emotional phenomena similar to hysteria. It is interesting that Blessebois's work clearly resists such notions and highlights the medieval belief of women's disordered and voracious sexual temperament. When a presiding magistrate, interrogating him during one of his many brushes with the law, demanded to know whether the accused deserved his reputation of a corrupter of many women, the writer replied that he was instead a young man whom many wicked women had corrupted.

### Biography

Born in Verneuil, Normandy, c. 1646 (possibly as late as 1650) to a recently ennobled bourgeois family. Moved to Alençon due to his widespread notoriety in his hometown as a proficient seducer of young women, 1668; the scandal caused by the circulation of a manuscript caused him to return home some months later. With younger brother Philippe, set fire to and destroyed official tax records in Verneuil, standing guard until the flames had destroyed all documentation, 1670. Captured at Montreuil-sur-Mer and began his first term of imprisonment at Alençon; banished permanently from France and goods requisitioned to the Crown, November 15, 1670. Granted special permission to leave prison due to a written offer of marriage made to Marthe Le Hayer, 1671. Enrolled in the army, 1672; arrested after his fiancée complained he had reneged on his marital promise, 1673. Escaped from prison at For-l'Evêque, 1674. Fled to the Netherlands and was a mercenary on one of 15 ships commanded by Admiral Tromp. Returned to France, imprisoned several times for violent acts; sent to Châtelet, 1678. Joined the French navy; condemned to the galleys for desertion, 1681. Deemed unfit to row and exiled to Guadeloupe, February 1686. Placed as a slave under the care of Charles Dupont,

marquis du Grand-Pérou, 1686. Charged with sexual magic; condemned to make reparation in absentia, 1690. Died after 1697 and probably no later than 1700.

PAUL SCOTT

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# BOCCACCIO, GIOVANNI

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1313–1375

Italian poet and novelist

Giovanni Boccaccio, one of the most influential writers in European literature, is remembered primarily for his collection of one hundred tales, the *Decameron*, written in the aftermath of the Black Death which decimated Europe in 1348. The collection contains various different kinds of stories, and many of the tales are erotic or bawdy. The *Decameron* was the first vernacular literary work to have a truly international impact, and its audience was not restricted to any one social class. It was translated into Latin, Catalan, and French even before the advent of printing. Print spread it further still.

In his youth, Boccaccio wrote several narrative works, in both prose and verse, dealing with themes of courtly love. His poem *Filostrato*, c. 1335, told the popular medieval story of Troilus' betrayal by Cressida at the siege of Troy. His *Tesieda*, c. 1341, focused on the rivalry of two young knights over a beautiful maiden. Both were famously adapted by Chaucer and later dramatized by Shakespeare. Experimenting in a wide variety of genres, Boccaccio also wrote a lengthy and jumbled prose romance, *Filocolo*, c. 1336–1338; *Fiammetta*, a psychological prose

narrative of a woman betrayed by her lover, c. 1343–1344; and several poems celebrating the beauty of nymphs and the sublimity of courtly love.

While many of these early works proved influential, they are all eclipsed by the *Decameron* [*The Ten Days*], 1348–1351, which consists of one hundred tales told by a group of aristocratic young women and men who have taken refuge in a Tuscan villa to escape the ravages of the Florentine plague. Written in simple, vigorous prose, the tales in the *Decameron* are realistic and domestic: they are about ordinary people, and are set in real places. While some tales are moralistic, they tend to be worldly and ironic. The erotic tales in the *Decameron* are characterized by their acceptance of the physical reality of sex and their criticism of clerical hypocrisy. While illicit sex is not necessarily approved of, neither is it castigated or punished.

About two thirds of the tales in the collection focus on sexual relations between men and women. Some stories are decorously romantic; others are bawdy and crude. Many of these tales deal with socially forbidden relations—young lovers confronting social obstacles, adulterous liaisons, lustful clerics, rape. There is little mention of homoeroticism or autoeroticism; in the

*Decameron*, sex is a matter between men and women to be discussed between men and women. While some of the sexually explicit tales have proved shocking to readers over the years, at no time is it suggested in the text itself that they are inappropriate for a group of young unsupervised, unmarried aristocrats. And on the seventh day the presumably virginal young women have no trouble coming up with tales of clever wives duping their foolish husbands. Still, most of the bawdiest tales are told by the three men in the group, including the story of Masetto (3.1), a cunning laborer who becomes the sexual servant of an entire convent full of nuns, and the tale of Alibech (3.10), a Muslim girl converted to Christianity by a hermit who teaches her how to put his “devil” in her “hell.”

That the women in the group outnumber the men suggests the extent to which the *Decameron* was written with a primarily female audience in mind. While in later life Boccaccio stipulated that women should not read the book, in the text itself he always refers to his readers as “ladies.” Boccaccio’s portrayal of women in the *Decameron* is complex and multivalent. Women appear both as passive objects of desire and as lustful protagonists. Sometimes female sexuality is seen as a threat, sometimes it is celebrated. Although the tales do not always portray women in a flattering light, the group of storytellers creates an alternative society which is largely organized by women and in which women share power with men. The influence of women on the tales is represented symbolically by the feminine space of the enclosed garden in which the group meets, as well as by the hidden “Valley of Ladies,” where the young women retire to bathe and the whole group gathers to tell the bawdy tales of the seventh day. Nonetheless, the fact that none of the tales deals with female friendship suggests that Boccaccio is interested in women primarily as they relate to men.

After the completion of the *Decameron*, Boccaccio devoted himself increasingly to humanist studies and to the compilation of encyclopedic works in Latin: *Genealogica deorum gentium* [*The Genealogies of the Pagan Gods*], 1350–1371; *De casibus virorum illustrium* [*The Fates of Illustrious Men*], 1355–1360; and *De claris mulieribus* [*Concerning Famous Women*], c. 1361. Some have seen Boccaccio’s shift from creative works in the vernacular to scholarly

works in Latin as the result of his friendship with Petrarch, whom he first met in 1350. Whatever the cause, it is clear that Boccaccio’s later years were marked by increasing piety and asceticism. In the late 1350s, he took minor religious orders. By the 1370s there were rumors that he had become a monk.

The shift in Boccaccio’s values is perhaps best demonstrated by his final fictional text, *Corbaccio* [*The Dirty Crow*], c. 1355, a misogynist rant in the form of a dream vision warning a young man not to marry. It is hard not to see this work as a repudiation of the amorous devotion to women and the playful celebration of earthly love which suffuse the *Decameron*. Besides the scholarly writings on Dante which occupied his later years, *Corbaccio* was Boccaccio’s last work in the Italian prose which he had done so much to shape into a great literary language.

The influence of the *Decameron* on European literature is incalculable and enduring, not least as a model of erotic narrative. Its structure provided the model for the Marquis de Sade’s *120 Days of Sodom*; and as recently as 1971 the Italian filmmaker and poet Pier Paolo Pasolini made a film version of the *Decameron*, focusing on several of the best-known erotic tales.

### Biography

Born in the summer of 1313, probably in or near Florence—not in Paris, as long believed. Illegitimate son of a successful Florentine merchant. Joined his father in Naples as apprentice of the Bardi company of Florentine bankers, 1327. Studied canon law and Latin classics at the University of Naples, beginning 1330–31. Returned to Florence, winter 1340–41. In Ravenna and Forlì, 1346–47. In Florence at time of Black Death, 1348; father and stepmother died, leaving him head of family. First meeting with Petrarch, 1350. Traveled as Florentine ambassador to various Italian states, 1350–67. Organized military resistance to mercenary Fra Moriale, 1355. Took minor clerical orders, c. 1357. Birth legitimized by papal dispensation, 1360. Promoted teaching and study of Greek at the University of Florence after 1360. Left Florence and moved to his family’s hometown of Certaldo for political reasons, 1361–65. In Naples, 1371–72. Lectured on Dante in Florence, 1373. Died at Certaldo, December 21, 1375.

IAN FREDERICK MOULTON

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## BONAVENTURE DES PÉRIERS

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c. 1510–1544

French humanist and poet

Little is known with certainty about the life of Bonaventure Des Périers, and the mystery that shrouds his life is equaled by the enigmatic nature of a number of his works or by their uncertain attribution. The earliest definitive reference to Des Périers links him to Robert Olivetan and Lefèvre d'Étaples in 1535, indicating that Des Périers assisted in the preparation of their vernacular (French) version of the Old and New Testaments. His religious leanings, while far from following Calvinist orthodoxy, were more in line with the Reformers than with the Catholics. Among his literary associations were many of the prominent French-speaking Calvinists, including Clement Marot, whom he defended against his detractors.

As secretary to Marguerite de Navarre, the sister of Francis I, king of France, Des Périers would have transcribed her works, including many of the tales that were later published in her *Heptameron*. Marguerite's powerful position at the court, her interest in the ideas of the Reformers, as well as her own literary pursuits made her an ideal employer for Des Périers. Her

circle functioned as a forum for free thought, where the ideas expressed often ran counter to both Catholic and Calvinist sensibilities. Such ideas were found in the anonymous *Cymbalum mundi*, published both in Paris and Lyon (1537–38). The text came under the scrutiny of Francis I and the Parlement of Paris. Francis' direct intervention caused the Sorbonne to order the work burned and its publisher imprisoned. How Des Périers escaped punishment—if he had been identified as the author—is unclear. The most plausible explanation is that he benefited from Marguerite's protection. However, no unequivocal attribution of the *Cymbalum mundi* to Des Periers appeared until 1566 in Henri Estienne's *Apologie d'Herodote* [*Apologia of Herodotus*]. Now considered one of the major prose texts of the sixteenth century, it defies a transparent reading. The text presents a series of four prose dialogues modeled after Lucian and establishes a pre-libertine philosophical stance in the works of Des Périers. The dialogues themselves concern disparate events—from Mercury coming to earth in order to have the book of man's fate rebound, to Cupid's arrow propelling a recalcitrant woman into her would-be lover's



arms, to a horse attempting to get permission from his owner to be able to go out on his own when mares are in season (the latter being the topic of discussion of two dogs). Concordant with many ideas of the Reformation, its critique of the split of the Reformers into various sects signals Des Périers's break with any established form of Protestantism. Indeed, the Sorbonne did not declare the text heretical; rather the condemnation rested on its being a "pernicious" book. Its dedication, "Thoazas du Clévier (or Clénier) à son ami Pierre Tryocan," deciphered in the nineteenth century as an anagram for "Thomas l'Incrédule à son ami Pierre Croyant" [Doubting Thomas to his friend Peter the Believer] signals the skepticism that imbues the dialogues.

The volume *Recueil des oeuvres de feu Bonaventure des Périers* [Collected Works of the Late Bonaventure des Périers] appeared shortly after his death in 1544 in Lyon. It included his poems, a work modeled on Seneca, and a translation of the *Lysis* of Plato. The Platonic dialogue, in which the interlocutors are Socrates and a series of young boys, explores love in a homosexual context. One of the poems, addressed to Marguerite de Navarre, "Queste de l'amitié" [Search for Love/Friendship] restates the main points of the Platonic dialogue, although through its dedication, it places them in the mode of heterosexual Platonic love. Renaissance Neo-Platonism also informs another poem in the collection, the "Blason du nombril" [Blazon of the Navel] (see *Blason du corps* in this volume). The *blason*, poems in praise of the female body, had been revived by Marot and was particularly popular among the Lyon poets. While the majority of these poems eroticized a fragmented body (there were *blasons* of the eyebrow, the nose, the breast, etc.), Des Périers' poem retraces the myth of the androgyne. Thus, like the works of his patron Marguerite de Navarre, Des Périers' writings frequently reflect the broad scope of Neo-Platonism and Evangelism. It should be remembered that at the time of the publication of this collection, Des Périers was not yet directly associated with the *Cymbalum mundi*.

A second posthumous publication would radically change the literary standing of Des Périers. The *Nouvelles créations et joyeux devis* [Novel Pastimes and Merry Tales] (1558) placed him in the context of another tradition, that of the short tale, and definitively established him as a master prose writer. Nonetheless, questions of

authorship were raised about the collection. When it was reprinted in 1568, it had been augmented by some 39 tales. Critical consensus maintains Des Périers as the author for the first edition, but not for the appended tales.

### *Nouvelles créations et joyeux devis*

The *Novel Pastimes* as originally published contained 90 "nouvelles," although the first tale serves as a preamble to explain the author's intentions. It was published the same year as another posthumous collection of short tales, Marguerite de Navarre's *Heptameron*. Unlike that text, which, following in the tradition of Boccaccio, placed its tales in an elaborate frame structure, Des Périers's work is not set in a coherent, overarching structure, nor does it play different narrative voices against one another. Given that Des Périers was familiar with Marguerite's work and her desire to create a French Decameron, it is possible that Des Périers deliberately chose a different structure for his collection. A single narrative voice unites the tales, characterized in the main by their brevity. The order is not completely random: some tales in a series share a common character, others follow upon a similar theme, others have a similar geographic location. The tales themselves are models of simple, direct narration, demonstrating little interest in serious social satire or moralizing. The minimal development of characters, combined with ample dialogue, as well as narrative exposition, create fast-paced, easily accessible stories. The vast majority of the tales can be divided into three broad thematic categories: the Church, the Law, and sex, with protagonists from all social strata. These categories, which sometimes overlap, also recall the themes of the *fabliaux*, thus placing Des Périers's collection in the tradition of the short French comic tale.

Unlike the *fabliaux*, however, erotic subjects do not dominate the collection: horse thievery is as important as the "theft" of another man's wife. Further, however colored his other works may be by a Protestant morality and a Neo-Platonist love esthetic, love, when it appears in these tales, is a physical matter, better qualified as lust. The promiscuity of the clergy, adulterous relations, and sexual jokes form the core of the erotic tales in the collection. Typical plots include husbands who are cuckolded in spite of their efforts to preserve their honor; for example,

“De l’enfant de Paris nouvellement marié, et de Beaufort qui trouva moyen de jouir de sa femme, nonobstant la songeuse garde de dame Pernette” [Of the Newly Wed Parisian Youth, and Beaufort, Who Was Able to Have His Way with the Former’s Wife, Despite the Careful Watch of Dame Pernette]. Others are frequently concerned with performance and ingenuity in matters of sexual relations; for example, “D’un jeune garçon qui se nomma Thoinette pour ester receu a une religion de nonnains” (Of a Young Man Who Called Himself Thoinette So That He Could Enter a Convent”). Linguistic turns, as in “De Trois soeurs nouvelles épouses, qui répondirent chacune un bon mot à leur mari la première nuit de leurs nopces” [Of Three Recently Married Sisters Who Each Answered Their Husbands by a Witticism on Their Wedding Night], three sisters must come up with a way to counter their husbands’ discovery that they are not virgins. Their father offers two hundred écus to the one who has the best reply. The story ends in a series of puns, but the narrator does not say who wins, preferring to accord each one the sum. Overall, the ribald, bawdy nature of these tales and the unadorned language dealing with sex demonstrate Des Périers’s ease with the “esprit gaulois” that amply colors the French short tale.

### Biography

Born Arnay-le-Duc, c. 1510. Probably educated in Autun, at the abbey school of Saint

Martin. Visited Lyon in 1533–34. Secretary to Marguerite de Navarre, 1536–41(?). Spent time in Paris in 1540s. Died, possibly a suicide, Lyon, c. 1544.

EDITH J. BENKOV

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## BONNETAIN, PAUL

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1858–1899

French novelist, journalist, and playwright

### Major Work: *Charlot s’amuse*

On August 18, 1887, Bonnetain and four other disciples of the naturalist novelist Émile Zola (1840–1902) published an open letter accusing

the Master of having perpetrated in his recent novel *La terre* [*Earth*] (1887) a gross attack on virtue. The irony is that Bonnetain himself had previously become known as a purveyor of filth and, because of the notoriety of his novel *Charlot s’amuse*, which took self-abuse as its theme, had earned himself the nickname “Bonnemain” (“Handy Andy”). As a naturalist writer, he, too, subscribed to a literary program

in which scientific realism was used to construct a portrait of the underside of society and the degeneracy of individuals who inhabited it.

*Charlot s'amuse* [*Charlie Gives Himself a Helping Hand*] (1883) is a novel about a man who suffers from a deviation of the sexual drive (or "genital sense"), which in his case manifests itself as an irrepressible desire to masturbate. The teaching of the Swiss medical writer Samuel Auguste Tissot (1728–1797) was still generally accepted, and onanism was held to be responsible for softening the brain, destroying an individual's willpower, generating tuberculosis, and ensuring moral impotence. Bonnetain was prosecuted in December 1884 at the Assize Court in Paris and was acquitted. His Belgian publisher, Kistemaekers, was similarly let off at the Brabant Assizes in December 1885. In both cases much was made of the literary quality of the work.

When *Charlot s'amuse* was next published, in 1888, it contained the text of the indictment together with a precise list of the 12 allegedly obscene passages selected as being "contrary to public decency." The reader could therefore more easily form his (or less probably her) own opinion as to whether the novel was pornographic or not. In addition, the book carried a supportive preface by a friend, Henri Céard (1851–1924), who was also a naturalist writer. Céard admitted that he had not "studied" the novel thoroughly, but he declared that he had been particularly touched by its "profound sadness," its "serene ferocity," the "quiet, sinister manner of its observations," and the "cruelty of life," as well as the "misery of passion" which it described. In addition, it showed "heredity in all its horrors" and "fate manifest in physiology." But, he contended, while it certainly attacked hypocrisy, the novel was above all artistically written. The choice of subject, he maintained, was not open to criticism, for masturbation already featured in the Bible and the *Confessions* of Jean-Jacques Rousseau: "*Charlot* provides a terrifying analysis of a peniless man promenading his vice across the whole of Paris but never being able to satisfy his dream, his erection yet more stimulated as he views photographs of nudes in gaslit windows, and so storing up his desires at each new step that no sexual contact will satisfy him—his only despairing recourse then being to his own hand." The details to which Céard alludes include the hero's drunken suicidal father and his nymphomaniac

mother. Charlot's neurosis and vitiated sexual urge lead to epilepsy, anemia, and the general collapse of his personality. As a pretty child he is seduced and abused by several Catholic priests (the anticlerical tone of the work is in line with other contemporary novels on homosexual themes), and when he moves on to secondary school he forms an attachment with Lucien, a more "masculine" elder youth, who, after an initial sentimental affair, abandons him for women and the army. Charlot now learns to dissemble as he begins to masturbate more efficiently and to hide his vice.

He is filled with distaste for women, "which is, as it were, the punishment for self abuse." A visit to a prostitute does not cure him; and an affair with Fanny, another nymphomaniac, is successful only as long as they both continue to indulge their appetite for "ecstatic orgies of lust." Fanny abandons Charlot, leaving their baby son with him. He, having relapsed into his habit, learns from *Family Advice to Fathers* that "solitary abuse, when it does not lead to frightful diseases, inevitably results in madness or suicide." He therefore decides to preempt his destiny, and taking the child with him (for he fears that the boy will have inherited the family curse), he drowns them both in the nearby canal. While the novel may be read as a cautionary tale, there is no doubt that the lurid descriptive passages are quite powerful.

### Biography

Born in Nîmes (Department of the Gard, southern France), 1858; died in Hong (Laos), 1899. Between the ages of 18 and 23, Bonnetain served in the French navy. Repatriated when he was suffering from malaria, which he contracted in French Guiana, he published his first novel, *Le tour du monde d'un troupier* [*A Trooper's Journey Around the World*] in 1882. He then embarked on a career in part-time journalism, which he supplemented by writing articles of literary criticism and further novels, among which two are considered his best: *Charlot s'amuse* (1883) and *L'Opium* [*Opium*] (1886). He also collaborated in the writing of several plays (e.g., *La Pelote* [*The Ball of Wool*] (1888), with Lucien Descaves, whose scandalous novel, *Sous-offs* [*Subalterns*] (1890), contains episodes describing sexual irregularities in the French army). He was colonial war correspondent for

the newspaper *Le Figaro* and for a time its literary editor. He married Raymonde Ogé in 1888 after a brief but intense affair with Marie Colombier, then in her 40s, who was a celebrated literary scandalmonger. He allegedly helped Marie with her *Mémoires de Sarah Barnum* (1883), which was a satirical portrayal of the famous actress Sarah Bernhardt's recent tour of the United States. Publication of this book provoked a duel in which Bonnetain was slightly injured, and his honor remained intact. Marie has been thought to be the model for Fanny Legrand, the heroine of Alphonse Daudet's novel *Sapho* (1884), while

the hero, Jean Gaussin, allegedly owes something to Bonnetain.

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## BOOK OF ODES [SHIH-CHING]

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The *Shih-ching* [*Book of Odes or Book of Songs*] is one of the Five Classics of ancient Chinese literature. This collection consists of 305 songs, composed between c. 1000 and c. 600 BCE, grouped into four sections. The first section, the *Kuo-feng* [*Airs of the States*], includes 160 odes, arranged in 15 groups according to geographical area. All are folk songs from northern China, describing important events in the lives of ordinary people in ancient times. The second section, *Hsiao-ya* [*Lesser Elegant Odes*] contains 75 songs, some of which are folk songs, others were composed to celebrate banquets and feasts. The third section, *Ta-ya* [*Greater Elegant Odes*] includes 31 songs inspired by Chinese history and mythology. The final section, the *Sung* [*Hymns of Praise*] incorporates thirty songs for religious rites and feasts. These hymns were sung on ritual occasions in praise of the ancestors. Although the words of these songs are preserved in the *Shih-ching*, the music associated with them was lost in antiquity.

Traditionally the *Shih-ching* was said to have been compiled by Confucius (551–479 BCE), after he chose from among some 3,000 songs those that best conveyed his moral message. Although modern scholarship rejects this association, the *Shih-ching* was a key part of the Confucian canon. For many centuries, the songs

were studied with a view to understanding the moral example that Confucius had found in them. As one of the Five Classics of Confucian learning, study of the *Shih-ching* received imperial sponsorship. Prior to the unification of China in 221 BCE there were a number of different versions of the *Shih-ching* in circulation, but only one survived the Han dynasty to be preserved to modern times. This version, the Mao, gave each ode a strong moral and political message, encapsulated in the short preface, or *hsü*. The Mao version also assigned a number to each ode, and this remains the most common form of identifying individual songs.

Approximately one third of the odes in the *Shih-ching* are on themes related to courtship, love, and marriage. Even the most erotic of these songs is assigned a moral, and many are associated with famous historical events. For example, the song *Ch'en-feng* [*Dawn Breeze*] (Mao 132), which describes the sexual frustration of a woman abandoned by her lover, was traditionally interpreted as a satire against Lord K'ang of Ch'in (r. 620–609 BCE), who neglected his wise ministers. Likewise, a song entitled *Chiang Ch'ung-tzu* [*I Beg You, Chiang-tzu*] (Mao 76) records a young woman telling her lover to leave the house silently, for fear of gossip. This ode was said to be a criticism of Lord Chuang of

Cheng (r. 743–701 BCE), who forgave his rebellious younger brother. Assigning a moral message to these songs seems to have been a very early development, and certainly predated the development of this book into one of the Confucian classics.

According to ancient Chinese historical works, the odes of the *Shih-ching* were already seen as conveying political and moral information in the Spring and Autumn period (771–475 BCE). At this time, these songs were regularly chanted or sung at diplomatic meetings and important conferences. These performances were not solely for entertainment; they were also intended to convey messages of loyalty and of criticism to particular members of the audience, and as such played a significant part in the ongoing negotiations. Even songs with a considerable erotic content were performed in this way. Sometimes only a single verse would be sung, due to the significance of the wording in the context of the discussions. Although people were aware of erotic elements found in many of these songs, this was not necessarily the most important aspect of the *Shih-ching*.

A number of the songs included in the *Shih-ching* deal with premarital sexual relations, and in particular with the festivals at which young people were encouraged to meet and develop relationships. These songs, which would form a particular challenge to later commentators, who were trained in Confucian gender roles, describe sexual relationships that take place outside of the control of the family and in which the women concerned have considerable freedom to choose their partners. It is clear from a number of odes that women played the lead role in the festivals at which young people met and chose their sexual partners. Some of these songs were composed for two choirs, one male and one female, singing alternate sections. The odes are often extremely frank in their portrayal of sexual desires and the ease with which they could be satisfied.

A number of songs in the *Shih-ching*, such as *Chiao-t'ung* [*Clever Boy*] (Mao 86), focus upon female sexuality. These odes usually describe pre- or extramarital sexual relationships, and in some cases detail the pain caused when a relationship sours. Among the songs describing extramarital relationships is *Nü yueh chi-ming* [*She Says the Cock Has Crowed*] (Mao 82), in which the wife orders her lover out of bed at cock-crow. Many of the themes of the songs in the *Shih-ching* were

later adapted for erotic verse by male poets, who took on a female persona in order to explore issues of sexuality, desire, and frustration.

No matter how apparently personal the subject matter of these songs, at no stage does the poet or singer attempt to create a subjective voice. The terms used to describe beautiful women and desirable men in these songs are highly generic, and no attempt has been made to individualize these figures. This marks an important distinction from later Chinese erotic verse, which often emphasizes the unique and personal nature of sexual relationships. In the twentieth century, the folk nature of many of the songs in the *Shih-ching* was reaffirmed. As traditional scholarship was rejected, and belief in the Confucian message of these odes declined, it was possible once again to explore the erotic nature of many of the songs incorporated in this ancient anthology.

OLIVIA MILBURN

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# BOREL, PÉTRUS

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1809–1859

French fiction writer and poet

Although his name is little remembered today, in comparison with his contemporaries Théophile Gautier and Charles Nodier, Pétrus Borel was acknowledged as a literary innovator in his own lifetime. His distinctive prose writing, characterized by black humor, sadistic irony, narrative twists, and a mixture of styles and registers, made Borel's texts unique among the heavy hyperbole and lyricism of the Frenetic Romantic movement. Moreover, his self-stylization as "the Lycanthrope" (the werewolf) and his reputation as a passionate and promiscuous lover marked him as a colorful character of the nineteenth-century literary scene. It is a testimony both to Borel's writing and to his promotion of his self-image that he served as an acknowledged influence for the most important French poet of the nineteenth century, Charles Baudelaire, who shared Borel's pessimistic vision of "spleen et ennui." Elements of Borel's legacy can also be identified in the twentieth century, in the writings of the French Surrealists and the proponents of the Theatre of Cruelty, especially Antonin Artaud.

Borel's first major publication, a collection of poems entitled *Rhapsodies* (1831–32), offers little in the way of the sadistic aesthetic that would become his stock in trade. For the most part, it contains highly sentimentalized and conventional love poems. However, one poem, "Le Rendezvous," suggests perhaps the dark qualities that would come to characterize Borel's portrayal of eroticism. The poem recounts the anticipation of an anxious lover who is awaiting an encounter with his mistress. When finally she arrives, it is as a corpse, carried along in a casket. Overwhelmed with passion and sorrow, the lover immolates himself with a knife in order to join her in death.

*Champavert, contes immoraux*, published a year later, is regarded by critics as Borel's masterpiece. The collection comprises seven pieces

of writing which, for want of a more accurate generic label, are named *contes* (short stories). In fact, they are hybrid texts, which place figures from history or folklore into fictional settings and situations. In the case of two of the *contes*, "Passerau, l'écolier" and "Champavert, le lycanthrope," the protagonists are recognizable as autobiographical constructions. Each *conte* gives an account of a central character who ends by raping, murdering, or dying as a result of his or her attempts to realize the impossible demands of passion, often in its adulterous or incestuous forms.

Despite the collection's subtitle, this work is not so much immoral as colored by a morbid sensibility and a heavy pessimism. The moral and sexual life of humankind is shown to be driven by an enjoyment of suffering, as in "Monsieur de l'Argentière, l'accusateur," which ends with a cameo description of an Englishman, who is an avid *amateur* of executions; or "Passereau," in which the eponymous hero begs the public executioner to kill him, in a darkly humorous passage of dialogue ("Je désire que vous me guillotinez" [I desire that you should guillotine me], Passereau declares at one point, revealing Borel's dual taste for masochistic sentiment and high-fallutin use of the French language, seen in his choice of the uncommon imperfect subjunctive).

Often the narratives take the form of a particularly grim illustration of "poetic justice." This is the case in one of the most effective tales in the collection, "Don Andréa Vésalius, l'anatomiste." In this story, a young bride neglects her elderly and impotent, but passionately attached, surgeon husband in favor of sexually attractive young men. One by one, these young men begin to disappear mysteriously. On her deathbed, the wife wishes to confess her infidelities to her husband. To her horror, he reveals that he has known of her affairs all along: indeed, it was he who killed her lovers in order to use their bodies in his anatomical experiments. At the story's close, the reader is invited to look through the

window of Vésalius's laboratory, wherein he is dissecting the voluptuous corpse of a beautiful young woman, recognizable by her long, blond tresses as his wife. As is the case in all of the stories in *Champavert*, erotic appetite is ultimately punishable by death, but death itself is recuperated for erotic pleasure.

If *Champavert* marks the high point of Borel's writing, his novel *Madame Putiphar* (1839) is an altogether less accomplished work. The plot is convoluted and unwieldy and the novel too long. Having said this, it is probably the piece of writing for which Borel is best remembered, perhaps because it is more explicitly erotic and more obviously violent than the *contes*, in which shock operates on the psychological rather than the visceral level. (However, Borel's stated intention was to produce a political rather than an erotic work: the eponymous character is supposed to evoke Madame de Pompadour, and the character of the Pharaon is a satirical portrait of Louis XV.)

The most memorable erotic scenes in *Madame Putiphar* concern the kidnapping of the young heroine Deborah and her incarceration in the Pharaon's private brothel. Here she is trained as a courtesan for the King's bed, by a dominant lesbian Madame. In her biography of Borel and his circle (1954), Enid Starkie has pointed out the similarity in atmosphere and detail between these scenes and certain sections of Diderot's *La Religieuse*. The anticlerical sentiment of Diderot's work would doubtless have appealed to the cynical and anti-establishmentarian Lycanthrope.

The later chapters of *Madame Putiphar* also contain some extensive and gruesome descriptions of the physical torture meted out to the heroes Fitz-Whyte and Fitz-Harris during their incarceration in the state prisons of France. It is perhaps these descriptions that led Jules Janin, in his review of *Madame Putiphar*, to compare Borel to the Marquis de Sade. Janin condemned the novel's "charnal house" aesthetic, identifying it as symptomatic of the moral degeneracy of the 1830s. (It should be noted, however, that Janin had previously formed part of Borel's circle and was himself the author of works of Frenetic Romanticism.)

Contrary to Janin's claims, it must be stated that for the most part Borel's writing bares little resemblance to de Sade's. The description of sexual acts in Borel's text, for example, could

never be described as pornographic. If the two writers can be said to have anything in common, it is rather the fact that both were individuals whose extreme sensibilities were exacerbated by periods of revolutionary bloodshed and civil unrest. Both writers chose to represent the violence of their *Zeitgeist* by displacing the cruelty they found there from the political level to the personal; from the battlefield into the bedroom. The lonely Lycanthrope Borel, in expounding Plautus's proverb "Homo Homini Lupus" [Man is a wolf to man], sought to demonstrate, like de Sade, that the finding of a certain piquant pleasure in the suffering of the other is an inevitable facet of the human condition.

### Biography

Born in Lyons in 1809, the twelfth child of an ironmonger, Pétrus Borel was educated in Paris at the Petit Séminaire Sainte Elizabeth and the Petit Séminaire Saint Roch. Nicknamed "the Lycanthrope," he was the leader of the group of young, rebellious, republican poets known as the Petit Cénacle or the Bouzingos, who were involved in the July revolution of 1830 and developed the aesthetic school known as Frenetic Romanticism. In the late 1840s he worked as a colonial administrator in Algeria but was discharged from service in disgrace in 1855. Borel died July 17, 1859, in Algeria. According to his biographer, Claretie, his death was due to stroke, though other, more fanciful chroniclers claim that he expired owing to his overwhelming weariness with life.

Borel's best-known works are *Rhapsodies* (1831–32), *Champavert, contes immoraux* (1833) and *Madame Putiphar* (1839).

LISA DOWNING

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## BOULLOSA, CARMEN

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1954–  
 Mexican novelist, poet, and playwright

### *Son vacas, somos puercos*

Carmen Boullosa writes poetry of great fluidity, craft, and beauty, and her considerable oeuvre includes essays, children's books, and plays. However, it is in the realms of her considerable novelistic oeuvre that eroticism is most clearly discerned and explored. In these, her primary concerns, despite the very different times and spaces depicted, are politics and the erotic.

Boullosa has observed that as a woman writer, she has been permitted to enter the spaces of the senses and the body, but not those of political ideas, nor has she been recognized as a particularly political writer. This is perhaps the next battle to be fought, but it would be misleading to give the impression that the body was always a site of access for women, and particularly Latin American women, writers. Marjorie Agosin, referring to such writers, talks of a tradition of modesty and claims that for them to speak out has required acts of daring and transgression. Here, Boullosa's fourth novel, *Son vacas, somos puercos*, a daring, inventive, and indeed political work, will be examined in the light of its treatment of both transgression and eroticism.

The novel, which portrays an almost exclusively male world, is set initially in 1666. It recounts the life of a young French boy by the incongruous name of Smeeks, presumably in

allusion to Dickens' character in *Nicholas Nickleby* and to the misery there described, who attempts to escape a life of poverty and hardship by selling himself off for three years of slavery in the Caribbean. It is a curious tale which explores in some detail the cruel, often violent, but fascinating society in which he finds himself; a world populated by slave owners, slaves, both European and African, Native Americans, prostitutes, and pirates.

Smeeks, literate thanks to the tutelage of a priest in France, finds himself enslaved alongside an elderly African, Negro Miel, who teaches him many of the techniques he has learned as a healer, a process which is continued by his subsequent owner, a French surgeon, Pineau. On the death of the latter, Smeeks joins a group of pirates, working as a surgeon at sea, and the rest of the novel concentrates almost exclusively on his life amongst these pirates. It is a very masculine life—indeed, the island that he first lands on, Tortuga, is inhabited solely by men; nor do the pirates have any women amongst them. Women are generally viewed to be a problem; they cause fights between men and encourage them to settle down and to give up their lives of freedom. They would be disruptive of the strict codes of honor, which the pirates obey scrupulously.

Love appears when on the boat from France a boy reveals him/herself to Smeeks as a girl. Cross-dressing, with different readings in terms of identity and sexuality, is explored in greater depth in another of the writer's novels, *Duerme*.



Here the implication is that she dresses in this way to protect herself, and possible other interpretations are left hanging, but she shares her secret only with Smeeks, and puts his hand on her breast as proof. Smeeks becomes obsessed with her, referring to her as “She,” the capital letter denoting her importance to him, but he never gets any opportunity to talk to her again. “She” becomes the unattainable, infinitely desirable and eroticized love object.

As a counter to this, the sexual act is treated in a particularly neutral and passionless way. Smeeks mentions almost casually that all three of his mentors—the French priest, Negro Miel, and Pineau—have had sexual relations with him, and at one point he opines that “if women serve to clean men of their seed, the body of another man could serve in the same way or even better” (p.62, my translation). He is taken to a brothel and eventually gets used to the notion of having sex with women, but has to overcome an initial repulsion to their smell. Sex in these cases is depicted as no more than a physical necessity.

Where sex is eroticized in the novel is in the case of rape. It is the pirates’ prize and the culmination of their desire. The use of force and the humiliation involved render it infinitely preferable in their eyes to a visit to a prostitute. As is so often the case in novels, suspense and desire are interwoven, thus references are made to the siege of Maracaibo from early on, and finally, on reaching this place in the last section, the novel explodes in an orgy of rape and violence, both of which are depicted in erotic detail. Terrible scenes of torture are described, then of one pirate it is said that: “[H]e liked to kill the woman he was possessing, saying that the dying flesh tightened in such a way that there was no greater pleasure”, something others try out of curiosity. Spanish women, who have internalized their own worth purely in terms of their virtue, are most powerfully represented by a beautiful woman from a wealthy family who with her adolescent daughter manages to hide from the conquering pirates, whose desire for them only increases with the passing of time. The scene of their discovery and multiple rape is described by Smeeks, who does not participate but narrates in almost loving, voyeuristic, detail: “[S]uch was the abuse that we left them (I saw it myself) slashed, lacerated; where they were not actually bleeding their flesh was raw, with wounds on their intimate parts and all around

them” (p.108). Their ultimate destruction is carried out by themselves when they somehow manage to find the strength to burn down the house they have been left in.

Such eroticization of violence is complex. Had the novel been written by a man, then accusations of misogyny would be difficult to counter, but the fact that it is by a woman sheds a different light on it. These things happened in times past and continue to happen, and to confront them in this way is instructive. For a woman to attempt to explore such issues from a male point of view is unusual and rather brave. Boullosa’s work is notable for tackling these different and difficult topics, and its honest attempt in this case to confront the eroticization of violence is eye-opening and innovative.

### Biography

Born in Mexico City, September 4, 1954, Boullosa attended the Universidad Iberoamericana and the Universidad Autónoma Nacional, both in Mexico City. She lived in Berlin as a writer in residence in 1995–6 and has taught at San Diego State and Georgetown Universities and La Sorbonne. Throughout 1994 she wrote a column for the Spanish newspaper *El País*, and she is a founder of the “Casa Citlaltepetl” with the International Parliament of Writers in Mexico City. She is separated from her partner of 20 years, and has two children. She has twice been awarded the Xavier Villaurrutia Prize, once for a poem, *La salvaja*, and the other time for her novel *Antes*.

LINDA CRAIG

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## BOURGEADE, PIERRE

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1927–

French writer, playwright, and poet

Eroticism and politics are interwoven in Bourgeade's work as two sides of a systematic exploration of the representations and phantasms of Western civilization. Bourgeade is as preoccupied with sex and death as de Sade or Bataille, who greatly inspired him. He shows a fascination for the minute description of rituals of pleasure and of humiliation and for violence and desecration. The eroticization of the prohibited takes the most diverse literary forms, from the "phallucination" poems (in *Ultimum moriens* [1984], dedicated to Philippe Sollers), to the short prose (*Les immortelles*), and de Sade-like theater (*Erzébet* [1998]), but creates a coherent body of work. Brevity is predominant. It leads sometimes to the incorporation of diary entries in novels such as *L'Aurore boréale*, defined, as much of Bourgeade's work could be, as an "ongoing movement between the 'imaginaire' and materiality." Apart from his later crime fiction, where rapidity is equally a distinctive feature, a

significant part of Bourgeade's works consists of short stories that are linked together by an overall theme, whose various facets are highlighted. This is exemplified in *Les immortelles*, which may be considered as a collection either of short stories or of prose poems, and also applies to the stories of *L'Argent* (1998), as well as to the tales which make up *Eros mécanique*, which progress gradually toward the double meaning of the last tale, entitled "Le Trou," where Eros and Thanatos reunite. As such a title suggests, the largely archetypal vision of the female, almost invariably portrayed as available and disposable, is not only offensive, it is also threatening. The matrix metaphor is inverted into a symbol of destruction, as an abyss which serves as a representation of disappearance, leading to the voracity of death.

Although essentially realistic, the eroticism in Bourgeade's short prose draws upon a realm of fantasies, inherited from Surrealism, onanistic onirism, and visions of the bizarre. It often gives way to an emphasis on the pornographic, when it graphically depicts the openness, or the

opening, of usually female bodies and when it deals with the revelation of the animality beyond the sophistication of social appearance and status. This aspect is reinforced by an overwhelming absence of feelings of love (as is indicated by the title of *No Love*, with Marie L., 2000), which is replaced by the portrayal of multiple fetishism and the fixation on infinite numbers of relentlessly substituted bodies.

An attempt toward a type of inventory or catalogue is visible in Bourgeade's prefaces, as in the collection *Lectures amoureuses* by J.J. Pauvert and also in his writings on scandalous artists or art forms, such as on the painter and photographer Pierre Molinier (1979) or the French icon of erotic cinema Brigitte Lahaie (1999). In the same fashion, an attempted mapping of perversions is presented metaphorically through the exploration of each of the 20 Parisian districts in *L'Autre face* (with Marie L., 1999). Similarly, the interest in new technologies, as seen in *Cybersex* or *Téléphone rose*, shows the willingness to discover unprecedented transgressions and, in doing so, to contribute to the understanding of a new humanity through its new sexuality. Special narrative attention is therefore paid to the most traumatic experiences, where the paroxysm of pleasure serves to highlight paroxysmic fears, viewed as symbols and as symptoms of social conditions. This is linked with the exhumation of the violent unconscious of developed societies, as witnessed in works since *New-York Party*, where the materialism of desire leads to a commodification of murder. In this process, Bourgeade's writing of the erotic as an attempt to unveil a hidden truth demonstrates once again its intrinsically political dimension.

### Biography

Born November 7, 1927, in Morianne, in the French Pyrénées, Bourgeade attended school in Orthez and Bayonne and studied law and politics in Bordeaux and Pau. He married in 1952 and became a solicitor at the Court of Appeal of Bordeaux (1952–54). He changed to a career in the administration, first as a director in the prefecture of the Department of Oise (1954–59), then in the prime minister's office, where he was in charge of relations with the headquarters of the army (1959–62) and vice general secretary

for youth affairs (1962–74). He was 38 when he published his first book, *Les Immortelles* (1966), a collection of short stories celebrating femininity and the female body, which was awarded the prix Hermès. His subsequent works, *La Rose rose* (1968), *New-York Party* (1969), *Le Violoncelle qui résiste* (1971), and *L'Aurore boréale* (1973), are characterized by the two recurring and increasingly interconnected themes of power and obscenity. He left the administration in 1974 in order to dedicate himself to writing. An extremely prolific writer, Bourgeade has published over 30 books to date. He earned praise for his political allegories, such as *L'Armoire* (1977) (which tells of the evasion from a form of totalitarianism to the fall into a form of servitude), *Une ville grise* (1977) (an account of the Prague Spring), and *Le Camp* (1979) (Nazi concentration camps), culminating in his stories on torture in Algeria, *Les Serpents* (1983), which was short-listed for the prix Goncourt and was awarded the prix Motta by the Académie française. These themes were continued on the stage, for which Bourgeade authored more than ten plays, including *Deutsches Requiem* (1973), *Orden* (1974), *Etoiles rouges* (1975), the award-winning *Palazzo Mentale* (1976), *L'autorisation* (1995), and *Le passeport* (1996). Power and obscenity also lie at the core of his acclaimed recent novel *Les âmes juives* (1998). The place of eroticism has become increasingly seminal in his most recent publications, such as *Sade, Sainte Thérèse* (1987), *Eros mécanique* (1995), and *Cybersex et autres nouvelles* (1997). It also permeates Bourgeade's exploration of the genre of the detective novel in works such as *Téléphone rose* (1999). He's been a member of the Conférence Sade since 2001, and collects erotic and surrealist objects.

DOMINIQUE JEANNEROD

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## BOUSQUET, JOÉ

1897–1950  
 French writer

### *Le cahier noir*

Like an obsessive primal scene, the basic motif of *Le cahier noir* is of a man narrating how he spanked a young woman, thereby experiencing an unexpected and incommensurable pleasure both sensual and spiritual. That motif is repeated every four or five pages, i.e., over 50 times in the book overall. That circularity would be very tedious if it were not for all the slight variations: the woman is usually spanked by hand, though occasionally the man uses a birch-rod or a whip; sometimes he also fingers her anus, sometimes he even sodomizes her, though the main variation concerns the relationship between the narrator and his victim. In the first part of the book, she tends to be his cousin, his girlfriend, his lover, his fiancée, or his wife; in the second part, she is also at times his teenage sister and at times his underage daughter. That combination of incest and pedophilia has made the book quite controversial; a conservative reader would readily find some of the scenes sickening and

unacceptable. Even in that second part, all scenes follow a regular pattern—for example, he is the older brother in his twenties coming back home after several years abroad, she sees him as a hero and just wants to be spanked by him like a little girl; or he is the father who has to punish his teenage daughter and spanks her, and they realize that they both really enjoy it. A recurrent and predictable element is the affected surprise of the two protagonists, who end up discovering an unsuspected yet immeasurable source of pleasure, promising themselves they would do it again and again.

Throughout this eulogy to spanking (which makes *Le cahier noir* a rather original text of erotic literature), the narrator is exclusively obsessed with young women's naked bottoms: other parts of the body (such as the breasts, legs, or face) are never mentioned, as anal sex (preferably with virgins) is undoubtedly his favorite sexual act. The few scenes of oral sex and vaginal sex are nothing compared with the sodomies which occasionally follow the spanking, usually with the man getting so fascinated with the woman's bottom (Bousquet uses the animal term *croupe*, rump) that he cannot resist and must penetrate it. Except on a couple of early

occasions written from the woman's viewpoint, women's perspectives are rarely mentioned: most women seem to appreciate the violence inflicted upon them; they even seem grateful to the man dominating them, which makes Bousquet a rather phallogocentric if not misogynist author.

A particularity of *Le cahier noir* is its excessively lyrical style: scenes of spanking and sodomy are described in mystical terms, as experiences of spiritual communion and enlightenment, with reference to angels, light, and metaphysical revelations. The forbidden view of a woman's naked bottom and the "tender resistance" of her anus are presented as epiphanies with lengthy pseudo-philosophical, pseudo-poetical sentences which sometimes stop when the editor was not able to decipher Bousquet's handwriting anymore. Bousquet was often under the influence of drugs (mainly morphine, cocaine, and opium) when he wrote in his *Cahier*, and this is reflected in the text, the quality of which is sometimes dubious, both for the matter and manner. It is difficult to appreciate *Le cahier noir* as a linear literary work, probably because it was not meant to be read that way—published 39 years after the death of its author, it documents a man's fantasy world by recording numerous erotic scenes which keep intertwining the same key elements (spanking as a spiritual experience, women's *croupes* as a vision of Heaven), occasionally integrating more disturbing components (the identity of the woman—sister, daughter). A possible key to understanding and analyzing the book is the title given by the author to one particular section (p. 69 in the 1997 edition from La Musardine), "Bases d'une érotologie," suggesting that as a literary project *Le cahier noir* aims to explore and explain an idiosyncratic aspect of eroticism (spanking) through a plethora of kaleidoscopic and complementary illustrations of it.

## Biography

In May 1918, a 21-year-old lieutenant fighting in the north of France was hit in the spine by a German bullet which would forever paralyze his lower body. From then on, Joé Bousquet started writing and became a very prolific (albeit usually regarded as middle-of-the-road) author who cultivated friendships with writers such as Jean Paulhan, Louis Aragon, Paul Eluard, and Paul Valéry, as well as painters such as Jean Dubuffet and Hans Bellmer. Despite his disability, Bousquet was also a womanizer; many women wrote to him, several became close friends and came to visit him in Carcassonne, his city of origin in the south of France. He nicknamed one of them "Poisson d'Or," and in his *Lettres à poisson d'or* one can identify some key themes developed in *Le cahier noir*. There is no evidence that *Le cahier noir* was ever intended to be published: the manuscript was found in the form of two small notebooks and was published for the first time in 1989 by Albin Michel. The title was chosen by its editor, Christine Michel, based on anecdotes on the way Joé Bousquet allegedly referred to that text as the darker side of his writing. The collection of his *Oeuvre romanesque complète* was released by Albin Michel between 1979 and 1984 in four volumes; only a minor part of his correspondence has been published, notably by Gallimard in 1969.

LOYKIE LOÏC LOMINÉ

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# BRANTÔME, PIERRE DE BOURDEILLE SEIGNEUR DE

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c. 1539–1614  
French memorist

## *Les dames galantes*

Compiled in typically Renaissance fashion, *les dames galantes* [*The Lives of Gallant Ladies*] presents eight discourses with hundreds of anecdotes with titles like “Discourse on Women Who Make Love and Cuckold Their Husbands,” “Another Discourse on the Beauty of a Beautiful Leg and Its Virtue,” or “Discourse on Married Women, Widows and Girls, as to Which Are Warmer in Love than the Others,” and the like.

As is the case with the essays of his contemporary Michel de Montaigne, Brantôme’s discourses often seem to have little to do with such titles. Thus his discourse on cuckolding begins with an attack on cuckolded husbands who react by killing their wives and/or their wives’ lovers. Brantôme—who never married himself—is naturally sympathetic to the latter. The same discourse finishes, more or less, with a digression on which season is best for lovemaking, and concludes airily that “all seasons are good, when you take them apropos.” Similarly Brantôme says in his discourse on wives, widows, and girls: “In conclusion, vive the love of women!”

The very great interest of Brantôme’s discourses resides, therefore, not in his digressions and strangely superficial conclusions, but in his anecdotes and the rather special attitude he takes toward his subject. He wrote more about sex than anyone in France before de Sade. He wrote more about feminine clothing, seemingly, than anyone before Marcel Proust. Interestingly enough, some of the ladies in the first collection (published as *Les dames illustres*) seem to be the same as the *dames galantes*, just part of life at the Valois court.

As the above may suggest, sex for Brantôme seems inseparable from court life. For Brantôme the court is not unlike a present-day American high school—a relatively small world full of little (but in Brantôme’s anecdotes sometimes bloody) intrigues, where everybody is interested in everybody else’s business. Brantôme himself declines to name any of his *dames galantes*. He includes disclaimers worthy of a stand-up comedian: “However, I don’t want to accuse the great many honest and virtuous married women, who have behaved virtuously and constantly in the faith they have reverently promised their husbands...”

At the same time, though, Brantôme feels that it is something of a moral duty that love must be rewarded. Thus it is more or less required that “beautiful ladies must appear and show off their beauties.” For Brantôme a love kept entirely secret is not a love really fulfilled. He quotes “[a]n opinion in love that I have seen defended by several, that a secret love is worthless, if it is not a little bit visible, if not to everyone, then at least to your closest friends.”

In one of the most famous passages in Brantôme, he describes a cup belonging to his friend the Duke of Alençon, inside of which are engraved images of human couples and animal couples copulating. The idea is to tease female guests into drinking from the cup and to ask them what they see, as a means of bringing presumably private sexual thoughts into the public domain.

Meanwhile Brantôme’s favorite sexual practice, apparently, is what he calls the “coup en robe” (“there’s nothing like the coup en robe”). The *coup en robe* consists of having quick sex with a more or less fully dressed great lady in a closet, in an alcove, or some other semipublic place. Brantôme describes the pleasure “when you imagine that you defy, that you crush underfoot, that you press and have your way, and pull down and cast on the ground the cloth of

gold, the drape of silver, the beading, the silk fabrics, with the pearls and precious stones, then your ardor, your contentment is greater.”

Contrary to the accepted wisdom of the sixteenth-century physician Ambroise Paré, who recommended going slow, Brantôme quotes a great lady who condemns “the stupid women of the past who, wanting to be too delicate in their loves, shut themselves up in little rooms.” She explains that “today, you have to seize your opportunities, and the quicker the better”—thus returning to Brantôme’s persistent theme of how sexual, presumably private, things become part of the gossip and public life of the court.

Although everyone assumes that Brantôme’s conquests were numerous, the author of the *Dames galantes* is anything but boastful. Time and time again in his discourses, he defers to his “good companions” and to the *dames galantes*, who, he says, know more than he does. He defers to our “authentic doctors of love,” and even to the courtiers, who will “know better how to talk about this than I.” He defers to “the natural philosophers... presenting many reasons; but I’m not a good enough philosopher to deduce them.”

Brantôme never says just who these people are. Indeed there is no sixteenth-century French author who might qualify as more expert on sex than Brantôme himself. The inevitable conclusion is that this represents a narrative stance, a persona Brantôme adopts to speak humbly about his amazing subject, perhaps exemplifying his idea that to seduce women, one must adopt an “hardiesse modeste”—a modest daring. In the same way, Brantôme insists that his subject is untreatable—something which defies logical, rational classification. Brantôme writes:

I know very well that I’m undertaking a big subject, and I would never be able to do it if I wanted to take it through to the end.... For all the paper in the Chambre des Comptes wouldn’t be enough to write down half their stories, for of such people and such women I don’t know any battle sergeant good enough to put them in rank and order.

Such is *Les dames galantes*. Writing the greatest French work of his time on sex, Brantôme adopts the stance of an ordinary guy—in Renaissance terms, a humble *serviteur* of court

ladies. This man of some classical culture and reputation at court adopts (in spite of the seeming anachronism and the differences between the sixteenth century and our own time) something like the attitude of a reader of the *Daily News* or the *Daily Mail* or the like, coming across as an everyman eternally in awe of sex and the *dames galantes*. In another of his simple conclusions, he writes: “il n’y a pas de loi qu’un beau con ne renverse” [there is no law that cannot be overturned by a beautiful cunt], and elsewhere that “the [fair] sex always gets its way.”

### Biography

Born between 1539 and 1542, Brantôme divided his time between court life and military campaigns until 1584, when a fall from a horse left him incapacitated for many years—in all about 40 per cent of his life. He took up writing, beginning with biographies of military commanders and princesses of the court. His most famous work, however, which he titled *Second recueil des dames* [*Second Collection on Women*], is constantly reprinted under the title *Les Dames galantes*.

HERBERT DE LEY

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# BRAZIL

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Almost two hundred years after the Portuguese arrived in Brazil, the Bahian poet Gregório de Matos (1636–96), influenced by the Spanish baroque, produced the country's first literary works of an explicitly erotic nature. Matos, known as Boca do Inferno (Mouth of Hell) for his mordant satire, also wrote lyrics in which ornate conceits couple religious mysticism with the boldly erotic. His most sensual verse apostrophizes the black and mulatto women of Bahia. In the century that followed Matos's death, baroque style went into decline and literature was not much concerned with the flesh. After independence (1822) the desire to forge a national literature was undertaken by subscribing, belatedly, to the tenets of the Romantic and Realist movements. Disregarding the shortcomings of such postcolonial endeavors, it is under the auspices of these movements, especially in the novels of the second half of the 19th century, that literary eroticism began to flourish in Brazil.

The leading proponent of Brazilian prose during the juncture between Romanticism and Realism is José de Alencar (1829–77). Alencar idealized the notion of the noble savage while celebrating the civilizing legacy of colonization. Even though social mores imposed a literary chastity of sorts, in his so-called urban novels describing bourgeois life in Rio de Janeiro, Alencar deals with themes such as prostitution and is indulgent and fetishistic in his description of women, notably in *Senhora* [*Madam*] (1875), where their feet are the object of sensual delight. Despite the greater predilection for verisimilitude and the development of characters' psychological profiles which ensued Alencar in the works of Realist authors, on the whole during this period sexuality was to remain unspeakable in literature, and eroticism was to be borne through suggestion rather than exposition. A case in point is the work of Joaquim Maria Machado de Assis (1839–1908)—celebrated as a master of Realism and often as Brazil's greatest author—where silence and ambiguity are

deployed as the principal tropes of the erotic. His novels *Memórias Póstumas de Brás Cubas* [*Epitaph of a Small Winner*] (1881), *Quincas Borba* (1891), and *Dom Casmurro* (1900) deal with failed love and adultery; they are sensual in the extreme without resorting to language which might offend. Arguably, the height of erotic suggestiveness in Machado's oeuvre is the story "Missa do Galo" [Midnight Mass] (1894), where the narrator recalls one night as a youth waiting to attend midnight mass in the company of D. Conceição, who is married and whose husband is away. The story centers on their ambiguous silences and the wanton undertow which compels their coy exchange, making for the depiction of an implicitly illicit and highly seductive scene. Like Alencar before him, Machado conveys the sexual allure of his female characters through fetishistic use of synecdoche: he lavishes attention on women's arms, not just those of D. Conceição, but those of women throughout his narratives; he even wrote a story on this penchant, "Uns braços" [Arms] (1899).

With the advent of naturalism at the end of the 19th century, however, and the increasingly deterministic studies of human nature which came into vogue in the literature of the period, sexuality became a privileged theme. Moreover, Brazilian authors began taking liberties where their European counterparts bowed to decorum. Literature from the late 1880s to the turn of the century may be described in Foucauldian terms as having fostered diverse discourses aimed at explaining and ultimately controlling sexual behavior. In 1888, the year slavery was abolished, Raul Pompéia (1863–95) published *O ateneu* [*The Athenaeum*], a series of vignettes about life at a boys' boarding school. Sérgio, the protagonist, resents his internment, the boys who persecute him, and the director, and eventually sets fire to the school building. The novel has been described as a satire on the empire of Pedro II and its collapse, and as a message of hope for the nascent republic (1889). While at school Sérgio



## BRAZIL

experiences both homosexual passion—a consequence of confinement—and heterosexual attachments which make aspects of his narrative lewd and unwholesome for the time, but Pompéia ostensibly attenuates prurient episodes by resorting to insinuation. The most infamous work of Brazilian naturalism, *Bom-crioulo* [*The Black Man and the Cabin Boy*, 1895] by Adolfo Caminha (1867–97), also broaches the subject of homosexuality in terms of pathology resulting from same-sex imprisonment. Amaro, known as Bom-crioulo [Good Black Man], is a fugitive slave working on board a merchant ship where he seduces the white cabin boy, Aleixo. When Amaro and Aleixo leave the ship, the latter is lured away by a Portuguese prostitute and is then murdered by the jealous Amaro. The story moves from the misery of the black population to the dishonorable nature of rakish Europeans and finally anticipates the demise of white Brazil in the death of Aleixo. Allegorical and pathological implications aside, Caminha's novel offers an open description of a homosexual relationship and is persuasive when emphasizing the dark homoeroticism of the sadistic world of sailors.

Lesbianism is given a comparable though less comprehensive treatment in Aluísio Azevedo's (1857–1913) novel *O cortiço* [*The Slum*] (1890), a story of social outcasts, promiscuity, and money, set in a tenement in Rio de Janeiro. Here women are seen to turn to other women out of dissatisfaction with men: Léonie, a French prostitute, seduces Pombinha, a simple girl living in the slum, because she is tired of men mistreating her. Lesbian liaisons, although comforting, are underpinned by the notion of deviance born of vice (prostitution); thereby, as with the above novels, moral judgement upholding the status quo sanitizes—and enables—a transgressive frisson. In each case the attempt to induce conformity is jeopardized by this frisson, which could incite further defiance of the endorsed norms.

In the years preceding the revolutionary Week of Modern Art (1922), the treatment of eroticism in poetry was dichotomous: poets such as Raimundo Correia (1859–1911) accrued eroticism to the celebration of longevity and the advances of science in tame exaltations of the sensuous perfection of nude statuary, whereas others like Augusto dos Anjos (1884–1914) and Alphonsus de Guimaraens (1870–1921),

despairing of such optimistic sentiment, wrote of the sensual coupling of self and otherness through death, cultivating a necrophile aesthetic. Prose manifestations of decadence during these years were fronted by João do Rio (pseudonym of Paulo Barreto, 1881–1921) a devout follower of Oscar Wilde, whose stories and novels aimed to chronicle the artifice, perversity, and sexual delinquency of the Brazilian belle époque. In his most famous story, “O bebê de tarlatana rosa” [*Rose Tarlatan Baby*] (1910), the narrator, Heitor de Alencar, desires an enigmatic woman wearing a pink baby costume during carnival; she accepts his advances on condition that he promise not to remove her mask, but in the throes of passion he tears it off and is horrified to find a face without a nose. The interchangeable intensities of attraction and revulsion, carnality and mutilation in this story again gesture toward the indivisibility of eroticism and death. Decadent literature of this sort constituted an important shift toward liberating sexuality from naturalism's scientific discourse of perversion; such dissonance was greatly exacerbated by the Modernist impetus.

The search for political and cultural innovation during the 1922 Week of Modern Art in São Paulo brought together nationalistic preoccupations with the avant-garde movements of European art, instigating years of intense literary production. Mário de Andrade (1893–1945), alias the “pope” of Brazilian Modernism, wrote *Macunaíma* (1928), a bawdy rhapsody of the ethnic and linguistic influences which shaped the Brazilian character. Another august figure of Modernism, Oswald de Andrade (1890–1954), published *Serafim Ponte Grande* [*Seraphim Grosse Pointe*] (1933), a satirical bricolage-cum-travelogue in which the protagonist stages an orgiastic revolt against bourgeois values. Of the poets associated with this generation, the prolific Manuel Bandeira (1886–1968) wrote love lyrics of erotic vigor, as did the illustrious Carlos Drummond de Andrade (1902–87) in *O amor natural* [*Natural Love*], which appeared only posthumously in 1992 because the poet had considered the collection too risqué.

In the wake of the initial phase of Modernism—coinciding with the Vargas dictatorship (1930–45)—came the neorealism of a regionalist fiction concerned with transition from agrarian to industrial society. One of the authors

writing about the northeast, José Lins do Rego (1901–57), explored adolescent sexuality in works like *Menino de engenho* [*Plantation Boy*] (1932) and the autobiographical *Meus verdes anos* [*My Green Years*] (1956). In 1932 Jorge Amado (1912–2001) emerged as a misguided Marxist novelist idealizing the squalid lives of the Bahian lower classes, though by 1958, with *Gabriela, cravo e canela* [*Gabriela, Clove and Cinnamon*], his commitment to politics had been superseded by devotion to salacity. The regionalist tradition and the lessons of Modernism were subsumed by João Guimarães Rosa (1908–67) in his magnum opus, *Grande sertão: veredas* [*The Devil to Pay in the Backlands*] (1956), a strikingly neologistic epic of a *jagunço* (bandit) named Riobaldo and the hostile life of the *sertão* (backlands). Much of his monologue—a vehicle for reflection on meta-narrative concerns—relates to his desire for a fellow bandit, Diadorim. Although this dishonorable passion is seemingly redeemed by the fact that Diadorim turns out to be a woman—revealed only after she is killed—this does little to detract from the homoeroticism which prevails throughout the piece, or from the contention that desire is an undecidable force overriding biological instinct. The disruptive force of libido is also the subject of Lúcio Cardoso's (1913–68) *Crônica da casa assassinada* [*Chronicle of the Assassinated House*] (1959), where narrative play between concealment and restrained disclosure eroticizes the riving of the hegemonic family body by infidelity, incest, necrophilia, homosexuality, and transvestism. The erotic potential of the telling process itself is also explored in the work of Clarice Lispector (1925–77), which reflects on the violent pleasures inherent in the oppressive act of narration, as in *A hora da estrela* [*The Hour of the Star*] (1977). Her novels and stories arrest epiphanic moments at which femininity falters, negotiates the loss of domesticity, and is consumed by paroxysmal *horror vacui*. Diegetic eroticism in her work is tentative: nuances produced by poetic zeal subtending moments of introspection, never effects of debased dynamics of power and sexuality as found in the stories of *A via crucis do corpo* [*The Stations of the Body*] (1974), which have more in common with the sordid brutality of stories by Dalton Trevisan (1925–).

Censorship and repression during the military dictatorship (1964–85) caused many writers to

go into exile; testimonial accounts of outcast existence flourished. During this period Rubem Fonseca's (1925–) discomfiting *Feliz ano novo* [*Happy New Year*] (1975) was banned because of its allegedly pornographic content, as were several plays by Nelson Rodrigues (1912–80). Rodrigues brought the scandal of deviant sexuality to the Brazilian stage. Although he subverts heterosexuality and the nuclear family in plays such as *Os sete gatinhos* [*Seven Kittens*] (1958), *Beijo no asfalto* [*Kiss on the Asphalt*] (1961), and *Toda nudez será castigada* [*All Nudity Will Be Punished*] (1965), he binds transgression to public humiliation, instilling a sense of what should be deemed normative. In the aftermath of dictatorship and the experience of alienation, women and sexual minorities rose to literary prominence as part of the general drive to speak out against all forms of social injustice. Their discourses of gender and sexuality proved auspicious for the narrative expansion of eroticism, a trend which extends into the 21st century. Pioneering authors on the subject of female sexuality and the problematics of emancipation include Lygia Fagundes Telles (1923–), Hilda Hilst (1930–), Sônia Coutinho (1939–) and Márcia Denser (1949–). The most innovative narrative and poetic engagements with homoeroticism have come from Silviano Santiago (1936–), Edilberto Coutinho (1938–96), João Silvério Trevisan (1944–), Caio Fernando Abreu (1948–96), and Glauco Mattoso (pseudonym of Pedro da Silva, 1951–). Finally, also worthy of note are the fluidly sensual characters of João Gilberto Noll (1947–), the indefatigable pornography of João Ubaldo Ribeiro's (1941–) bestselling *A casa dos budas ditosos* [*The House of Blissful Buddhas*] (1999), and the maverick fusion of licentiousness and Judaic myth in Arnaldo Bloch's (1965–) inspired novella *Talk show* (2000), all of which augur a promising future for the erotic genre in Brazil.

KARL POSSO

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## BREAST, THE

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The female breast has been an erotic marker since it first emerged in pre-Christian texts. From the Hebrew Bible to contemporary erotica, it has sparked the male literary imagination. Most recently, however, it has been claimed by women authors as well, so as to present a feminine view of their most freighted body part.

Although the erotic breast appears as a literary trope in every age and place in the Western world, it follows the fads of its time: sometimes small breasts are in fashion, as in the Middle Ages and 1920s, more often the larger breast predominates, as in the Renaissance and 1950s. In erotic literature, the breast “peaked” during the Renaissance, the period to be considered primarily in this essay.

The only frankly erotic section of the Bible is found in the Song of Songs, a collection of love poems probably written by more than one author, including women. Female bodily delights are enumerated in a poetic inventory that became the model for untold imitations throughout the centuries to come:

How fine  
You are, my love,  
Your eyes like doves'  
Behind your veil  
....  
Your breasts  
Twin fawns  
In fields of flowers.

Breasts are also compared to “clusters of dates” and “clusters of grapes,” the juice of which awakens desire “Like wine that entices / The lips of new lovers.” Unlike any other part of

the Bible, the Song of Songs is an unabashed paean to erotic pleasure, with breasts appearing as sensual symbols of reciprocal bliss.

While the Latin poets Catullus, Horace, Ovid, and Propertius celebrated the breast in their love poems, and French authors of medieval narratives sang the praises of little breasts (*les mamelles*) that were commonly compared to apples and, less commonly, to round nuts (Garin le Loherain, Ogier le Danois, and Aucassin et Nicolette), it would take the consummate skill of Renaissance poets to turn the breast into an international fetish.

In France, the breast cult reached a verbal paroxysm between the 1530s and 1550s, launched by Clément Marot’s *blason* entitled *Le Beau tétin* [*The Beautiful Breast*], written during the winter of 1535–36. A *blason* traditionally focused on the body parts of the female beloved: eyes, eyebrows, nose, ears, tongue, hair, chest, stomach, navel, buttocks, hand, thigh, knee, foot, as well as the breast (see the entry for *Blason du corps* in this volume). Marot playfully described the breast in the following manner:

A little ball of ivory  
In the middle of which sits  
A strawberry or a cherry.  
...  
When one sees you, many men feel  
The desire within their hands  
To touch you and to hold you.  
But one must satisfy oneself  
With being near you for my life!  
Or another desire will come.  
...

## BREAST, THE

For every reason, happy is he  
Who will fill you with milk,  
Turning the virgin's breast into  
The breast of a beautiful, complete woman.

The poem narrates the effect produced by the sight of the breast on the male viewer. A beautiful breast is not only a stimulus to his desire, but also a source of masculine pride, since it is his seed that impregnates the female and transforms her into a milk-bearing creature. Such a breast allows the poet to spend himself in verbal ecstasy, and to act out a power fantasy of triggering the milk-production process.

The most famous French Renaissance poet, Pierre de Ronsard (1524–85), was also a breast man. In the long cycle of love poems dedicated to Cassandra, he refers over and over to her “beautiful breast,” “virginal buds,” “lawns of milk,” “generous throat,” “overly chaste breast,” “hill of milk,” “alabaster throat,” “ivory breast,” and so forth. He tells us that if he could only “grope around her breasts,” he would consider his obscure fate more fortunate than that of kings. He envies the doctor who has the right to feel the breast of Ronsard’s sweetheart at any time. Occasionally his hand will not take orders from his brain: “sometimes my hand, in spite of myself, / Transgresses the laws of chaste love / And searches at your breast that which inflames me.” Yet even the pleasure of touching her bosom can cause regret: “I wish to God that I had never touched / My loved one’s breast with so much mad desire.” For now he has an admittedly greater need, which the beloved is not about to satisfy.

Ronsard’s breast metaphors were sometimes borrowed from earlier Italian poets. In the tradition of Petrarch, he contemplated the joys of being transformed into a flea with the opportunity of biting the desired bosom. In the tradition of Ariosto, he imagined the female chest as an earthly paradise where “twin flows of milk” come and go like the ocean tide (Sonnet CLXXXVII). But we should not think that Ronsard’s outpourings were merely literary conventions. Cassandra was a real person, the daughter of a Florentine banker in the service of the king of France, and the unrequited passion she inspired in him triggered his lubricious fantasies. On the frontispiece of *Les Amours*, written between 1546 and 1552, there are two medallions: one of Ronsard, the poet, crowned

with a laurel leaf, and the other of a bare-breasted Cassandra at the age of twenty.

Compared with the marmoreal conceits of male poets, the few erotic texts that have come down to us from women tell a different story. Louise Labé (1524–65), a French poet from Lyon, described the turmoil in her chest she experienced in the absence of her former lover. She longed to be gathered up at his breast (Sonnet XIII) or to hold him once again at her own “tender breast” (Sonnet 9).

Since the first moment when cruel Love  
Poisoned my bosom with his fire  
I have burned from his divine fury,  
No respite for my heart for even a day.

Breast and bosom betoken torment rather than titillation.

Similarly, a poem sent by a nun to her female lover reveals the mental ache associated with past pleasures. “When I recall the kisses you gave me, And how with tender words you caressed my little breasts, I want to die Because I cannot see you” (1986; Judith C. Brown). This kind of frank physicality is practically nonexistent in surviving premodern texts authored by women.

Following their continental counterparts, British male poets also employed the “blazon” as a showcase for the display of female body parts. Robert Greene’s *Menaphon* (1589) provides a fairly standard example:

Her locks are plighted like the fleece of wool  
...  
Her lips are roses over-washed with dew  
...  
Her paps are like fair apples in the prime,  
As round as orient pearls, as soft as down.

Michael Drayton (1563–1631) transformed his mistress’s chest into a pastoral landscape replete with meadows and rivers: “Thy full and youthful breasts, which, in their meadowy pride / Are branch’d with rivery veines meander-like that glide.” Thomas Lodge’s *Rosalynde* (1590) offers the best mammary two-liner of the period: “Her paps are centers of delight / Her breasts are orbs of heavenly frame.” Terms derived from nature, geography, and the cosmos, like “orbs,” “globes,” “worlds,” and “hemispheres,” vied with more common fruit and floral expressions, such as “buds,” “strawberries,” “apples,” and “cherrylets,” to evoke the erotic enticements

offered by a female bosom. Edmund Spenser (1552–99), equating female parts with different flowers, created an anatomical English garden in his Sonnet 64:

Her goodly bosom like a Strawberry bed;  
Her neck like to a bunch of Columbines;  
Her breast like lilies, ere their leaves be shed;  
Her nipples like young-blossomed Jessamines.

His “Epithalamion” (a poem celebrating marriage) moves indoors to the kitchen, where the bride is offered up in oral terms, and breasts provide the *pièce de resistance* in a menu of edible delights:

Her cheeks like apples which the sun hath rudded,  
Her lips like cherries charming men to bite,  
Her breasts like a bowl of cream uncrudded,  
Her paps like lilies budded.

Shakespeare, tiring of the blazon with its lily-white breasts, parodied that conventional form in his Sonnet 130:

My mistress’ eyes are nothing like the sun;  
Coral is far more red than her lips’ red;  
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun.

By the time of his death in 1616, the blazon had petered out and paeans to the erotic breast were on the wane. John Donne (1571–1631), who brilliantly evoked genital activity in many of his erotic poems, paid scant attention to the female chest. A new, more domestic discourse was on the rise, with breasts the site of controversy over the practice of wet-nursing. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the breast became politicized by such writers as Jacob Cats (1577–1660) in Holland, William Cadogan in England (see his influential 1748 *Essay upon Nursing*), Carolus Linnaeus in Sweden (1707–78), and especially Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78) in France, all arguing for a return to maternal nursing.

But the erotic breast had not disappeared. It had simply gone underground for awhile. As Margaret Anne Doody points out in her *London Review of Books* article on my *History of the Breast* (1997), Samuel Richardson’s novels offered both the eroticized and the maternal breast, the former in the sequel to *Pamela* (1740–41), the latter in *Clarissa* (1747–48). Lovelace in *Clarissa* gets carried away by the sight of the protagonist’s bosom barely hidden under a white handkerchief: “And I saw, all the way we

rode, the bounding heart (by its throbbing motions, I saw it!) dancing beneath the charming umbrage.... What a precious moment That! How near, how sweetly near, the throbbing partners.” Clarissa, the possessor of the “throbbing partners” that so excite Lovelace, runs away with him under promise of marriage, but finds out to her sorrow that he intended only to seduce her. Her downward spiral into a house of ill repute, jail, and death is not so heavy on morality as to deaden its erotic tug. Lovelace, in the end, finds that he really loves Clarissa and offers her marriage, but it is too late. He dies, repentant, in a duel.

French eighteenth-century novelists were no less attracted by women’s bosoms, most notably Jean-Jacques Rousseau (a breast man if there ever was one!) and Pierre Choderlos de Laclos in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* [*Dangerous Liaisons*] (1782). In Laclos’s masterpiece of erotic literature, the Vicomte de Valmont attempts the seduction of Mme. de Tourvel, a chaste judge’s wife. He confesses to the Marquise de Merteuil, his accomplice in matters of seduction, that he is drawn to Mme. de Tourvel’s “round supple figure” and specifically to her gorge (bosom) covered only by a single layer of chiffon. In the presence of her scarcely concealed breasts, Valmont admits: “My furtive but keen glances already spied out their enchanting shape.” Slightly later he manages to feel their contours. In crossing a ditch, she is obliged to accept his help and he clasps her in his arms. “I held her breast against my own and, in that brief moment, I felt her heart beat faster.” Laclos’s depiction of the sexual games masterminded by two diabolical aristocrats caps a century of libertinage (libertine philosophy and debauchery) and points, in its own way, to the Revolution at hand.

The breast continued to surface in nineteenth- and twentieth-century erotic literature in poetry, novels, and memoirs, not to mention spectacle and film. European and American men continued to be aroused by the sight of a woman’s bust, explicated by Freud as the source of a person’s deepest emotions. He posited that sucking at the breast was not only the child’s first activity, but also “the starting point of the whole of sexual life.” Freud’s case histories sometimes read like erotic literature, with breasts and penises appearing in every crevice of the human mind.

## BREAST, THE

Conversely, writers influenced by Freud, that is, a significant number of twentieth-century authors, looked to the master of psychoanalysis for tacit approval of their own breast obsessions. From Ramón Gómez de la Serna's fanciful inventory of mammary delights titled *Senos [Breasts]* (1917) to Philip Roth's preposterous novella *The Breast* and Woody Allen's film *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Sex* (both 1972), male authors have had license to eulogize, categorize, and ridicule what they deem to be women's defining appendages. Even if some of these works stretch the boundaries of the erotic into the comic and the absurd, they carry with them the aura of sexuality that is likely to excite a reader.

Gómez de la Serna treats breasts as if they had a life of their own. He represents them in a series of lyrical vignettes titled "The Best of Breasts," "The Inquisitor's Wife's Breasts," "The Breast Which Called Me from Behind," "A Duel over Breasts," "Breasts on the Beach," "The Breasts of the Woman with a Flat Nose," "False Breasts," "Circus Breasts," "Tattooed Breasts," "Stupid Breasts," "Breasts that Look at Themselves in the Mirror," and so forth. As an early proponent of surrealism (a literary and artistic movement born immediately after World War I), Gómez favored incongruous alliances: the breasts in his tales find themselves in surprising situations; for example, on a hermaphrodite's body or in a reliquary. They may be called upon to appear uncovered at night on a balcony, so that the author can see them from the window of his apartment. They may be presented to a "collector of breasts" so as to receive a certificate declaring that they are "delicate and opulent... luminous... pure and beautiful." As a fetish, to be sure, they represent a feminine essence that Gomez can never get enough of. Sacred, maternal, fundamentally erotic, breasts offer him "life preservers against death."

It is a long leap from male objectification of the female breast to texts written by women featuring their own breasts. Consider this exuberant 1996 poem by Alicia Ostriker on the acquisition of breasts:

All the years of girlhood we wait for them,  
Impatient to catch up, to have power  
...  
When the lovers lick them  
And bring us there, there, in the fragrant wet,  
When the babies nuzzle like bees.

We hear the proud possessor of a burgeoning bosom and her pleasure in the exquisite sensations produced by a lover's mouth at the breast... or a baby's; for, as Ostriker tells us in another poem, mothers can become sexually aroused by the process of suckling.

Greedy baby  
Sucking the sweet tit  
....  
when you suckle I am slowly moved  
in my sensitive groove  
you in your mouth are alive, I in my womb

Female erotica recognizes the breast as multi-functional. Throughout life it can play its role as a stimulus to desire, for both males and females; it also has a more primary role to play at that stage of life when one is breast-feeding an infant. Freud was right in positing a connection between suckling and sex, but, in the case of women, it may not have been exactly what he thought.

MARILYN YALOM

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## BRIGHT, SUSIE

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1958–

American essayist, columnist, and anthologist

Susie Bright recorded her erotic fantasies in letters and poetry as a teenager and, in the early days of the feminist and sexual liberation movements, wrote about sexual issues for her peers in underground publications. In 1978, around the time of the assassination of gay city councilman Harvey Milk in San Francisco, Bright became fascinated by the sexual politics of the city's emerging gay community, and this dynamic cultural milieu became the focus of her academic studies at Santa Cruz. From 1981 to 1986, she worked at Good Vibrations, a sex toy boutique in San Francisco, first as a part-time salesperson, and later as manager. From 1984 to 1990, she wrote the mail-order catalog and created an extensive erotic video library for the store. During this period, she began reading her erotic poetry publicly in small storefront venues in San Francisco. Under the nom de plume of "Susie Sexpert," Bright wrote the first of many "Toys for Us" columns for the debut issue of the new lesbian sex magazine *On Our Backs* that she and others founded, and she soon became editor of the publication. Over time, the focus of the column expanded from consumer reviews and sex advice to commentary on pornography, sexual politics, and erotic adventurism. Many of the "Toys for Us" columns are collected in *Susie Sexpert's Lesbian Sex World*. Although these pieces were written for a lesbian audience, the book had significant crossover appeal for both female and male heterosexuals as well as for gay men. Bright soon began writing for a wider audience in such publications as *Playboy*, *Esquire*, *The Advocate*, *Hustler*, and the *Village Voice* and reviewed X-rated movies for the magazine *Penthouse Forum* from 1986 to 1989.

In the 1990s, Bright emerged as a prominent voice in the radical and often volatile discourse surrounding sexuality. She lectured widely, especially in universities, in community theaters, and at film festivals, and appeared at places as diverse

as the Esalen Institute, the famous New Age retreat and study center located in California's Big Sur; the Modern Language Association; and the British Film Institute. Her lectures have frequently ignited controversy. She once received a death threat from a feminist antipornography group in Massachusetts, and her "Sexual State of the Union Address" delivered at Wellesley College near Boston in 1994 was nearly disrupted by a bomb threat. During this period, Bright published numerous articles and essays, and many of these early pieces are collected in *Susie Bright's Sexual Reality: A Virtual Sex World Reader*, and in *Susie Bright's Sexwise: America's Favorite X-rated Intellectual Does Dan Quayle, Catharine MacKinnon, Stephen King, Camille Paglia, Nicholson Baker, Madonna, the Black Panthers and the GOP....* She became a columnist for *Playboy Online*, the online sexzine *Labida*, and *Salon.com*, the most widely-read online journal of politics and popular culture. In 2001 she began her own Internet audio show, "In Bed with Susie Bright," on Audible.com. She also developed and taught two courses at Santa Cruz: "The Politics of Sexuality" and "The Politics of Sexual Repression." From time to time, she teaches "Reading, Writing, and Rethinking Erotica," and "How to Read/Write a Dirty Story," as online courses designed to help students understand, create, and publish literary erotic fiction.

Disappointed by the paucity of women's erotica and the marginalization of writers who did manage to publish their work, Bright conceptualized and edited *Herotica*, her first collection of erotic fiction by and for women, in 1988. The volume was so popular that she subsequently edited *Herotica II*, *Herotica III*, *Totally Herotica*, and the *10th Anniversary Edition of Herotica*. This series gave voice to such now well known writers as Pat Califia, Sarah Schulman, Lisa Palac, Carol Queen, and Joan Nestle, and introduced readers of erotica to emerging stars, as well to many nascent voices. From the first volume of the *Herotica* series, Bright consciously tracked and documented changing thematic and



stylistic trends in short erotic fiction, and this practice continued in her next editing venture. In 1993, Mark Chimsky, an editor at Macmillan Publishers Ltd., invited Bright to edit a new series entitled *The Best American Erotica*, patterned after similar series of poetry and short stories. The idea proved a resounding success, with every collection achieving bestseller status. According to Bright's assessment, erotica of the 1980s was often autobiographical and heavily confessional, dominated by tales of youthful yearning, coming-of-age sagas, and coming-out stories. In the Introduction to the first volume, *The Best American Erotica, 1993*, Bright identifies a countertrend toward "porn noir," which eschewed confessional writing and focused on more imaginative work within a noirish milieu. She observes, however, that by the mid-1990s, the noir trend had waned and been largely supplanted by stories with more eclectic, visionary settings, which now included encounters with mysterious beings or strangers, as well as with more familiar character types. Many of these stories are notable too for the authors' adroit use of language for dramatic tension and erotic effect. In the 1994 collection, instead of discussing new trends in her Introduction, Bright offered readers and potential writers a primer on "How to Write a Best Erotic Story."

The 1995 edition marks the debut of excerpts from the work of some well-known writers that, according to Bright, qualify as erotica. The series would ultimately include excerpts from such bestselling authors as Nicholson Baker (from *Fermata*), Jane Smiley (from *Good Faith*), Marge Piercy (from *Three Women*), and Bret Easton Ellis (from *Glamorama*), as well as short stories by Robert Olen Butler, Celia Tan, Dorothy Allison, Mary Gaitskill, and the actor Alan Cumming. The 1996 volume reveals less emphasis on style and literary convention, formerly seen as necessary to distinguish "erotica" from "pornography," and an increasing interest in frank eroticism. In 1997, mythic themes from European fairy tales, the Old Testament, and Native American and Hindu traditions emerged. These stories also reflect gender-bending points of view, in which the gender and sexual orientation of authors no longer predict characterization, milieu, or action. This trend is independently confirmed by Carol Queen and Lawrence Schimel's collection, *Switch Hitters: Lesbians Write Gay Male Erotica... and Gay Men Write Lesbian Erotica*.

(There is no 1998 edition of *Best American Erotica*. That year, the publication date was moved forward from October 1998 to February 1999, to enable succeeding volumes to be published early in each calendar year.) In the Introduction to the 1999 volume, Bright cites the insoluble problem of pleasing everyone, and suggests that a story's appeal lies more in its ability to capture and hold the reader than in specific characters, setting, or specific sexual practices. As an example, she cites "The Hit," by Steven Saylor (writing as Aaron Travis), which readers ultimately voted as the top story of the series' first decade, although the characters and action lie well beyond the experience and interest of most readers. A number of stories in the 2000 edition mark a departure from glamour and the physical perfection of protagonists, and exhibit instead a lively interest in gross, misshapen, even puerile characters who are not, in the end, necessarily redeemed by sex. In the Introduction to the 2001 volume, Bright notes the explosion of erotica on the Internet, but reports that the quality is often superficial, predictable, and imminently forgettable. In contrast, her overarching goal in the *Best American Erotica* series is to offer the cream of short erotic fiction, in which the sex is psychologically compelling, exotic, and memorable. The 2002 edition continues the trend away from gender-centric points of view as authors plumb the depths of erotic experience from an unpredictable variety of gender perspectives.

In 2003, in addition to her selection of stories, Bright celebrated a decade of the series' publication by interviewing contributors about their lives, asking questions about education, jobs, interests, and awards, and about their experiences in writing erotica. This informal survey reveals that the interests and experiences of writers of erotica are as typical and unpredictable as those of the general population. This double volume also includes the results of an informal survey of readers regarding their favorite stories over the decade, a listing of the top 100 stories, with occasional commentary by the authors, and reprints of the top five stories. In the 2004 Introduction, Bright notes the appearance of two new mini-trends: tales featuring blood—vampires, cutting, or blood-sharing experiences—which she posits symbolize trust and sexual risk-taking in the age of AIDS; and male submission, which she suggests is a reaction to American military involvement in Afghanistan and Iraq. In 2005,

rather than identifying new trends, Bright muses on the uses of pornography/erotica, and recommends sharing the stories with partners to enhance the erotics of sexual experiences.

Bright's work has won numerous awards, including the Firecracker Alternative Book Award for *Nothing but the Girl* in 1997, and *Susie Bright's Sexual State of the Union* in 2001; the Lambda Literary Award for *Nothing but the Girl* in 1997; and the Good Vibrations Venus Award, 1997. She was named "Best Sex Columnist of 1998" by the *New York Press* for her "Sexpert Opinion" column on Salon.com. In 1999 her documentary *Susie Bright: Sex Pest*, in which she argued for exploring sex beyond intercourse, won the Erotic Award for Best British TV documentary. In 2003, Bright was inducted into the X-Rated Hall of Fame, at the annual awards of the X-Rated Critics Organization. She has also garnered numerous accolades from popular publications: "the avatar of American erotica" (*New York Times*); "the X-rated intellectual" (*San Francisco Chronicle*); "America's ranking connoisseur of sex, porn, and freedom of physical expression" (*Book Magazine*); "the absolute bomb" (*Village Voice*); the "goddess of American erotica" (*Boston Phoenix*); "sexual Renaissance woman" (*Publishers Weekly*); "one of the leading thinkers and visionaries of our time" (*Utne Reader*); and a "national treasure, right up there with the Grand Canyon, the Okefenokee Swamp, and the Smithsonian's Nancy Reagan Memorial Dress Collection" (*The Millennium Whole Earth Catalog*). Regarding her willingness to tackle controversial topics and openly criticize pronouncements and policies that she sees as sexually repressive, *Rolling Stone* opined, "No one can accuse her of shutting up."

Since the late 1980s, Bright has been enormously influential in mainstreaming short erotic fiction and in enhancing its literary merit. She achieved her status as a significant figure in this movement because of her personal interest in sex and love of literature, and as a result of her desire to bring American erotica out of obscurity into the mainstream when no one else was interested in taking on the task.

### Biography

Born Arlington, Virginia, March 25, 1958. Raised in California and Canada. BA,

Community Studies, University of California at Santa Cruz, 1981. One daughter, born 1990. Lives in Northern California.

REBECCA CHALKER

### Selected Works

#### Author

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## BUKOWSKI, CHARLES

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1920–1994

American novelist and poet

### *Notes of a Dirty Old Man*

Charles Bukowski's *Notes of a Dirty Old Man* is a collection of short stories and opinion pieces. It was first published by Essex House in 1969. City Lights Books has published it since 1973. The selections are from a column Bukowski wrote for the Los Angeles alternative paper *Open Press*. After *Open Press* folded in 1969, Bukowski's column was picked up by the *LA Free Press*, *Open City's* main competitor. The book represents a fourteen-month period of the late sixties when Bukowski's rising fame, due primarily to the *Open City* column and to *At Terror Street and Agony Way* (1968), led to problems with his superiors at the United States Post Office. John Martin (publisher of Black Sparrow Press) agreed to pay Bukowski one hundred dollars a month for life to write full-time. Resigning his position, he set about his first novel, *Post Office* (1971).

*Notes of a Dirty Old Man* is an important work in the Bukowski *oeuvre* because it represents a transitional period in his life and marks his return to prose, a genre he had abandoned for almost twenty years (although he did release short stories in chapbooks in the mid-sixties). The impetus came from *Open City's* founder, John Bryan. Although Bukowski had a disdain for journalism (he felt it was often "flat and careless" writing), he accepted Bryan's offer of a weekly column. Bryan's willingness to print anything Bukowski submitted gave Bukowski the freedom to experiment. In the introduction to the book, Bukowski acknowledged that it was the "absolute freedom to write anything you please" that improved his writing.

The pieces chosen for inclusion in the book vary greatly in style and topic. There are sociopolitical tirades and observations and straight fictional vignettes depicting the absurdity, irony, and hopelessness of the life of the downtrodden.

The bulk of the book, however, comprises works of autobiographical fiction. These describe Bukowski's troubled childhood, his travels through the United States, his growing fame as a writer, and his relations with women. The thread that holds this diverse amalgam of styles and topics together is the underlying theme of failure to attain lasting happiness. This is particularly evident in the manner in which Bukowski presents relations between men and women.

*Notes of a Dirty Old Man* offers a solely male, heterosexual, and misogynistic view of the physical relations between humans. The stories range from the sad to the comical, from violence to tenderness. Throughout the book Bukowski is consistent in presenting the view that the relationship between the male and the female is a disjointed one. The men in the stories are concerned with women in an almost solely sexual manner. When the female characters in the selections attach any emotional or nonphysical aspect to their sexual interactions, problematic situations arise; when they do not seek anything beyond the physical, the female characters are referred to as being "good women" by the males.

A typical "good woman" is Frankie's wife, the skirtless woman Bukowski comes across when walking home from a party. The woman remains nameless but can be read as the female representation of Bukowski: she just wants to have a few drinks and enjoy herself. However, her husband attaches restrictions upon her autonomy by hiding all her skirts and dresses. Bukowski feels some remorse after they have sex when he sees her leave in a ripped pair of his workman's trousers. However, when she does not attempt to wake him (he is only feigning sleep) or take any money from his wallet, he finds peace from this woman who "had given something to" (104) him without seeking anything besides the physical act of intercourse. The ending reinforces the note he had scribbled on a piece of paper during the party: "love is a way

with some meaning; sex is meaning enough” (99).

This story ends with Bukowski falling asleep alone in his bed, the best indication of the presence of a “good woman.” The story of the “300-Pound Whore” also ends with the male character falling asleep in bed, sexually satisfied and alone. After a comical love scene where Henry Chinaski (Bukowski’s main fictional representation of himself) had to hang on to the sides of the bed in order to stay upon the bucking Ann, and which resulted in a broken bed, the male character felt sadness at the woman’s departure. However, the story ends with a contentment similar to the story of “Frankie’s Wife”: Chinaski “naked between the new sheets of [his] new bed,” with the woman gone without having accepted his offer of money, “slept, alone, gracious and touched by the miracle” (153).

Most of the erotic encounters in the book, however, are not portrayed as positively as the aforementioned episodes. Bukowski presents sex for the male as a necessity. The men see women as sexual objects, tolerated only because they provide sexual release. Masturbation is an option, but a depressing one. Thus, the men yearn for women, but wonder whether the emotional price attached to sex make it worthwhile. This notion is presented in the “Moss and Anderson” column. Although both characters admit that “the price is always too high” (53), they make a date with two women. The column ends with Moss telling Anderson that they have “an hour’s freedom” left before they must pay the price of their autonomy in order to satisfy their need for sex.

In Bukowski’s *Notes of a Dirty Old Man*, the erotic episodes are misogynistic, often presenting women as an unfortunate necessity of coitus. However, his portraits also offer keen insights into the male/female dichotomy. He draws a distinction between sex and love that challenges patriarchal society’s positioning of woman as the seller of sex. Bukowski raises questions about the relationships between authority, personal freedom, and sexuality. He portrays what he has experienced: a culture that in its assignation of sexual roles has man as a fiend and woman as a whore. It is not surprising then that the erotic passages of the book, presented through Bukowski’s wry wit, play like a tragic-comedy where turmoil is rife and satisfaction rare.

## Biography

Born Heinrich Karl Bukowski in Andernach, Germany, on August 16, 1920. Immigrated to the United States, first living in Baltimore, then moving on to California in 1923 with father, Henry, and mother, Katharina. Parents changed the child’s name from Heinrich to Charles. Graduated from Los Angeles High School in 1939 and enrolled in Los Angeles City College, where he studied journalism, English, theater, and history. Dropped out of college in 1941. From 1942 to 1947 moved around the United States working menial jobs and writing stories. In 1947 returned to LA. Began working for the US Post Office, 1952, as a temporary mail carrier. Almost died from alcohol abuse, 1955, hospitalized in LA County Hospital and saved by blood transfusion from father. On September 7, 1964, Frances Smith (FrancEye) gave birth to Bukowski’s daughter, Marina Louise. The FBI began investigating Bukowski, 1968, after being informed by the Post Office of his sexually explicit writings and unorthodox lifestyle. Resigned from the Postal Service in 1969 (he knew he was about to be fired for absenteeism) and began writing full-time. The movie *Barfly* released, 1987, starring Mickey Rourke and Faye Dunaway. Bukowski wrote the screenplay and had a small role as a patron in a bar. Diagnosed, 1993, with myelogenous leukemia. Bukowski died March 9, 1994.

MICHAEL KEARNEY

## Editions

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## BURROUGHS, WILLIAM S.

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## BURROUGHS, WILLIAM S.

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1914–1997  
American novelist

Burroughs' distinctive contribution to a poetics of obscenity is manifest in his incisive empirical address to Western, particularly American, culture, in the cyber-tech perspective for his deconstruction of cultural habits, in the disciplined amoral ethos of his works, and in their ironic fusion of the heinous, the parodic, the ugly, and the hysterical to produce a complex grotesque

vision of postmodern civilization. In his works, obscenity is imagistically and thematically conspicuous, pornography accordingly may be pertinent at any given moment, and eroticism, as such, is negligible (as for the distinction between pornography and eroticism, cf. "Pornography"). Burroughs' *Junky*, though pseudonymously published, established several of his fictive hallmarks. Most importantly, that work assumed Burroughs' characteristic documentary or quasi-documentary stance, which derives from its

autobiographical narrative of drug addiction and ecology, as well as a couple of uncharacteristically decorous homosexual scenes. The narrative is conventionally chronological, but the narrator, Burroughs himself, is from the start disposed to living outside both convention and the law. Though Burroughs later called this outlaw stance a “romantic extravagance” of the time, it in fact became a staple of his subsequent work.

*Naked Lunch* elaborated the tension between conventional and “outlaw” cultures with a hyperbolical vengeance, not only imaging bourgeois institutions as analogues of criminal counterparts (narcotics agents and dealers, straights and gays, scientists and generalissimos, etc.), but dissecting the marketing strategy common to them all. Following the logic of capitalism, the cultural objective is to make consumers of the population. Addiction is the logical conclusion, and “the narcotics industry” is the paradigm. “Junk is the ideal product... the ultimate merchandise. No sales talk necessary. The client will crawl through a sewer and beg to buy.... The junk merchant does not sell his product to the consumer, he sells the consumer to his product. He does not improve and simplify his merchandise. He degrades and simplifies the client.... Junk yields a basic formula of ‘evil’ virus: *The Algebra of Need*.” Literally, junk is heroin; figuratively, it is the power of control to which all segments of society are addicted—domestic relations, sexual relations, political relations, public policy, etc. The greater the need, the greater the addiction, a straightforward calculus all the way to “total need.”

*Naked Lunch* is conceived as a cultural alert that certain social habits indicate high levels of addiction. One such habit is capital punishment:

Johnny is led in, hands tied.... Johnny sees the gallows and sags... his chin pulling down toward his cock, his legs bending at the knees. Sperm spurts, arching almost vertical in front of his face. Mark and Mary are suddenly impatient and hot... Mark is adjusting the noose.

“Well, here you go.” Mark starts to push Johnny off the platform.

Mary: “No, let me.” She locks her hands behind Johnny’s buttocks, puts her forehead against him, smiling into his eyes she moves back, pulling him off the platform into space.... His face swells with blood.... Mark reaches up with one lithe movement and snaps Johnny’s neck... sound like a stick broken

in wet towels. A shudder runs down Johnny’s body... Johnny’s cock springs up and Mary guides it up her cunt, writhing against him in a fluid belly dance, groaning and shrieking with delight.

Burroughs says, “These sections are intended to reveal capital punishment as the obscene, barbaric, and disgusting anachronism that it is.” In short, let advocates see their naked lunch. The “junk virus,” Burroughs insisted, is “public health problem number one,” and since *Naked Lunch* treats this problem, “it is necessarily brutal, obscene and disgusting.”

Addictions proliferate, as one of the most pernicious masquerades under the banner of science. Dr. Benway is a kind of postmodern Joseph Mengele and is Burroughs’ allegory of the consummate technocratic reduction of human being to the “soft machine.” “I deplore brutality,” says Benway, a control addict who prefers more subtle and efficient inducements of “anxiety” and feelings of “special guilt” that can be achieved with a disguised attack on the citizen’s personal identity by an adroit “Interrogator.” “Many subjects,” says Benway, “are vulnerable to sexual humiliation,” the procedures and effects of which he describes with insouciant obscenity: “I recall this one kid I condition to shit at the sight of me. Then I wash his ass and screw him. It was real tasty. And he was a lovely fella too. And sometimes a subject will burst into boyish tears because he can’t keep from ejaculating when you screw him. Well, as you can plainly see, the possibilities are endless like meandering paths in a great big beautiful garden.”

Benway is just one of many agents of the “Nova Mob,” like the *cosa nostra* nowhere and everywhere, and consequently “the black wind sock of death undulates over the land, feeling, smelling for the crime of separate life.” The “cure” for separate life, of course, is addiction. This is the business of Benway’s technology of the profane, creating and feeding the habit, whatever it may be. For the junky, as noted, is the perfectly self-contained consumer: “Probing for a vein in my dirty bare foot.... Junkies have no shame. . . They are impervious to the repugnance of others. . . The junky’s shame disappears with his nonsexual sociability which is also dependent on libido. . . The addict regards his body impersonally as an instrument to absorb the medium in which he lives, evaluates his body with the hands of a horse trader. ‘No use trying

## BURROUGHS, WILLIAM S.

to hit here.’ Dead fish eyes flick over a ravaged vein.” The consequence is a culture of zombies completely absorbed with feeding their habits.

*The Soft Machine*, *The Ticket that Exploded*, and *Nova Express* all elaborate on these motifs, especially the technology of “Juxtaposition Formulae” whereby populations can be manipulated and subject to Nova control even unto the next millennium. Though *Queer* (1985) is a conventional narrative in the mode of *Junky*, and *The Third Mind* (1978) is an expository work addressed to methodology, Burroughs’ later books continue the witty, incisive cyber-tech deconstruction of cultural obscenities that won him an international readership in the 1960s. He continued also to use the addiction trope to probe technocracy; as posed in *The Soft Machine* the question is, “Are these experiments really necessary?” Juxtaposition Formulae cultivate power addictions by creating and aggravating conflicts—between races, nations, genders, businesses, unions, etc., wherever it wants enmities pushed to “use of total weapons” in the face of “absolute need.”

Burroughs’ cold, ironic eye, his scientific perspective, and his existentially amoral grotesques, including a judicious obscenity, were instrumental in cultivating the rationalist, as distinct from sympathetic, poetics characteristic of postmodern literature. He and his works, especially *Naked Lunch*, became touchstones for a certain kind of cyber-punk hipness in both literature and pop culture. Moreover, though his theories of spontaneous composition and the cut-up method had been articulated and practiced by the cubists and surrealists, to say nothing of his friend Kerouac, they gained a new appeal by virtue of the perceptual vivacity that Burroughs’ deadpan candor, wit, and grotesquerie imparted to the vulgar accuracy of his cultural critique.

### Biography

William Seward Burroughs was born in 1914 in St. Louis, where his father owned and operated a lumber business. As a child he was subject to nightmares, and he later recalled “hearing a maid talk about opium and how smoking opium brings sweet dreams, and I said: ‘I will smoke opium when I grow up.’” Though “neither brilliant nor backward in studies” in his progressive grammar and high schools, he did have an impressive reading habit that included Oscar

Wilde, Charles Baudelaire, and André Gide. At this time, too, he formed what he called “a romantic attachment for another boy” and a literary attachment to the autobiography of a minor outlaw. All of these things foreshadowed developments in his adult life and literary works. He graduated from Harvard University, where he studied English literature and discovered his growing sense of alienation from the middle-class sensibility of American life.

With a small trust fund following college, he traveled, dabbled in graduate studies of ethnology and archeology, and worked at various jobs from which experiences he drew on in later works, for example *Exterminator!* (1973). He met Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac in 1944 and together they became the core figures of what would be called the Beat Movement. Burroughs, however, did not begin seriously writing until the early 1950s, and then largely at the insistence of Ginsberg. With Ginsberg’s agency, Burroughs’ first novel, *Junky*, was published under the pseudonym William Lee in 1953. Meanwhile, seeking what he called “kick... momentary freedom from the claims of aging, cautious, nagging, frightened flesh,” Burroughs traveled in South America, North Africa, and Europe.

In 1958, excerpts from *Naked Lunch* had appeared in *The Chicago Review* and *Big Table* and the resulting obscenity charges gave the work notoriety. The full novel was published in 1959 by Olympia Press in Paris. Olympia Press also published *The Soft Machine* (1961) and *The Ticket that Exploded* (1962) in Paris. By 1964 Burroughs’ readership and reputation were substantial, and Grove Press published *Nova Express* in New York in that year and *The Wild Boys* in 1971. He continued publishing through the ‘70s and by that point had long since become a counterculture icon. He lectured on the centerpieces of his distinctive poetics, spontaneous composition, and his “cut-up” collage method frequently in the 1970s and 1980s at Naropa Institute’s Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics in Boulder, Colorado, founded and for many years directed by Allen Ginsberg. In the 1980s Burroughs settled in the university town of Lawrence, Kansas. *Queer* was published in 1985 and *The Western Lands* in 1987. His last known work, *Ghost of a Chance*, was published in a limited edition by the Whitney Museum, New York, in 1991. Several months after Allen Ginsberg’s death, William Burroughs died at age

83 in Lawrence of a heart attack, August 2, 1997.

PETER MICHELSON

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## BURTON, SIR RICHARD F.

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1821–1890

British ethnographer, travel writer, translator

While Burton wrote over forty books, he is known primarily as a translator, especially of the works of Eastern eroticism that caused a sensation when they were circulated in 19th-century England. Burton could have faced prosecution under the Obscene Publications Act of 1857, although these works—namely the *Kama Sutra*, the *Perfumed Garden*, and the *Ananga Ranga*—are considered classics of erotic literature today. Burton's translations, and the extensive prefatory and explanatory material appended to them, constituted a major contribution to Victorian discourse on sexuality. As his biographer Fawn Brodie notes, "Burton's real passion was... for the hidden in man, for the unknowable, and inevitably the unthinkable. What his Victorian compatriots called unclean, bestial, or Satanic he regarded with almost clinical detachment" (p.16). Because of his detachment and fascination, Burton had a profound influence on the study and discourse of human

sexual behavior and was a forerunner of pioneering sexologists like Richard von Krafft-Ebing and Havelock Ellis.

Burton's entire career is marked by an interest in human sexual practices. His early writings—travel books, records of his explorations, and ethno-geographical studies—also include extensive notes about the sexual customs and social rituals of the native people he encountered. An avowed atheist, Burton nonetheless traveled to Utah in order to study the tenets of Mormonism—and the practice of polygamy. But his more sexually explicit observations about the practices he studied had to be relegated to footnotes and rendered in Latin to avoid censure and the censor. In his *Supplemental Nights*, Burton laments that he had "failed to free the Anthropological Society from the fetters of *mauvaise honte* and the mock-modesty which compels travelers and ethnological students to keep silence concerning one side of human nature" (VII, p.437). Burton saw his later career as a way to reverse this earlier failure. He translated and heavily annotated sexually themed texts: Eastern



erotica, Latin poems by Catullus, several works of Italian literature, Brazilian poetry, and, most famously, the *Thousand Nights and a Night* and the *Kama Sutra*.

Burton hoped his translations would remedy the prudish reticence about sexuality that marked British culture. As he notes in the *Supplemental Nights*, “The England of our day would fain bring up both sexes and keep all ages in profound ignorance of sexual and intersexual relations” (VII). This, Burton claims, produces a culture that is actually more sexualized than the purportedly oversexed East. British women without an outlet for their physical needs and desires “relieve their pent-up feelings by what may be called mental prostitution” (*Supplemental Nights* VII); reading French novels. Burton’s ideal world would free sexuality from shame and release both women and men from debilitating sexual repression. At the same time, Burton’s project serves to extend his childhood tendency to resist authority, his adult desire to live outside the confines of British mores, and his longing literally and figuratively to find his own path. As Michel Foucault notes in *The History of Sexuality*, “What sustains our eagerness to speak of sex in terms of repression is doubtless this opportunity to speak out against the powers that be, to utter truths and promise bliss, to link together enlightenment, liberation, and manifold pleasures; to pronounce a discourse that combines the fervor of knowledge, the determination to change the laws, and the longing for the garden of earthly delights”.

Despite his professed frankness in writing about sex, Burton often bowed to his culture’s reticences. For instance, instead of the “Plain and Literal Translation” he promised for the “Arabian Nights Entertainment,” his translation of the *Kama Sutra* substitutes the Sanskrit words *lingam* and *yoni* for “penis” and “vagina”—even though *yoni* never appears in the original Sanskrit and *lingam* only rarely. Moreover, Burton originated ideas of sexuality—particularly homosexuality—that reveal his priggishness. His “Terminal Essay” of the *Thousand Nights and a Night* proposes a “Sotadic Zone” where “the Vice is popular and endemic” (X), making the appearance of male homosexuality “geographical and climatic, not racial”. While escaping the Victorian tendency to project the abject onto racial others, Burton nonetheless

constitutes homosexuality as an alien “other.” His treatment of pederasty is important in its frankness and lack of moral judgment, but it is also vexing in its desire to define male homosexuality as thoroughly “foreign” to British understanding.

Burton was equally intent on correcting what he saw as a commensurately serious shortcoming among his countrymen: their failure to understand “the East.” Edward Said defines Orientalism as “the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient”. This is precisely how Burton characterized his work: “I consider my labors as a legacy bequeathed to my countrymen at a most critical time when England the puissantest [*sic*] of Moslem powers is called upon, without adequate knowledge of the Moslem’s inner life, to administer Egypt as well as to rule India” (*Supplemental Nights* VII). Indeed, reviewers of the *Thousand Nights and a Night* presumed a connection between Burton’s Orientalist knowledge and the proper administration of Empire. The *Home News* of 18 September 1885 suggests that Burton’s aid may have saved General Gordon from his death in Khartoum, remarking that “it seems curious that his services could not have been utilized in the Soudan, when the want of competent Arabic scholars was so severely felt.” (qtd. in *Supplemental Nights* VIII).

Burton, along with men like Forster Fitzgerald Arbuthnot, Leonard Smithers, Henry Ashbee, and Richard Monckton Milnes, circumvented the Obscene Publications Act of 1857 to publish works that Burton, at least, did not consider at all obscene. (The headnote to each volume of the *Thousand Nights and a Night* is an Arab proverb that may well summarize Burton’s attitude: “To the pure all things are pure.”) Burton and Arbuthnot founded an imaginary society, the Kama Shastra Society of London and Benares, which would print potentially actionable texts out of “Benares” or “Cosmopoli” (which were merely code for London) to get around laws governing books printed in England. Writing to John Payne about this project on January 15, 1883, Burton crows: “It will make the British public stare” (Wright II).

While he often seemed merely to want to shock “Mrs. Grundy,” Burton clearly contributed to the gradual emergence of erotic candor in British cultural discourse. His translation of the *Thousand Nights and a Night*—which he claimed would be “a repertory of Eastern knowledge in its esoteric phase” (I)—was sold by subscription only, each volume costing one guinea. It made Burton a wealthy man. Isobel reports that Burton said, with sarcasm, “I struggled for forty-seven years.... I distinguished myself honorably in every way I possibly could. I translated a doubtful book in my old age, and immediately made sixteen thousand guineas. Now that I know the tastes of England, we need never be without money” (II). While Burton lived to gain acclaim for his *Arabian Nights* and his knowledge of the East, he died long before the British public was entirely convinced that discussion of sex was not, by definition, pornographic: the first publicly printed British edition of the *Kama Sutra* did not appear until 1963.

### Biography

Born March 19, 1821, in Torquay, Devon. Family lived in France and Italy, returning to England only for brief visits. As a child, showed talent for languages; was fluent in Greek, Latin, Italian, and French before entering Trinity College, Oxford, in 1840. Expelled in 1842 for bad behavior. Sailed to India with a commission in the Bombay Army, a military branch of the East India Company. Spent seven years in Sind as a field surveyor and intelligence officer, often disguised as a Muslim merchant. Mastered Arabic, Hindi, and other Indian languages, while learning as much as he could about Indian culture. Wrote three books on Indian ethnography on his return, but became famous for his incursions into Medina and Mecca (1853)—Muslim cities forbidden to nonbelievers—made possible by his command of the language and disguise as an Afghani physician. Later traveled to Ethiopia and Somalia to the forbidden city of Harer, the citadel of Muslim learning. Took a tour of duty in the Crimean War. Afterward, traveled to Africa as an explorer. In 1857, along with John Speke, attempted to locate the source of the Nile. In 1860, traveled across the United States to Salt Lake City, Utah, to investigate Mormonism. In 1861, married Isobel Arundell and joined

the British Foreign Office. Posted in 1865 to Santos, Brazil, but resigned in 1868 after deploring the conditions there. Landed a post in Damascus in 1869, but recalled in 1871 due to Turkish government’s complaints about his conduct. Posted to Trieste, Italy, in 1872, in part due to influence exerted by Isobel’s relatives. A desirable position, but too far from Muslim lands for Burton’s tastes. Left him freedom and time, however, to write and to do the translating work that gained him entry into this encyclopedia. In 1886, knighted by Queen Victoria. Died October 20, 1890, in Trieste.

LEEANNE M. RICHARDSON

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## BYRD II, WILLIAM

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## BYRD II, WILLIAM

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1674–1744

Colonial American diarist

William Byrd II reflected in his diaries, prose works, and occasional verses the sexual values of an eighteenth-century English gentleman: frequently predatory and misogynistic, always insisting on chastity in one's wife but not expecting it in other men's wives, and often struggling with the conflict of passion and reason within himself.

### Prose

Byrd is best known to students of early American literature as a diarist who, while not rivaling Pepys in style or incidents, meticulously documented the routines he employed in his gentlemanly self-fashioning. Although clearly not intended for an audience, the diaries reveal a man who recognized the unruliness of his libido and documented his flirtations, seductions, and whoring, as well as marital sexuality.

In addition to keeping the diaries, Byrd maintained a gentleman's commonplace book, a record of his reading and conversations during the

eight years between his stormy first and his second marriage. As a result, several of its entries are hostile to women and suspicious of marriage, including citations of St. Basil, Plutarch, Petronius, Xenophon; several entries record erotic anecdotes about sexual voracity. Concerned about his own insatiable sexual desires, Byrd also transcribed relevant excerpts from Dr. Nicolas Venette's *De la génération de l'homme, ou tableau de l'amour conjugal* (of which Byrd owned two copies in French).

Byrd brought together many cynical and misogynistic commonplaces in the bawdy prose work "The Female Creed"—woman's confession of faith in men, in sentimentality, and in every possible superstition. It concludes, "I believe in my conscience, that tho' my Adorer loves Wine, and wenches, and gameing, more fondly than Pamperoni loves his Gut, yet my superior Prudence and attractions are sufficient to reclaim him, and to reform his wayward Inclinations into a loyal, confin'd, serious, harmless conjugal Love" (*Another Secret Diary* 475).

In letters and in "characters" (a popular Augustan literary form in which the foibles of character types or actual persons were satirized)

circulated among friends, Byrd offered to a small audience an unsentimental view of love, female beauty, and lust. His self-portrait in the character “Inamorato l’oiseaux” is particularly revealing: “Love broke out upon him before his Beard, and he cou’d distinguish sex before he cou’d the difference betwixt Good & Evil. Tis well he had not a Twin-sister as Osyris had, for without doubt like him he wou’d have had an amourette with her in his mothers belly” (*Another Secret Diary* 276). In it he described the “Civil war between this Hero’s Principles and his Inclinations” (276).

It is likely that Byrd collaborated with William Burnaby, a colleague in the Middle Temple, in the translation of Petronius’ *Satyricon*, published in London in 1694, of which his notebooks translate the anecdote of “The Ephesian Matron” (*Another Secret Diary* 224–27). This faithfully grieving widow keeps vigil at her husband’s tomb. Eventually a soldier guarding the nearby corpses of hanged men seduces her in the tomb, during which the family of one of the executed recovers his body. Faced with her lover’s capital punishment for dereliction of duty, she replaces the missing body of the executed with that of her deceased husband.

In *The Secret History of the Line* (a novelistic rendition of the more straightforward *History of the Dividing Line betwixt Virginia and North Carolina Run in the Year of Our Lord 1728*) Byrd composed a humorous narrative that was circulated in manuscript form among a close circle of friends in Virginia and England. The picaresque *Secret History* depicts women as fair game for predatory males who are attentive to neither Christian sexual ethics nor gentlemanly hospitality when making advances on the wives or daughters of their various hosts along the surveying journey. Typical of the time, Byrd was not squeamish about interracial sexual liaisons between a gentleman and an inferior, but he also famously proposed in the *History* that miscegenation between European colonists and Native Americans would assimilate the latter into colonial society.

### Verse

Like many 18th-century gentlemen, Byrd wrote occasional verses (published pseudonymously) characterized by wit, neoclassical allusions, and social commentary.

“Upon a Fart” is a parody of Anne, Countess of Winchelsea’s “Upon a Sigh” and is alleged to have “cur’d that Lady of her Itch to Poetry” (*Another Secret Diary* 244). It employs the sentimental poem’s characterizations of the sigh (“Gentlest,” “Softest,” “Shapeless”) as ironic attributes of the fart. Farting entails gender differences as it is “rattled out by th’ unbred swain, / But whisper’d by the Bashfull wench” (246). The poem ends with a description of what is perhaps the earliest record of the frat house prank of igniting farts, a diversion that Byrd attributes to “Maids at Court” who make visible the fart “burning blew” (246).

A visit to the spa at Tunbridge Wells in 1719 produced several poems that Byrd published under the name of “Mr. Burrard” in *Tunbridgia: or, Tunbridge Miscellanies* (London, 1719). Dilettante “Water Poets” (as Richard Steele named them) wrote verses describing the habitués of resorts like Tunbridge Wells, Bath, Epsom, and Scarborough. Byrd’s verses are conventional neoclassical encomia to beautiful and aristocratic women, all of whom were other men’s wives.

William Byrd II employed conventional 18th-century literary forms to reflect aristocratic sensibilities about eroticism. At the same time, his diaries and commonplace book reflect his own struggles to rein in sexual passion with human reason.

### Biography

Born in 1674 to William Byrd I, a Virginia planter and trader in frontier furs who was the son of an English goldsmith, and Mary Horsmanden. In 1681 his father sent him to be educated in England at the Felsted School; between 1690 and 1696, Byrd engaged in a merchant apprenticeship in the Netherlands and entered London’s Middle Temple for law training, a situation that would also have provided his literary apprenticeship because it brought him into contact with the literary life of London. He became a protégé of Sir Robert Southwell, was inducted into the Royal Society for the Improving of Natural Knowledge, and was appointed an English agent for the Virginia Colonial House of Burgesses. An ambitious social climber, Byrd availed himself of the professional, political, social, and recreational opportunities that England offered the aspirant.

## BYRD II, WILLIAM

After the death of his first wife, he sought a socially advantageous second marriage but was thwarted in his first attempts at it. Eventually returning to Virginia, Byrd became an important leader in the colony's political and economic life. He accumulated a library of some 3,000 volumes, second in size only to the library of Cotton Mather, a Boston Puritan divine. His secret diaries, written in code, provide a window into colonial and English life. His leadership of a surveying party to define the border between Virginia and North Carolina resulted in his writing an account that combined the perspectives of an ethnographer and naturalist.

THOMAS L. LONG

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## *CABINET SATYRIQUE, LE*

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Compilations of licentious poetry constitute a separate genre in the history of French literature, a genre that appears for only one quarter century, from 1600 to 1626. The action brought against Théophile de Viau for his participation in *Le Parnasse satyrique* [*The Satyric Parnassus*] (1622), and the conviction that followed, put an end to this prosperous age during which it was possible to publish bawdy works with the king's privilege. A similar genre had existed during the sixteenth century, a famous example being *Les blasons anatomiques du corps féminin* [*Anatomical Blazons of the Feminine Body*]. By the beginning of the seventeenth century, however, the genre had become more specific: editors tended to compile mainly satirical or openly sexual poems.

*Le cabinet satyrique* holds an eminent rank among the libertine collections and is one of the best representatives of the genre. This status derives in part from its amplexity: With 460 poems in the original edition of 1618, it is the most voluminous compilation of the time. Moreover, it had eleven reissues during the seventeenth century, a sign of its popularity. The work came out of the printing press of the

Parisian editor Anthoine Estoc, who specialized in the publication of satirical collections. When *Le cabinet satyrique* appeared, Estoc had two other works of the same type in his catalogue, not to mention *Le Parnasse satyrique* that would be published four years later. Moreover, Anthoine Estoc exploited his own previous publications, as well as those of other printers, for two-thirds of *Le cabinet satyrique* are in fact previously edited poems. On the whole, half of the collection's poems are anonymous but, as the title proclaims, the rest belongs to "les plus signalez Poëtes de ce Siecle" (the most notorious Poets of this Century), that is the greatest satirists of the beginning of the seventeenth century: Mathurin Régnier, Pierre Berthelot, François Maynard, etc.

The foreword to the collection is distinguished by its length and ambition. First, along with the customary claims to novelty, one finds an attempt to build a genuine canon to which the work's content is presented as a continuation. Thus the illustrious predecessors of the previous century, like Pierre de Ronsard, as well as the Greek and Latin comic authors, are mentioned, and serve as guarantors of authority. Afterwards,

the edifying purpose of the satirical genre is put forward as a subject of praise and glorification: Satirists are “des Philosophes deguizez” (disguised Philosophers) whose aim is to provoke a distaste for vice by depicting it without shame. Finally, the foreword’s author presents *Le cabinet satyrique* as a harmonious, non-monstrous “corps de Livre” (body Book), that is a work carefully arranged with homogenous parts. This claim to order proves veracious: *Le cabinet satyrique*, besides a part made of miscellany, is composed of twenty-two sections more or less coherent, the latter comprising erotic testaments, epitaphs, and funerary poems.

Although the work in its entirety does not belong to the erotic genre, the first sections quickly emphasize sexual activity. The primary focus is on the genitals. The male organ is shown as tireless and monumental. Being always the woman’s object of desire, it brings incomparable pleasure and is persistently exhibited as an enticing gift. As for the female organ, it is depicted using architectural metaphors (house, palace, inhabited cavern, etc.) that replace the floral comparisons of the previous century. It is especially blameworthy when too large. Such a preference explains itself by the fact that the *ars erotica* found in *Le Cabinet satyrique* is largely genitally bound. Although it can be conveyed by other gestures (touch, kiss), sensual pleasure is above all a result of coitus. Witness woman’s desire for man’s “liquor” presented as a new year’s gift: “Margot, ça, je te veux donner / Un coup de V. pour t’estrener, / Afin que, toute ceste année, / Toi qui de sperme est affamée / Tu passe l’an joyusement, / F..tant dés le commencement.” (Margot, now then, I want to give you / A C\*\*\* blow as a gift / So that all this year / You who are thirsty for sperm / Might spend the year happily / F\*\*\*ing from the beginning.) (t.1, p. 142, ed. Fleuret and Perceau), Witness also the condemnation of sodomy, supposedly leaving women unsatisfied and making men cowardly and odious to God.

Besides the strictly erotic inspiration, the satirical vein is also exploited. The poet’s purpose is to show indignation when confronted by a certain character or situation. Satire thus becomes a pretext for depicting mores or human types, such as courtiers, to whom a long section is devoted. However, the misogynous inspiration predominates. Among other blemishes, the woman

is blamed for her impudicity. For example, Sigognes describes in a poem a lascivious young woman who undresses as soon as she is asked to and whose bedroom is always encumbered with lovers even as others wait in the street. Among all feminine types, no one incurs insults as much as the old woman. Her late lubricity is laughed at, as well as her improper desire to imitate younger ones by giving herself up to love games. Also laughed at is the fact that she resorts to make-up in order to disguise—in vain—her ugliness. Satirists multiply baroque images to express the disgust with which this ugliness inspires them. Their style is principally based upon images of disease, darkness, stench, and upon sensations of flaccidity and ooze. Often associated with infernal deities, the old woman becomes mingled with the character of the witch flying on a broom and fornicating with the devil during Sabbath.

Cuckoldry has constituted a favorite theme in erotic texts since the Middle Age *fabliaux*, and an entire section of *Le Cabinet satyrique* is devoted to it. These poems bring out the wisdom and ethics of cuckoldry. Caused by women’s lewdness, cuckoldry is thus bound to happen again and again, generating a kind of vicious circle where cuckolds cheat others in order to get even. An epigram by François de Maynard reveals the paradox of jealousy: To keep too close an eye on one’s own wife induces her to break free and arouses envy among other men. The cuckold’s jealousy is considered as an erroneous opinion: instead of worrying without reason, he should resign himself to enduring his fate, as great warriors do. Moreover, cuckoldry allows the husband to avoid the exertion of coitus thus prolonging his life.

Another section is dedicated to the Carnival spirit and celebrates “les jours gras” (meat days). The Saint-Germain fair is shown as the scene of true miracles, for there hunchbacks and one-eyed persons are adulated and given a thousand words of love. The Carnival brings back the golden age: it is a time during which fights are but games and during which men and women get drunk and “mettent cul bas” (put the ass down) together. Playing upon the etymology of the word, Pierre Motin shows that the carnival is the moment during which one enjoys flesh, be it banquet’s meat or lovers’ bodies.

DAVID DORAIS

**Editions**

*Le cabinet satyrique ou recueil parfait des vers piquans et gaillards de ce temps. Tiré des secrets cabinets des sieurs Sigognes, Regnier, Motin, Berthelot, Maynard, et autres des plus signalez poètes de ce siecle.* À Paris, chez Anthoine Estoc, au Palais en la galerie des Prisons pres la Chancellerie. M.D.C.XVIII (1618). Avec privilege du Roy. In-12.

*Le cabinet satyrique* enjoyed eleven other editions during the seventeenth century, from 1619 to 1700, mostly in Paris and Rouen.

*Le cabinet satyrique [etc.]. Nouvelle édition complète, revue et corrigée. Avec glossaire, variantes, notices bibliographiques, etc.* Gand: Duquesne, Paris: Claudin, 1859.

*Le cabinet satyrique [etc.]. Nouvelle édition complète, revue sur les éditions de 1618 et de 1620 et sur celle dite du Mont-Parnasse, sans date.* Bruxelles: Poulet-Malassis, 1864. The two latter editions were condemned to destruction by two French tribunals in 1865 and 1868.

*Le cabinet satyrique. Première édition complète et critique d'après l'édition originale de 1618, augmentée des éditions suivantes, avec une notice, une bibliographie, un glossaire, des variantes et des notes par Fernand Fleuret et Louis Perceau. Texte orné de plusieurs reproductions.* Paris: Librairie du bon vieux temps, Jean Fort, Collection des satiriques français, 1924.

*Le cabinet satyrique. Illustrations de Pierre Leroy, gravées sur bois par Roger Boyer.* Paris: Guillot, Collection du XVIIe siècle galant, 1952.

**Further Reading**

*Few serious works have been written about French erotic poetry of the seventeenth century. The best reference is still the voluminous work of Frédéric Lachèvre.*

Lachèvre, Frédéric, *Le libertinage au XVIIe siècle*, Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1968 (Paris, 1909–1928), 15 vol.

*The following two works deal directly with the subject but are of little interest.*

Bougard, Roger G., *Érotisme et amour physique dans la littérature française du XVIIe siècle*, Paris: Gaston Lachurié, 1986.

Loude, Michel, *La littérature érotique et libertine au XVIIe siècle*, Lyon: Aléas, 1994.

These two articles are valuable for the background information they provide:

Houdard, Sophie, “*Vie de scandale et écriture de l’obscène: hypothèses sur le libertinage de mœurs au XVIIe siècle*,” *Tangence*, 66 (2001): p.48–66.

Simonin, Michel, “*Eros aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles*” in *Eros in Francia nel Seicento*, Bari: Adriatica, Paris: Nizet, 1987, p.11–29.

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## CABRERA INFANTE, GUILLERMO

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1929–2005

Cuban journalist and novelist

Guillermo Cabrera Infante was a key member of a group of Latin American activist intellectuals who brought about dramatic changes in Hispanic fiction by means of their radical innovations in narrative technique. Within this tradition of self-conscious intellectual outsiders, who write as if from exile but with a vivid flavor of their homeland, must be counted Pablo Neruda, Carlos Fuentes, Julio Cortázar, Octavio Paz, Gabriel García Márquez, and Mario Vargas Llosas.

*Tres Tristes Tigres* (1967, tr. *Three Trapped Tigers*, 1971) can hardly be considered a traditional novel; it lacks a plotline and there is no significant development of character or human

relationships. It is, however, an extremely coherent book with a highly coherent internal structure that describes a world full of racial discrimination, social hypocrisy, and depicts a lost generation of youths in the throes of sexual frustration. The five main narrators share similar language, emotional and sexual experiences set against the background of Havana nightlife in the late 1950s. From the very outset, the announcement made by the club compere, “*Tropicana, the most famous cabaret in the world*” (which is written both in Spanish and in a deliberately poor English translation), the book is structured in such a way that the reader may easily become lost in a literary labyrinth of vignettes. The odd numbers deal with the traumatic story of this unhappy woman while the even numbers recount the physical consequences of her



mental anguish, an anguish which has its origins in the traumas she underwent as an orphan (including abuse by her stepfather, a wretched childhood, marriage with a homosexual, and various other social and sexual dilemmas).

Probably the most autobiographical of his novels, *La Habana para un infante difunto* (1979, tr. *Infante's Inferno*, 1984), tells the story of a boy whose life changes dramatically when his parents moved to the Cuban capital, is brought up in a *solar* (a large residential house where entire families would squeeze into a single rented room with communal facilities), and exposed to a total lack of privacy. Readers are presented with an exquisite portrait of the main protagonist's journey of initiation as he is exposed to a sequence of comic adventures in his relentless search for love and happiness; ranging across the sexual, intellectual, and visual experiences that befall him as he familiarizes himself with the city that surrounds him: libraries, prostitutes, and, his greatest love of all, cinema.

Havana is, above all, a sensual city inviting erotic encounters. Once the anonymous youthful protagonist and his family have moved to the *solar*, the boy makes his first contact with a real prostitute, an adolescent girl living next door. As years go by our hero learns to exploit the lack of privacy of the *solar*, becoming an adept peeping tom. Neighbors provide him with plenty of platonic relationships. Relationships both erotic and chaste build among two of his favorite fellow-dwellers, a pair of sisters living upstairs, Esther, with whom he falls in love, and Fela, whom he desires and eventually manages to kiss.

Literature complements the visual experience providing a further source of pleasure. Disguised in the covers of "decent" books he begins to avidly consume erotic literature he borrows from friends. "Oral" sex, meaning reading aloud of "forbidden" romantic *folletines* (serial installments of novels), is a practice this adolescent also enjoys and exploits, mostly with his older female cousin.

Summer holidays suddenly bring a new meaning to his life as he spends some weeks in his hometown, led on by more experienced friends he starts exploring and eventually mastering the arts of masturbation. This will provide him with further difficulties once back in Havana as privacy is something not afforded in the *solar*.

A new road to pleasure is opened as our hero embarks upon the difficult task of losing his

virginity. Social and religious habits in Havana make it even more difficult for men of his age to have sex with high school girls. His first trip to a brothel is arranged although, nervous and too traumatized by peer-group pressure, he fails to perform successfully: he will have to wait until he meets Julia, a married woman his own age, before he loses his virginity and inaugurates a long list of lovers. Later, the cinema becomes a major source of casual relationships promoted by elbow and leg rubbing, the closeness of the seats, and the anonymity of the darkness. It is there that he first witnessed a homosexual relationship: an old man jerking off a younger man in the toilet.

Cabrera Infante's passion for the big screen is evident. *Arcadia todas las noches* (1978, untranslated) is a collection of essays on Alfred Hitchcock, Howard Hawks, Orson Welles, and Vincent Minelli among others. Other works include *Holy Smoke* (1985), *Mi música extenuada* (1996, untranslated); *Mea Cuba* (1992). *Delito por bailar el chachacha* (1995) and *Ella cantaba boleros* (1996) share elements common to all his works: a persistent sense of humor, a passion for painting, photography, and music, particularly jazz, and the bolero craze. Cuban folklore is thoroughly and colorfully depicted, reflecting the strong influence of African culture. Women are invariably portrayed as sexually precocious, and the ease of erotic experience and sexual encounters with strangers in the lively nightlife of the capital city characterize the *laissez faire* sexual climate of the period.

### Biography

Cabrera Infante was born in Gibara, Cuba, 1929. In 1947, he worked in Havana as a proof-reader and edged his way into journalism by penning a few articles. He attended Journalism School (1950) but was expelled in 1952 after being fined and imprisoned for publishing the short story *English Profanities* which fell foul of Fulgencio Batista (head of the Cuban military regime) when published in the literary journal *Bohemia*.

Between 1950 and 1960, Cabrera Infante became an important member of the Cuban cultural elite; he wrote a weekly column for the magazine *Carteles* under the pseudonym G. Cain, many of which were later collected in

*Un oficio del siglo XX* (1973; tr. *A Twentieth Century Job*, 1991). Imitating Cinematèque Française, he founded Cinemateca Cuba while contributing to the Cuban Cinema Institute (closed in 1961 by the government) and the Writers' Association. He later edited *Lunes*, the literary supplement of the official Cuban newspaper *Revolución*.

In 1960, *Así en La Paz como en la guerra* (tr. *Writes of Passage*, 1993), a collection of short stories set in the 1950s (broadly speaking, the historical period in which Batista ruled the country), was published in France, Italy, and Poland, receiving the Prix International de Littérature in 1963.

In 1964, after Castro assumed power, he was sent to Belgium on a diplomatic mission. Subsequently he would never return to Cuba again, living first in Spain, and later, in London, where he resided until his death.

*Vista del amanecer en el trópico* (1974, tr. *View of Dawn in the Tropics*, 1978) won the Biblioteca Breve prize and in 1967, a second version, rewritten to circumvent Spanish censorship laws, was published under the title *Tres tristes tigres* (tr. *Three Trapped Tigers*, 1971) which further consolidated his international reputation.

CAROLINA MIRANDA

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## CALAFERTE, LOUIS

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1928–1994

French novelist, playwright, essayist, diarist and poet

Once described as a “Pasolinian character,” Calaferte has often said that the usual interpretations of his multi-faceted work were biased by a profound misunderstanding. Indeed, not only is he the author of *Septentrion*, often described as a brilliant and powerful erotic novel, but also

of twenty-odd respectable plays, autobiographic notebooks of reflections about his compulsive reading habits and his unwavering, unmediated faith in God, and even nursery rhymes. Yet behind this apparent heterogeneity, constantly driven by a throbbing sense of urgency, hides a unifying element. Indeed, Calaferte’s writings are all haunted by the will to achieve an exhaustive self-portrait.

Even before *Requiem des innocents*, an account of his difficult early years, he felt the need to translate his experience into violent, uncensored verbal surges. He believed this sincerity to be the only way to attain literary truth, or accomplish a “vertical exploration,” even a “drilling” of the self. Repeatedly declaring every novelist’s fictional invention to be an imposture, he also claimed that all that he ever wrote was part of his life experience. Perhaps this is why the equation he often makes between eroticism, faith, and purity makes his voice so unique, especially in *Septentrion* and *La mécanique des femmes*.

During the exhausting, yet therapeutic final stages of writing *Septentrion* (1956–1962), Calaferte already thought of it as a “nodal point” in his life. First published in an out-trade edition (1963), the novel was immediately banned for obscenity by Gaullist censors, only to reappear in 1984. Although Calaferte always maintained that this interdiction was mainly aimed at the novel’s feverish anarchical content, one cannot deny its gloomy, yet poignant atmosphere, filled with lurid eroticism and recurring pornographic episodes.

“In the beginning was Sex.” By parodying the gospel according to John and quoting, undoubtedly by accident, Stanisław Przybyszewski’s *Totenmesse* (1893), *Septentrion*’s incipit sets the entire novel’s tone. One is immediately grabbed by the narrator’s breathtaking stream-of-consciousness, a luxuriant combination of highly poetic lyricism and argotic imprecations against everyday conditions at the factory, as well as by the omnipresent erotic reveries and the unshakable will of writing a deflagrating book out of his misery. Along with the anonymous, often imaginary sex partners whom the narrator describes either as “tarts” or “whores” in the contempt-ridden inner monologues in which he engages every time he sees a skirt, he meets Nora Van Hoeck, a lascivious Dutch divorcée twice his age, and becomes her “sex object” out of pique. The first half of the novel narrates this year-long desperate, destructive relationship, whose only raison d’être is the humiliating stability brought by Nora’s material comfort, which he ironically despises, and her insatiable, almost ghoulish sex drives. After unceremoniously dumping her and ungratefully stealing her money, he falls into even deeper poverty. Homeless, he realizes he has no real friend whom he could ask for help and,

starving, he indulges in delirious erotic day-dreaming.

Still, since *Septentrion* was intended to embrace the contradictory extremities of the self, darkness accordingly intermingles with beauty, hope, and the pure light of mysticism. For example, the title refers either to the seventh heaven, or to the seven stars of Ursa Major (aka the Plough, *septen triones* meaning ‘seven oxen’). Moreover, not only is this brightness echoed by the novel’s seven chapters, but also in its three parts, symbolically entitled “Genesis,” “Omphalos,” (‘navel of the world’), and “Gamma” (Ursa Major’s third star, but also the Greek letter  $\gamma$ , whose shape recalls the *mons veneris*). But most important, the miracle the narrator long hoped for occurs in the end, when a family he hardly knows takes him in, thus participating in his entry into creative writing: “Depths and summits, sex is death and resurrection. So saying, goodnight, I’ve said enough—*ite missa est*.”

As for *La mécanique des femmes* (*The Way it Works With Women*), conceived of as the “metaphysical” pendant of *Épisodes de la vie des mantes religieuses*, it is a collage of short tableaux, daily dramas, brief dialogues, and confessions of both female fantasies and disappointments. Almost each of them is constructed upon the brutal opposition between the banality of everyday situations and unexpected, yet relentless sex drives. Although these episodes are written from the perspective of either ordinary women or prostitutes, their narratee is always a man. Answering critics who accused him of simply projecting male fantasies of continuous sexual availability onto imaginary women, instead of really analyzing the ‘female mechanics,’ Calaferte again claimed there was no invention in the book, that is, nothing but the account of lived or recounted experiences. Moreover, since he thinks that all churches must accept responsibility for making a moral problem out of sex, he firmly believes that one never knows the other’s secrets better as in eroticism. Perhaps this is why *La mécanique des femmes* insists, be it from a pseudo feminine perspective, on the motif of sex as an initiatory journey towards a “spiritual co-birth” of the self, or a mystical rite of passage. In fact, one of the book’s *leitmotifs* could be summarized as follows: One must not deny, lower, nor soil beauty, but instead accept it with all its mysteries, like the idea of God.

“The inner adventure was surely worth exploring, but I don’t have enough energy to go further,” wrote Calaferte a few years after finishing *Septentrion*. However, one must acknowledge he never stopped questioning his understanding of desire.

### Biography

Born in Turin, Italy, 14 July 1928. His family emigrated to France in the early 1930s, where he grew up in Lyons’ poorest suburbs. Right after elementary school, during the German Occupation (1942), he began working as a warehouseman (in an electric battery factory, among others), spurred on by the sole obsession of becoming a writer. In 1946, dreaming of a career as a stage actor, he moved to Paris without the slightest resource. While doing some walk-on parts in theaters, he subsisted as a docker or by washing dishes. In 1953, after publishing two novels, he moved back to Lyons, settling in the nearby town of Mornant (1956–1969), and producing literary radio programs for the O.R.T.F. (1957–1974). Then, dedicating himself exclusively to writing, he created a gigantic oeuvre in various genres, receiving several prestigious awards: Prix Ibsen (1978), Prix de l’Académie française (1983), Grand Prix national des Lettres (1992), and Chevalier de l’ordre national du mérite (1993). Author of over a hundred titles, many published posthumously, he also illustrated some 5,000 graphic works. After a lifelong fight against illnesses, he died in Dijon on May 2, 1994.

SÉBASTIEN CÔTÉ

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*No man’s land*. 1963  
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*Le chemin de Sion. Carnets 1956–1967*. 1980  
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*L’aventure intérieure. Entretiens avec Jean-Pierre Pauty*, Paris: Éditions Julliard, 1994; as *The Inner Adventure: Conversations with Louis Calaferte*. Translated by Willard Wood, 2003  
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## CALDWELL, ERSKINE

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1903–1987

American novelist

Erskine Caldwell's first novels, *The Bastard* (1929) and *Poor Fool* (1930) were followed by a short story collection, *American Earth* (1931), which—although unpublished—he himself considered his first book. These stories lay the foundation for Caldwell's later recognizable style, namely a grimly deterministic perspective on human life in which the manipulation of power between men and women, whites and African-Americans, rich and poor disposed him towards a gothic preponderance for depictions of graphic violence and startlingly grotesque imagery.

Nevertheless, Caldwell did not receive any measure of success until the publication of *Tobacco Road* (1932) and *God's Little Acre* (1933). Both books were set amongst poor whites and featured a great deal of grotesque sexual behavior. In particular, the incestuous activities of the protagonists, which Caldwell presented as near inherent in the family pattern of the sharecroppers, upset southerners and northerners alike, and culminated in a highly publicized obscenity trial in the wake of the publication of *God's Little Acre*. The publicity ensured the books status as a bestseller and the continued run of a theatrical adaptation of *Tobacco Road*, which ran on Broadway for over seven years.

The sexual content of Caldwell's work, his insistence on the grotesque absurdity of the deprived characters, and the animalistic nature of their psychological make-up, has thus often overshadowed Caldwell's reputation as a pro-proletarian writer of the period. In fact, Caldwell's perspective on sharecropping became sharpened as his political sympathies moved leftward during the Depression years. In both *God's Little Acre* and *Tobacco Road*, set in the brutalized countryside of the South, the characters remain oblivious to any notions of Southern gentility or nobility. Instead, Caldwell poignantly prefers to focus on the moral and physical destitution of a people described in starkly

realist terms. In 1935, Caldwell published a collection of proletarian stories, *Kneel to the Rising Sun*, before moving on to a style of writing that leaned itself more to his alleged objectivist style, namely documentary writing.

*Some American People* (1935) records Caldwell's journey through a Depression-torn America as does his later collaborations with the photographer Margaret Bourke White whom he married in 1939. As a couple they produced *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937) on the plight of Southern sharecroppers, *North of the Danube* (1939) on Czechoslovakia, *Say, is this the USA?* (1941), and *Russia at War* (1942). Despite a tumultuous relationship and subsequent divorce in 1942, their collaborative efforts represent a unique combination of documentarist photography and Caldwell's quirky fictionalized accounts of the vernacular speech patterns of the people portrayed. In *You Have Seen Their Faces*, Caldwell dismisses any form of passive objectivity, instead choosing to polemically foreground the pathos of the sharecropper's plight.

Caldwell continued to write prolifically during the 40s. The subsequent decline in his critical status was abetted by a continued interest in the more lurid and commercial sale of paperback editions of *Tobacco Road* and *God's Little Acre*. These editions were more often than not published with paperback covers portraying an array of women with suggestively torn clothing and leering men in the background. After successive marriages Caldwell attempted to break away from this cycle by focusing on female protagonists. His 1950s novels: *Gretta* (1950), *Gulf Coast Stories* (1956), and *Certain Women* (1957) nevertheless all deal in various ways with the sexual behavior of unfulfilled women. Caldwell's reputation as one of America's most censored authors aided in the publication of these books at a time when Caldwell, in America, was considered a rather formulaic writer banking on earlier successes. As Caldwell moved on from his interest in the sexual behavior of women he began to deal more concertedly with issues of

race and class in later work from the 1960s and 1970s: *Jenny by Nature* (1961) and *Close to Home* (1962) amongst others.

In total, Caldwell published well over 50 books of short stories, novels, and non-fiction but his work from the 1930s still stands as the foundation for his reputation as a writer engaged with the political and sexual spirit of his age. Despite the potential for his Southern fiction to be read as predominantly crass and sexually titillating, Caldwell's sociological sense and political sincerity combined to make him a crucial literary figure of his times.

### Biography

The son of Ira Sylvester Caldwell, a minister, and Caroline Bell, a teacher, Caldwell was brought up in the deep South amidst the people and locations that would later inform his fiction and documentary writing. Caldwell's interest in the social, sexual, and race relationships of the South stems partly from his upbringing as a minister's son, as well as from his fascination with the oral storytelling traditions of his home region. Caldwell went to Erskine College in South Carolina and later the University of Virginia and Pennsylvania from 1920–1925. After graduating he worked as a newspaper reporter for the *Atlanta Journal* and as a book reviewer for the *Journal*, the *Houston Post*, and the *Observer* during which time he also

submitted scores of short stories, which were not published. In 1925, he married Helen Lannigan with whom he had two sons and one daughter. In 1984, he was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. He remained prolific until his death in 1987.

CAROLINE BLINDER

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*God's Little Acre*. 1933  
*Journeyman*. 1935  
*You Have Seen Their Faces*. 1937  
*Georgia Boy*. 1943  
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## CALIFIA, PAT

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1954–  
 American writer and poet

### *Macho Sluts*

*Macho Sluts* is the most widely known of Pat Califia's works. The book is a loose collection of eight erotic stories, with an introduction and a final chapter on safe sex in the time of AIDS. Published in 1988 by Alyson Press, with one of

the stories having first appeared in *Advocate*, the book formed part of the range of lesbian erotica published in the late 1980s and early 1990s that challenged both Adrienne Rich's negation of variant lesbian sexuality within her concept of the 'lesbian continuum' which embraces all relationships between women, and Andrea Dworkin's anti-pornography claim that 'intercourse has nothing to do with lesbians or lesbian sexuality' (*Pornography: Men Possessing Women*, 1981).

*Macho Sluts* goes further than simply asserting the reality and validity of lesbian sexual desire in its detailed representation of a series of sado-masochistic scenarios within the leatherdyke community. Unapologetic and affirming in its tone, the book argues for an acknowledgment that passionate violence should not be seen in negative terms if it is the consensual choice of both/all partners.

The "Introduction" argues that sexual minorities have the right to pleasure themselves, and that for her the 'prospect of a human body being rendered helpless, put under slowly increasing stress, so that the maximum amount of sensation can run through skin, nerves, and muscles' is an erotic celebration of the body's stamina and grace. Stories such as *Jessie*, *Finishing School*, *The Calyx of Isis*, and *The Vampire* illustrate the sexual stimulation that comes from experiencing or receiving pain. The viewpoint of the stories keep switching so that the reader is implicated in both the sadist's and the masochist's roles and shares the pleasure of each. This serves to highlight the level of role-play and fantasy involved in the scenarios and to complicate the apparent power structures and symbolic frameworks of sexuality, since it is the "bottom" who controls the intensity of the transaction, in granting her consent, rather than the "top." This is even further complicated in *The Spoiler* where the master is a masochist who has made himself into a replica of his own desires.

Set in San Francisco dyke bathhouses, loft parties, and s/m gay bars, the stories celebrate a range of West Coast leatherdyke communities, as well as narrowing down onto the sexual couple or, in *The Calyx of Isis*, a whole group of dominatrices invited to play with one bottom. The stories argue for the presence and the visibility of a whole community of women choosing the pleasures of s/m, with their own etiquette and rituals, and their self-supporting structures.

A few of the stories are deliberately provocative, challenging social moralizers to rethink their positions. *The Hustler*, aimed at the anti-porn feminists, posits a world where the women's revolution has succeeded and s/m has been made illegal because it runs counter to a simplistic view of liberation and equal opportunities. The narrator finds herself hounded just as much by the censorious feminists as under contemporary society. *The Spoiler* is more surprising for the lesbian audience, since it is a

narrative about gay s/m men. But as Califia argues, fantasy should be uncensored, and why shouldn't lesbians be free to fantasize about men? *The Surprise Party* has a lesbian apparently abducted by a group of policemen and subjected to a ritual of humiliation, beatings, and rape, an ostensible punishment for being a leatherdyke that, in the end, turns out to be a birthday present of her most intimate fantasy played out by gay friends. The level of role-play in fantasy, the levels of choice in the symbolic framework of gender and sexuality, the level of disciplined transformation necessary to play out the scenarios of s/m, all problematize the simple assumptions of the uninitiated reader and argue for a more informed tolerance of sexual radicals.

Most of Califia's work, fiction and non-fiction, has challenged social stigmatization of lesbian sado-masochism, and has sought to claim a space for them within feminist debates. From *Sapphisty*, her first book in 1980, through to *Sensuous Magic* in 1998, including her advice column for *Advocate*, collected into the *Advocate Adviser* in 1991, Califia has written explanations, suggestions, and advice for sexual radicals, focusing on broadening their enjoyment within a climate of safe sex. She is passionate in challenging social strictures. *Sex Changes* continues her support of sexual minorities in its support of transsexuals.

Alongside this non-fiction runs a strand of fictional writing, such as *Macho Sluts* and *Melting Point* where she uses the erotic tale or short story format to engage and arouse the reader. "My intention...was to use arousal as a gateway into the reader's heart and mind, a passage through which some new ideas or associations might enter...to use sexual energy to change the way people view themselves, their partners, and the world around them" (*Melting Point*, 1993). Although most known as a short story writer, Califia has also published one novel, *Doc and Fluff* (1990) and one book of poetry, *Diesel Fuel: Passionate Poetry* (1997), both on the same topic; the experiences of lesbian leatherwomen. *Doc and Fluff: The Dystopian Tale of a Girl and her Bike* is a science fiction novel where the villain is executed by a prophet of the Goddess as punishment for his series of rapes and murders, thereby contrasting his oppressive use of violence to the very different consensual and mutually erotic play of the lesbian s/m couple.

As Lisa Sigel argues, “Califia promotes lust in all its forms and her work contributes to the growing theoretical complexity about sexuality, both in relation to queer studies and to the pornography debates.”

### Biography

Born in Little Rock, Arizona, March 8, 1954. Attended the University of Utah where, at 17 she came out as a lesbian and changed her surname to that of a legendary Amazon queen. BA, San Francisco University, 1977. In 1978, she co-founded Samois (lesbian sado-masochist activists, see *Coming to Power*, 1981) and in 1979 began her advice column for the gay magazine, *Advocate*, becoming editor in 1990. Califia’s essays and fiction focus on frank accounts of lesbian s/m desires. Her graphic accounts and her celebration of domination have led to her being a central figure in the anti-censorship debates.

MERJA MAKINEN

### Editions

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See also **Feminism; Lesbian literature; Sado-Masochism**

## CALVINO, ITALO

1923–1985

Italian fiction writer and essayist

### *Gli Amori Difficili*

*Gli Amori Difficili* [*Difficult Loves*], a collection of thirteen short stories, or “adventures,” written between 1949 and 1967, is representative of Calvino’s approach to the erotic: it is not just a

fact of life like any other; it occupies a special place in human existence and, consequently, in literature. Eros is unutterable, suggests Calvino in his essay “Definitions of Territories: Eroticism” [The Uses of Literature]. That is why “even writers whose erotic imagination aspires to pass all bounds often use a language that starts off with the utmost clarity and then passes into a mysterious obscurity precisely at the



moments of greatest tension, as if its end result could never be anything but inexpressible.” Calvino, however, seems to have found his own way of expressing the inexpressible. As he acknowledges the intrinsic subjectivity of erotic experience, he describes it only from the point of view of one of the two involved characters. His protagonists are in love with their own erotic perceptions, which makes them appear narcissistic. Also, most of them become—for the first time—intensely aware of their own eros—the initiation, however different in each case, is always mesmerizing.

The narration of the earliest story “L’avventura di un soldato” [The Adventure of a Soldier] is so subjective that it is impossible to tell whether this is a sexual fantasy of a Private Tomagra stricken by desire for a corpulent widow with whom he happened to share a train compartment or the events are real and his advances are being silently appreciated. The soldier and the widow are asleep or pretend to be asleep. Tomagra’s hand is exploring the widow’s thigh; the muscles of his calf are sending impulses to her leg. Just one sense, touch, is involved in this game, and just one player, the soldier. The reader learns in detail what Tomagra’s hand feels, but nothing beyond that. The ending of the story is ambivalent—maybe they make love, maybe not. The widow’s silence remains impenetrable; it delineates the inexpressible dimension of the erotic. “L’avventura di un soldato” can be read as the invariant of all the other stories in the collection.

The traveler’s adventure in “L’avventura di un viaggiatore” presents the night train as a vehicle of desire, and the traveling as a ritualized advance to the erotic object. In “L’avventura di una bagnante” [The Adventure of a Bather] Isolta, a respectable housewife, has lost her bathing suit while swimming far from the beach. The happy discovery of her own erotic relationship with water is replaced by a feeling of shame and helplessness. She spends the whole day in the sea until two men snorkeling around realize what the problem is and bring her a dress. The fact that the men have seen her naked makes Isolta feel pleasure—it has all happened under the water and through the water. At the same time the very idea of showing up naked outside the water is unbearable. Like Private Tomagra, she is daring only as long as blind touch is involved.

Sight, the principal sense of erotic attraction, is decisive in three of the “difficult loves.” The

nearsighted man of “L’avventura di un miope,” unaware of his eye problem, believes that he has lost his savor of life because he has stopped noticing beautiful women in the street. The photographer of “L’avventura di un fotografo” becomes obsessed with making the camera see the world in the same erotic way he does. The poet of “L’avventura di un poeta,” who has witnessed his lover’s enchanting dance in the water in a sea grotto, for a short time believes that he would be able to turn this magical vision into poetry. But words come to his mind, “thick, woven one into another (...) until little by little they could no longer be distinguished; it was a tangle from which even the tiniest white spaces were vanishing and only the black remained, the most total black, impenetrable, desperate as a scream.” The clerk in “L’avventura di un impiegato” has spent the night with an otherwise unapproachable beautiful lady. However, the impossibility to talk about his adventure makes him feel a painful tension, no different from the unfulfilled longing. Hence the potentiality of eros seems to be preferable to the speechlessness of the fulfilled desire. In “L’avventura di una moglie” [The Adventure of a Wife] recently married Stefania R. has spent the night with a young man, but has not slept with him. While remaining faithful to her husband, she has experienced the possibility of being unfaithful. This ambivalent situation gives her erotic pleasure and confidence as she replays it with other men in the neighborhood café.

“L’avventura di due sposi” [The Adventure of the Married Couple] is the only story in the collection which shows eros from the points of view of both characters. The man works during the night, the woman, during the day. They barely see each other, but it is precisely the absence of the other that makes their desires manifest. This story and “L’avventura di un lettore” [The Adventure of a Reader] introduce a conspicuous ironic note in Calvino’s *Gli Amori Difficili*. Amedeo Oliva, the Reader, is divided between Proust’s erotic narrative that he is devouring on a secluded beach, and an appealing woman whom he has just met there. After they make love, Amadeo is possessed again by his lust for reading. The eros of literature, unlike sexual desire, is insatiable.

In some of his later fictions Calvino tests another possibility of speaking about the inexpressible eros: going beyond the anthropomorphic

boundaries. His narrators are simultaneously participants in a meta-erotic relationship with the worlds they describe and voyeurs of the erotic life of those worlds. Fantasies about the love affairs of the mollusks or unicellular organisms in *Le cosmicomiche* [*Cosmicomics*] or, for example, of the tortoises in *Palomar* [*Mr. Palomar*], as well as Marco Polo's poetic tales about fantastic cities of female names in *Le città invisibili* [*Invisible Cities*], demonstrate the erotic nature of human curiosity and imagination. *Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore* [*If on a Winter's Night a Traveler*], in turn, equates eros with reading.

### Biography

Born October 15, 1923 in Santiago de las Vegas, Cuba; family moved to San Remo, Italy, 1925. Studied at the University of Turin, 1941–1947; degree in letters. Called to the draft by Mussolini's government, but went into hiding, 1943. Joined the Communist Resistance, 1944. Wrote for *L'Unità* [*Unity*], *La Nostra Lotta* [*Our Struggle*], *Il Garibaldino*, *Voce della Democrazia* [*Voice of Democracy*], *Contemporaneo*, *Città Aperta* [*Open City*], and *La Repubblica*, from 1945. Staff member, Einaudi publishers, Torino, 1948–1984. Married Esther Judith Singer, 1964; one daughter. Moved to Paris, 1967, and to Rome, 1980. Awards: *L'Unità* Prize, 1945; Viareggio Prize, 1957; Bagutta Prize, 1959; Veillion Prize, 1963; Feltrinelli Prize, 1972. Died of a cerebral hemorrhage in Siena, 19 September 1985.

KATIA MITOVA

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# CAO, XUEQIN

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1715–1764  
Chinese prose writer

### ***Dream of the Red Chamber [Hong Lou Meng] (also known as Shi Tou Ji or The Story of the Stone)***

Cao Xueqin's *Hong Lou Meng* is considered by many to be the best and most important work of fictional narrative ever written in China. First published in 1792, it circulated among family members and friends in various manuscript copies with commentary for something like fifty years. These copies eventually made their way to the marketplace, but growing numbers of readers were disappointed to find that the story broke off at Chapter 80. Gao E claimed to have found a fragmentary original ending and edited it to produce a complete 120-chapter version. Who actually authored the final forty chapters is a matter of great scholarly debate. Although no conclusive evidence has been found to support any particular claim, the vast majority of readers are familiar with the 120-chapter version.

There are so many matters of debate about this long novel (2,500 pages in English translation) that there are university departments, journals, and many monographs dedicated to *hongxue* or "redology"—comparable to Shakespeare studies in the West. To grasp the significance of the novel in China, according to Dore Levy, we would have to imagine a work with the popular appeal of Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind*, the critical acclaim of James Joyce's

*Ulysses*, and that is twice the length of both combined.

Among the debates of "red studies" is what *Hong Lou Meng* is about. It has been read as a *bildungsroman*, a *roman à clef*, a Buddhist-Daoist allegory of disenchantment and enlightenment, a novel of manners, and a romance, among others. One way to explain the story is to follow the fates of two characters. The main character, Jia Baoyu, is the youngest and sole heir to the once vast Jia family wealth. Baoyu is surrounded by girl cousins and maids and frequently derides men and champions the inherent superiority of women. The family elders want to choose a primary wife for Baoyu and are essentially torn between two choices. The story follows Baoyu's relations with these two female cousins who are diametrically opposed—the frail and ill, Lin Daiyu, and her more robust, outgoing counterpart, Xue Baochai. Both young women are beautiful, intelligent, and talented at composing verse.

We first meet Baoyu in a previous incarnation. The Goddess Nüwa was repairing the sky with stones, and she had one left over when her project was complete. This stone had magical properties. It could move, speak, and feel. The Stone sat alone for a long time at the bottom of "Greensickness peak," when it grows attached to a beautiful Crimson Pearl Flower. He feeds it with dew drops, which confer upon it life. The Stone is then taken down into the world by an eccentric Daoist priest and Buddhist monk and is reborn as Jia Baoyu with a perfect piece of jade in his mouth. The Crimson Pearl Flower is

reborn as Lin Daiyu who comes to live with the Jias after the death of her mother. There, she is fated to repay the stone for each drop of dew with a debt of tears.

Another major plot arch concerns the activities of Wang Xifeng, one of the daughters-in-law of the family Jia. Her involvement in the family finances and management gradually becomes one of control, and she oversees the moral and economic downfall of the once illustrious family. The contrast of Xifeng, the masculine woman who tends to the practical needs of the family and deals with the machinations of its members with Baoyu, the sensitive, feminine boy who lives his life primarily in the family garden with his girl cousins, writing poems and indulging their whims, exemplifies themes of crossing gender roles and crossing boundaries between pure, emotional interiority and the tainted, expressive worlds outside.

One of the major themes in *Hong Lou Meng* is the relation between appearance and reality. The world as it seems to be is “appearance” (*se*), and attachments are made to those appearances through “feeling” (*qing*). Appearances in *Hong Lou Meng* are seductive, and *se* also has the meaning of sex, or lust, and *qing* can also mean desire. In *Hong Lou Meng*, though, reality displayed in appearance is always empty, and attachment to it, *qing*, causes suffering. Thus, *Hong Lou Meng* in large part is about characters who (are fated to) suffer because of their desire, and the attainment or rejection of the truth that the only way to avoid suffering is to reject *se* by extinguishing *qing*.

*Hong Lou Meng* follows Jia Baoyu from his incarnation as a boy and the first arousal of his feelings, and first experiences with heterosexual and homosexual intercourse in the larger family mansions. He and his girl cousins then move into the family’s enormous “Garden of Total Vision,” built for the visit of the imperial concubine and complete with small houses enough for each of the girls and their personal maids. Baoyu is allowed to go live in the garden, as the only boy, where he regains his sexual innocence but begins to struggle with desire. The majority of his troubles and conflicts occur within the walls of the garden and those make up the majority of the novel from Chapter 18 to 99, when a wife is chosen for him. He then conceives a child, passes the civil service examinations, and then liberates

himself from feelings by abandoning the world. Wang Xifeng, who has a troubled marriage, is involved in a famous episode in which a distant “cousin” becomes infatuated with her as she intentionally frustrates his desires by making assignations with him and then causing calamities to befall him. He is so tortured by this behavior that he masturbates to death. In sum, the eros of *Hong Lou Meng*, lies primarily in the thwarting of desire and denial of its expression.

### Biography

Cao Xueqin, author of *Hong Lou Meng*, is considered China’s greatest novelist, although his only major work was not finished by him and little is known about his life. Cao was the grandson or grand-nephew of Cao Yin (1658–1712), who had a close relationship with the Kangxi Emperor. Cao Yin was appointed by the Emperor to the director of the Imperial Textile Factory in Nanjing in 1603 and because of his position, was extremely wealthy. After his death, the position was given to a couple of relatives, but because of mismanagement, was taken away by the Yongzheng Emperor in 1728. Many family positions and estates were confiscated and the remnants of the family moved to Beijing. Cao Xueqin was quite young at this time, and the downfall of the Jia family is often taken as a semi-autobiographical account of his own.

ANDREW SCHONEBAUM

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See also **Jin Ping Mei**; **Xiuta Yeshe**; **Zhulin Yeshe**

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## CAREW, THOMAS

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c. 1594–1640  
English poet

Thomas Carew's poetry forms part of that body of seventeenth-century verse generally termed "Cavalier Poetry." Like most other Cavalier poetry, the ideals Carew's verse expresses are those of the good life, often classical in nature and setting and providing the poet with a framework in which to explore issues of love and the erotic. Carew, like many other seventeenth-century poets, has a clear indebtedness to the Platonic ideas about love that were popular in the sixteenth century and to the more Petrarchan elements of Elizabethan love poetry. This means his poetry is concerned both with the erotic power of being scorned by a Petrarchan mistress and with the nature of sensuous erotic fulfillment.

As a poet in the Petrarchan line Carew is most at home when portraying the eroticized torments of unrequited love. In "The Spring," for example, the beauteous and bountiful nature of the summer is contrasted with the coldness displayed by his mistress: "all things keep / Time with the season, only she doth carry / June in her eyes, in her heart January." The trend of elaborately praising the mistress throughout the poem only for the scene to end in a final declaration of the speaker's tormented emotions is quite common in seventeenth-century verse, and Carew is one of the better poets writing in this style. Poems like "A Divine Mistress" exhibit Carew's dexterity within this form; the ability to frame the erotic within what is only hinted at, never directly alluded to. Like many others of this type, the poem does not deal at all with the specific details of the mistress (in fact the individual woman, if she existed at all, is irrelevant) but has as its sole purpose the speaker's reflection upon his own insatiable desire. Thus the woman is "divine" and without fault and these are both the factors that attract the speaker, but also leave him to conclude that her very divinity prevents the fulfillment of his lust: "She hath too much divinity for me / You Gods teach her some more

humility." This tormented eroticism reaches its climax in Carew's song "Murdering Beauty" where the mistress' attractions prove too much for the speaker: "If she behold me with a pleasing eye / I surfeit with excess of joy, and die."

Carew does occasionally venture into the realm of the specific, as in the poem "Celia bleeding, to the Surgeon" where the speaker addresses the doctor who has drawn blood from Celia (in the seventeenth century a standard poetic name for the mistress) and declares to him "Thou struck her arm, but 'twas my heart / Shed all the blood, felt all the smart." Throughout the poem, blood is eroticized, flowing as it does through Celia's "azure veins." More erotic still in its use of the sensual is the poem "Upon a Mole in Celia's bosom" with its story of a bee who tried to build an "amorous spicy nest" upon the mistress' breast only to be overcome by the joy found in sucking "the Aromatic dew" from the breasts themselves.

It is really in Carew's non-Petrarchan poems, however, that we find the truly erotic descriptions that are more commonly associated with seventeenth-century verse. "To A.L., Persuasions to Love" functions with a similar intent as Marvell's "To his Coy Mistress" except where Marvell would later write an elaborate argument, brimming over with hyperbole and rather sinister in its intimations of death and the grave, Carew devotes far more of his poem to a much simpler argument—to give me pleasure, states the speaker, is also to discover pleasure for yourself. In Carew's words: "'twere a madness not to grant / That which affords (if you consent) / To you the giver, more content / Than me the beggar; Oh then be / Kind to yourself if not to me." Part of the attraction of Carew's poetry undoubtedly lies in the sheer simplicity of his language and rhetorical style. In "Lips and Eyes" Carew imagines a debate between the lips and the eyes as to which are more beautiful, with the eyes claiming the title on the grounds that they "pierce the hardest adamant hearts," while the lips argue that from them "proceed those

blisses / Which lovers reap by kind words and sweet kisses.” This simplicity holds its own erotic appeal because it places desire and attraction with the physical world. The pleasures Carew describes are not of the metaphysical, spiritual, or emotional kind which often function to the detriment of physical sensations and physical satisfaction. The contrast between Carew’s sensual eroticism and the reflective eroticism found in the poetry of Donne is quite clear in Carew’s poem “The Rapture.”

“The Rapture” could be read as a mere development from a poem like “To A.L., persuasions to love” but the intensely eroticized and sensual portrait of the woman in “The Rapture” makes it much more than this. From the opening couplet, the speaker places himself in the position of aroused lover, desperate for physical fulfillment, by no means ignoring the woman herself—“I will enjoy thee now my Celia, come / And fly with me to Love’s Elysium.” Instead of allowing the poem to turn into a piece solely about the male speaker’s desire and pleasure, Carew makes the woman’s body and her desires a central concern, and draws a highly erotic (and highly metaphorical) portrait of her body. Standard seventeenth-century tropes such as comparisons of parts of the woman’s body with ivory or roses are present, but Carew’s descriptions have a freshness and intensity not always to be found in verse of this kind. The woman’s skin is “naked polished Ivory” and the speaker longs to penetrate the “rich Mine” of her “virgin-treasure.” The gentleness of the opening descriptive passages soon moves on to an expression of the speaker’s intense desires: “I’ll seize the Rose-buds in their perfum’d bed / ... taste the ripened Cherry, / The warm firm Apple, tipped with coral berry.” From this vision of “seizing” the speaker returns to the more lingering, caressing tone of the previous lines, narrating how he will “visit, with a wandering kiss, / The vale of Lilies, and the Bower of bliss.” The emphasis throughout the poem lies with the need to acknowledge there is no shame in physical love; that sex should be free of “the hated name / Of husband, wife, lust modest, chaste, or shame” between lovers. Interestingly, considering the difference between this poem and Carew’s other, more Petrarchan lyrics, it is in “A Rapture” that he cites the Italian poet: for, in the lovers’ paradise described by the speaker: “Laura lies / In Petrarch’s learned arms, drying

those eyes / That did in such sweet smooth-paced numbers flow / As made the world enamoured of his woe.” Even Petrarch is seen to finally attain satisfaction for his desires in the Elysium Carew imagines. However, in the final fifty lines of the poem, the hyperbole reaches such heights because of the speaker’s increasingly frustrated desire that it demystifies its ultimate purpose. “A Rapture” may contain more eroticized descriptions of the woman than some other seventeenth-century verse along similar lines, but the concluding message is the same. For all the speaker’s high-flown talk of love and the absurdity of feeling shame for consummating desire, it is the need to satiate his own lust that proves the principle aim.

### Biography

After a childhood in London, Carew matriculated from Merton College, Oxford in 1608, graduating B.A. in January of 1610 / 1611. Carew became secretary to the English ambassador to Venice in 1613, returning to England in 1615. Resuming his duties by accompanying the embassy to the Netherlands in 1616, Carew was dismissed as discretely as possible later that same year for “indiscretions” concerning the character of the ambassador. For the next two years Carew unsuccessfully sought employment, finally finding a position in 1619 accompanying Sir Edward Herbert’s embassy to Paris. In the early 1620s, Carew became associated with Ben Jonson and the “Tribe of Ben” and was frequently seen at court. His first poem was published in 1622 amongst the commendatory verses prefixed to Thomas May’s comedy *The Heir*. In 1630 he was appointed as a gentleman of the Privy Chamber (“Sewer in Ordinary to the King”), and his court masque, *Coelum Britannicum*, was performed in 1634. Carew also accompanied Charles I’s expedition to Scotland in 1639. Thomas Carew died in 1640 and was buried in St. Dunstan’s-in-the-West, Westminster on March 23 of that year. Poems appeared in 1640; a second edition was produced in 1642.

MARK LLEWELLYN

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CARTER, ANGELA

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## CARTER, ANGELA

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1940–1992

British novelist, short story writer and journalist

Angela Carter wrote nine novels, numerous short stories, articles, and radio plays. Her writing is complex, erudite, and provocative, and marked by a persistent interest in sexuality and feminism. She possessed a keen wit and humor, and her comedy often found expression through darker forms of the Gothic, as well as through parody and the stylistic excesses of mannerism. Her 1979 essay, *The Sadeian Woman and the Ideology of Pornography*, articulates her approach to erotic writing, and, alongside her readings of Bataille, usefully places much of Carter’s fictional work on sexuality. Carter works from a reading of Sade’s writing to propose the notion of a “moral pornographer,” one whose unflinching and honest attention to the materialist underpinnings of sexuality would unveil social inequalities and the mythologies of romance. For Carter, sexual relationships are the place where broader social and cultural relationships play out, and literature that directly approaches sex would be literature that illuminates gender relationships. The moral pornographer is in a unique position to serve as a “terrorist of the imagination,” by linking pornography, a typically abstracted form, to the realities of everyday life.

Carter’s fiction often unfolds in chaotic worlds that resemble Sade’s. Novels like *The Infernal Desire Machines of Dr. Hoffman* (1972)

and *Nights at the Circus* (1984) present picaresque tales of sexual adventures and depravities. In one scene in *Hoffman*, the main character, Desiderio, is subjected to serial rape while traveling with a carnival, enduring fierce but creative sodomy by the troupe known as the “Acrobats of Desire.” Carter’s interest in the possibilities and limitations of pornography are matched by her interest in the equally ambiguous uses of psychoanalytical theory. Her fiction explores alternatives to the Oedipal complex, as she engages and reworks Freud’s theories within the modes of fiction and fantasy.

Carter also works within the genre of Gothic fiction as one strategy for interrupting narratives of romance, a mythology she deems more dangerous for women than pornography. Her early novels, especially *Shadow Dance* (1996) and *Love* (1971, rev. ed. 1987) explored the passivity of the female victim through relationships marked by triangulations, sado-masochism, and violent struggle. In *Shadow Dance*, Carter details the ‘woman’s suffering body through the character of Ghislaine, who is scarred at the hands of the sadistic Honeybuzzard. In *Love*, Annabel is likewise victimized by her boyfriend Lee and his brother Buzz. Both of these novels demonstrate Carter’s intolerance for the victim prototype, and are unflinching in their refusal to romanticize or valorize female passivity.

Carter’s 1977 novel, *The Passion of New Eve*, further debunks fictions of femininity. In this dystopian novel, the sadistic Englishman Evelyn

journeys to an apocalyptic United States only to be captured by a radical woman's community where he is forcibly transformed from a man to a woman. Three of the main characters undergo sexual permutations: the narrator, Evelyn, is forcibly transformed through surgery into the pin-up girl Eve; the languorous masochist Leilah becomes the mythic warrior Lilith, while the glamorous actress-icon Tristessa, "Our Lady of Sorrows," is revealed to be a transvestite. Like her earlier novel, *Heroes and Villains* (1969), *The Passion of New Eve* unfolds in a post-apocalyptic future, a setting that allows Carter to explore human nature in the raw, separate from social niceties.

Carter's short stories continue her interest in demythologizing femininity, frequently accommodating this goal through her revisions of fairy and folk tales. "The Bloody Chamber," a version of the "Bluebeard" story, stands as one of Carter's best-known stories, and follows the misadventures of a young bride in the grasp of a ruthless voluptuary. Carter's interest in the werewolf motif finds expression through several short stories, as well as in her 1984 film collaboration with Neil Jordan, *The Company of Wolves*. Her later novels, like *Nights at the Circus* and *Wise Children*, demonstrate a shift away from the Gothic and an engagement with more readily recognizable comedic forms. But here as well, sexuality remains a focus. Her female protagonists in these last two novels actively claim their sexuality, as in the case of the octogenarian twins, the lively Chance sisters of *Wise Children*.

Carter's reputation as an erotic writer occurs through her feminism, specifically through her articulations of "moral pornography." Her fiction, while sexually explicit, retains a politically provocative edge. Eroticism in Carter is stripped of romance, and often brutally engaged with material realities. Her writing forestalls easy consumption, and instead invites thoughtful engagement with its comedic and sensual pleasures.

### Biography

Born in South London, England, May 7, 1940. Early education in Balham, South London. Worked as reporter in Croydon and Surrey, 1958–1962. Attended University of Bristol, 1962–1965 (B.A. 1965 with specialty in Medieval Literature). Married Paul Carter 1960. Divorced 1972. Lived in Japan 1969–1972. Visiting

professor of creative writing, Brown University, 1980–1981 (RI, USA), and Adelaide University, 1984 (South Australia). Contributor to *New Society*, *The Guardian*, and other journals. Taught creative writing, University of East Anglia, 1984–1987. Partner, Mark Pearce, from 1982. Son, Alexander, born 1983. Carter died February 16, 1992 of lung cancer.

LORENA RUSSELL

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See also **Feminism**



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# CASANOVA, GIACOMO GIROLAMO

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1725–1798

Venetian adventurer and autobiographer

## *History of My Life*

Though Casanova was the author of a novel, several satires, plays, and various historical, etymological, and mathematical studies; his fame rests entirely on his *History of My Life*, first published in 1822. This libertine memoir differs radically in conception from traditional autobiographies, which in the eighteenth century were generally reconstructions of the public career of a man of letters (Gibbon, Goldoni) or, after Rousseau, descriptions of the author's psychological or "moral" development. Casanova instead recounts a private history that many of his contemporaries would have regarded as frivolous, immoral, or criminal, explaining in his preface that he is writing to re-experience in memory the pleasures he can no longer enjoy directly in his old age. Despite his title, Casanova's project is an erotic rather than a historical one: to recuperate, through narration, the sensual charge of past experience.

This intention to relive the pleasures of the past rather than analyze them may explain the sprawling, seemingly disorganized proliferation of erotic memories in *History of My Life*. Unlike other libertine writers (such as Duclos, whom he admired), Casanova does not tell the story of a young man's sexual and social education. Only his earliest, innocent crushes are presented as learning experiences. Casanova respects the virginity of Bettina, his tutor's sister, and of Lucia, the daughter of the manager of an estate where he is a guest, with disastrous consequences: the former marries a man who abuses and abandons her, while the latter is seduced by a local rake, then runs away from home and becomes a prostitute. He concludes that it is misguided to respect a woman's honor. After this initial, rudimentary lesson, his love affairs teach him nothing; the narrator claims to have been the "dupe" of women until he was sixty.

Casanova's subsequent relationships are marked by another departure from the libertine novel, where the hero often treats women as a form of prey to be manipulated and dominated. Scenes of domination are rare in *History of My Life*, and their tone is almost always jocular. For example, when a prudish newlywed disapproves of his flirtatious banter, sex provides a comic comeuppance. Alone with Casanova in an open carriage during a thunderstorm, she is paralyzed by her fear of the lightning. He seizes the opportunity to raise her skirts, sit her on his lap, and "carry off the most complete victory that ever a skillful swordsman won" (*History of My Life* 1: 153). The prude's false sense of modesty prevents her from objecting—if she protests, the carriage driver will turn and see everything—and in the end, she allows Casanova to have his way, admitting that he has taught her a strange lesson.

More often, the autobiographer stages his love affairs in ways that call his mastery into question, and that sometimes challenge even the fundamental distinction between male and female. In 1745, Casanova meets Bellino, a young castrato soprano. Fascinated by the castrato's mixture of masculine and feminine, and convinced that he is a woman, Casanova tries repeatedly to convince him/her to strip, and is driven nearly mad by Bellino's refusal. Casanova at last glimpses Bellino's body, and sees what he takes to be a penis, but this only increases his agitation. When the castrato comes to his bed, the narrator describes their climax before finally telling us that Bellino is indeed a woman—what he had seen was a false penis, worn so that the young singer could pass as a castrato in the Papal State, where women were not permitted on stage. According to François Roustang, Casanova's obsession with the indeterminacy of Bellino's gender suggests a basic trait of his personality: a simultaneous fear of and fascination with the loss of gender differentiation. Far from expressing a confident sense of male mastery, the libertinism of *History of My Life* may be rooted in Casanova's fear of being like a woman.

Just as Casanova's sexual fears are expressed in gender switching and indeterminacy, so his social anxieties come to the surface in episodes that blur and confuse categories of class. In Cesena, Casanova encounters the French adventuress Henriette, who has been traveling in Italy, disguised as a man. As in the case of Bellino, it is Henriette's initial indeterminacy of gender that sparks Casanova's interest (Roustang 98). When Henriette appears in women's clothes, however, she is transformed into the perfect image of a noblewoman. Now Casanova is fascinated by the indeterminacy of her social status rather than her gender: as a penniless adventuress, Henriette is an outcast, beyond the margins of society, yet at the same time she is a scintillating conversationalist, perfectly at home in aristocratic company, whose exquisite manners and social graces show all the marks of superior breeding. Her fascinating ambiguity is increased by her refusal to tell anyone her story or even her true name—that is, to define herself by an explicit avowal of her social position. Their romantic idyll comes to an end when she is recognized by a family acquaintance in Parma. She returns to France, leaving a message for Casanova, written with a diamond on the windowpane of his room at the inn: "You will forget Henriette, too."

In the story of Henriette, the erotic and the social are connected by the author's intention to problematize categories of both gender and class. In other episodes, Casanova links the erotic and the social through acts of homosocial bonding, a process in which a woman functions as a token of exchange in the formation of a relationship between two men. This can be seen at its simplest in Casanova's trip to Constantinople in 1745. There he meets a prominent Turkish official named Ismail, and becomes the object of his homosexual advances, which he initially rejects. However, when the Turk asks Casanova to join him in spying on his harem as they bathe, he becomes so aroused by the spectacle that he allows Ismail to masturbate him—after which he considers it his social duty to do the same for his host, despite his professed lack of homosexual attraction. The women in this episode never see or speak to Casanova; they function only as a means by which a bond is established between an older, socially superior man, and a younger man who is his social inferior. The same pattern is repeated many times in

*History of My Life*, most strikingly in the relationship between Casanova, his intended bride C.C., the nun M.M., and the French ambassador to Venice. In 1753, Casanova falls in love with C.C., a merchant's daughter, and asks for her hand in marriage. Her father responds by sending her to a convent on the island of Murano. Casanova attends the convent church every Sunday so that C.C. can see him from behind the grating where she is cloistered. He also catches the eye of M.M., who sends him a note inviting him to an assignation. Casanova later learns that C.C. and M.M. have become lesbian lovers and that M.M. is also the lover of François de Bernis, the French ambassador to Venice, and that de Bernis was watching through a peephole as he made love to the nun. De Bernis is impressed with both Casanova's physical prowess and his culture, and the three are soon established in a *ménage à trois*. Casanova is delighted to share the society of this leading member of the French ruling class, and after some initial hesitation he decides that he is socially obligated to reciprocate by allowing the ambassador to sleep with C.C. The advantages of this homosocial bond are both practical (the French peer's patronage is essential to Casanova's success in Paris after his escape from prison) and psychological: the exchange of women allows the son of an actress to see himself as in some sense the equal of de Bernis, whom he calls "the king of men."

The formation of a bond with a socially superior man is so important to Casanova that he twice repeats this strategy at the level of pure fantasy, telling us that he discovered and cultivated two young women who go on to become mistresses of Louis XV. Casanova does not literally share either of them with the king, nor is the king ever aware of Casanova's role in providing them, but the autobiographer nonetheless takes great satisfaction in this imaginary link. Louis XV's attraction to the women the adventurer has "given" him is transposed, in Casanova's mind, to an unwitting expression of esteem for the "giver." The beautiful O'Morphi and Mademoiselle Roman thus act less as objects of Casanova's desire than as a relay for an imaginary exchange of desire between king and commoner.

In the libidinal economy of *History of My Life*, the autobiographer's happiness and social well-being are guaranteed by this constant

## CASANOVA, GIACOMO GIROLAMO

circulation of desire, either between men and women, between two women (Casanova is a spectator of numerous lesbian encounters), or between men, usually via homosocial bonding. Blocking this exchange leads to frustration, despair, and thoughts of death. This occurs during Casanova's trip to England, where he becomes obsessed with the courtesan Marianne Charpillon, who leads him on and bilks him of large sums of money. In Casanova's view, Charpillon is the epitome of the coquette, whose pleasure consists of stimulating desire while at the same time denying any trace of a corresponding desire in herself. For the first time in his life, Casanova is unable either to inspire passion in a woman or to reduce her to a sexual object: when he purchases Charpillon's favors for an evening, she positions herself in such a way that he cannot complete the act without forcibly raping her. Her impenetrable refusal of his desire reduces him to despair; he plans to commit suicide by throwing himself into the Thames, and is saved only by a chance meeting with a friend. Casanova regards his humiliation by Charpillon as the beginning of his life's decline, as if her refusal to keep his desire in circulation had irremediably weakened the foundations of his libertine system.

The remainder of *History of My Life* is in large part the story of a downward spiral of failure to find acceptable employment, of gambling losses, arrests, and expulsions from city after city. As unpleasant memories are increasingly mixed with the pleasant ones, it becomes more and more difficult for the aging Casanova to deny his precarious social position. The autobiographer compensates by again blurring the normal categories of sex and class in an episode of idyllic incest, articulated in two stages. In 1761, Casanova goes to Naples to visit his old acquaintance, the Duke of Matalona. Though the Duke is impotent, he preserves social appearances by keeping a mistress named Leonilda. Casanova falls in love with her, and they plan to marry, but just before the ceremony he is shocked to discover that she is his daughter by Donna Lucrezia, a middle-class lawyer's wife with whom he had had an affair seventeen years earlier. Casanova claims to be relieved that he had not slept with Leonilda before knowing her true identity, but he proceeds to commit what might be called incest at one remove: the three spend the night together, and Casanova

"quenches his fire" in Donna Lucrezia while gazing rapturously at their daughter, who in turn looks on enthralled. Desire again circulates and pleasure is shared in a parody of the bourgeois family that bends, but does not quite break, the incest taboo.

In the second, highly ambiguous part of his relationship with Leonilda, Casanova performs and at the same time disavows an act of subversion aimed at the familial structure of the aristocracy. In 1770, Casanova discovers that Leonilda is now the wife of the Marquis della C. . . , who married her in the hope of producing an heir, but whose age and infirmity make it difficult for him to carry out his conjugal duties. As a mason and a freethinker, the Marquis does not consider himself bound by the prejudices of society; according to Donna Lucrezia, he would have no objection if his heir were sired by another man. Like the Marquis, who apparently sees the prohibition against infidelity as a matter of social prejudice, Casanova views incest as socially taboo but perfectly normal in the state of nature: "She was my daughter, and nature, far from preventing me from having all the feelings of a lover toward her, forbade me to have only the inconsequential ones of father" (*History of My Life* 11: 307). This time, Casanova and Leonilda consummate the act—but they do so nearly unintentionally, without guilt or remorse, as the result of "an almost involuntary movement" that conveniently absolves them of responsibility.

Up to this point, Casanova has elaborated the episode within the terms of the broader eighteenth-century debate over nature and civilization. The continuation of the story focuses attention more narrowly on the aristocratic family. Revived by Casanova's engaging company, the Marquis declares his intention to "visit" his wife that evening, and Casanova wishes them "a fine boy to be delivered in nine months." Through Donna Lucrezia, the Marquis expresses gratitude to Casanova for the heir he is now sure he will have, but the autobiographer is deliberately ambiguous about the reason for the Marquis' thanks: is he grateful because he believes Casanova has sired his heir, as the narrator had previously hinted he would be? Or because he thinks Casanova has given him the strength to impregnate Leonilda himself? The question is not resolved, even when the narrator reports that the boy born nine months later resembled the Marquis.

Casanova's deliberate coyness about the parentage of Leonilda's child allows a double reading of this episode. If the baby's father is taken to be the Marquis, despite Casanova's hints to the contrary, then the autobiographer presents himself as the source of the elderly nobleman's new potency, symbolically superior to the flaccid aristocracy he has rejuvenated. But if the child is seen as Casanova's, despite the resemblance to the Marquis, then the autobiographer appears to go a step further, piercing the class barriers by which he had been excluded and leaving within them a son who, as a child of incest, is a highly overdetermined reproduction of himself: Casanova sired upon Casanova by Casanova.

The unruly proliferation of erotic memories in *History of My Life* is unified by an underlying philosophy of pleasure, perhaps loosely influenced by Condillac's popularization of the idea that human mental processes are based entirely on sensory perception. Casanova claims that he enjoys not only delicate sensations, but also "... high game on the very edge, and cheeses whose perfection is reached when the little creatures that inhabit them become visible. As for women, I have always found that the one I was in love with smelled good, and the more copious her sweat, the sweeter I found it" (*History of My Life* 1: 32). The wide range of his tastes, he insists, makes him capable of more pleasure than less open-minded men. Pleasure is just not a matter of solitary sensation, however; it must be given as well as taken. Casanova repeatedly underscores his ability to keep his sexual partners "swooning." His description of a seven-hour bout with M.M. is typical: "She was astonished to find herself capable of so much pleasure, for I had shown her many things which she thought were fictions. I did what she did not think she was entitled to ask me to do to her, and I taught her that the slightest constraint spoils the greatest pleasure" (*History of My Life* 4: 52). Nor is the sharing of pleasure limited to sex. In all social intercourse, pleasure given is the source of pleasure received, as Casanova suggests in a description of his dinner parties in Paris: "I matched well-chosen guests with exquisite suppers, at which my company saw that my pleasure depended on the pleasure I provided for them." (*History of My Life* 5: 230). It is precisely this joyous *exchange* of pleasure, both within the text and between text and reader, that distinguishes

Casanova's *History of My Life* from the work of libertine thinkers such as Sade, and that constitutes the source of its enduring popularity.

### Biography

Born in Venice, 2 April 1725, the son of an actor and an actress. Educated privately and at the University of Padua, 1734–1742. Unsuccessfully attempted a career in the Church, then in the military, 1743–1745. Unofficially adopted by Venetian senator Zuanne Bragadin, an enthusiast of the occult sciences, after Casanova convinced him that he possessed the secret of the *cabala*. Traveled in Italy and France, 1749–1753. Returned to Venice, joining a *ménage à trois* with the French ambassador and a nun. Imprisoned in 1755. Escaped in 1756, fled to Paris, participated in the foundation of the French state lottery and became wealthy. In 1757, met the Marquise d'Urfé, a student of alchemy and magic; swindled her repeatedly, claiming to have the power to regenerate her as a man. Invested in a silk-printing business; suspected of fraud in its bankruptcy and briefly imprisoned. Left France in 1759 to wander throughout Europe. Traveled to England in 1763; became obsessed with and was swindled by the courtesan Marianne Charpillon. Fled England to avoid prosecution for debt; sought employment at the royal courts of Prussia, Russia, and Poland, without success. Returned to Venice in 1774, but fled again in 1782, after a quarrel with a powerful nobleman. Accepted a position as librarian to Count Josef von Waldstein in 1785 and spent his last years at the Count's estate in Dux. Began his *History of My Life* circa 1790, telling the story of over a hundred love affairs; it remained unfinished at the time of his death on 4 June 1798.

TED EMERY

### Editions

On his deathbed, Casanova entrusted the unfinished manuscript of *History of My Life* to his sister's son-in-law, whose son sold it to the Brockhaus publishing firm in 1820. The first edition appeared in German translation from 1822 to 1828. The first version in the original French was published between 1826–1838, in an adaptation by Jean Laforgue, who altered Casanova's text significantly. All modern editions and translations were based on Laforgue until the publication of the Brockhaus-Plon edition of 1960–1962, which reproduced the text of the original manuscript. Of the French language

## CATALAN

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## CATALAN

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### The Middle Ages and the Baroque Period

The first examples of Catalan erotic literature are to be found in the Middle Ages, when the influence of the Occitan troubadours led several poets to imitate their style and themes. The best erotic poems are by Guillem de Berguedà (c. 1138–c. 1196) and Cerverí de Girona (XIII). In Cerverí's ironic 'Viadeyra,' for example, a woman is compelled by the poet to choose between her husband and her lover. In the fourteenth century, Bernat Metge (1340/1346–1413) adapted the second part of the poem *De vetula*, falsely attributed to Ovid, to Catalan prose. *Ovidi enamorat*, an ironic story about a poet who manages to be reunited with his lover twenty years after their first meeting, contains a detailed description of feminine beauty. Jaume Roig (?–1478) wrote the moralistic narration in verse, *Espill o el llibre de les dones* (1460), in order to

advise young male lovers. In his misogynous work, Roig regrets women's attractiveness, which according to the author is used to control men. The satirical and anonymous poem of the fifteenth century, *Col'loqui de les dames*, also merits consideration. In it a married woman, a widow, and a devout woman, all of them apparently respectable, chat in a shameless tone about their sexual adventures and experiences. The poetic work by Francesc de la Via (c. 1380–c. 1445) is characterized by the sense of humor and the joy of life, often described with great sensuality. The best example of erotic literature of this period, however, is the chivalry novel *Tirant lo Blanc* by Joanot Martorell (1413–1465). After the Middle Ages, Catalan literature suffered a period of decadence that affected the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, and brought with it the lack of highbrow literary tradition. Until the end of the nineteenth century, then, eroticism

could almost exclusively be found in the popular literature.

The Baroque period brought about a fusion of satire, eroticism, and scatology. The most representative author is the vicar Rector de Vallfogona, pseudonym of Francesc Vicent Garcia (1578/1579–1623). With poems like ‘En apreci de estar enamorat,’ extremely gross description of the physical appearance of a lady, he originated a school of authors called *vallfogonisme*. Albert Rossich published a selection of this kind of poetry, most of it anonymous, in *Poesia eròtica i pornogràfica catalana del segle XVII* (1989). The popular theater of the period also contains many sexual and scatological references; the most representative examples are the plays *Los amors de Melisendra* and *La infanta Tellina i el rei Matarot*, attributed to Francesc Mulet (1624–1675). Joaquim Martí edited some of these plays in *Col·loquis eròtico-burlescos del segle XVIII* (1996).

### **Eroticism and Scandal between 1850–1936**

In the nineteenth century there is a cultural re-birth, and from this period onwards, popular and highbrow literature coexist, but only the popular one will allow elements of eroticism. The most famous plays of the period is *El Virgo de Vicenteta* (1845), by Josep Bernat i Baldoví (1809–1864). Far from the idealized woman portrayed by the Romantic Catalan authors, Vicenteta is very explicit in relation to her sexual needs, which she considers unattended by her husband. The success of this play originated a string of analogous works that have a similar structure and topic, with a husband cheated on by his wife. Pitarra, pseudonym of Frederic Soler (1839–1895), wrote *Don Jaume* in 1875, a parody that mocks Catalan history by means of sexual and lewd references. Because of its controversial content it achieved great success and had many imitators, such as Antoni Bulbena i Tosell (1854–1946) reported in *La bibliografia eròtica i priàpica catalano-valenciana* (1920), the first essay devoted to erotic literature in Catalan. At the end of the nineteenth century, playwrights from Barcelona developed a kind of popular theater which lacked explicitness owing to censorship and based its effectiveness on provocative language that exploited double meanings and the slang of prostitution. These plays

were performed in a district of Barcelona called El Paral·lel, soon to be known all over Europe as a very tolerant and dissolute area. It attracted, for example, the interest of Jean Genet (1910–1986), who described this underworld in *Journal du voleur* (1949). Some of the best known playwrights were Amichatis, pseudonym of Josep Amich (1888–1965) and Josep Montero (1869–1942).

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the social conservatism brought rise to several controversies around novels that mixed religion and sexuality. The cultural movement called *Modernisme* integrated eroticism into its program, because it was considered a crucial feature of the human being. In these novels, landscape, religion, and symbolism were loaded with erotic content; sex was presented as a negative force, uncontrollable and destructive. The biggest controversy was created by Bertrana’s *Josafat* (1906), which tells the relationship of a prostitute with a bell ringer and takes place in the cathedral of Girona. Prudenci Bertrana (1867–1941) dealt with a similar topic in *Nàufrags* (1907), which narrates the frustrated love between a priest and his cousin. Another good example is *Solitud* (1905) by Víctor Català, pseudonym of Caterina Albert (1869–1966), with a female protagonist who is raped in the mountains.

During the 20s, the avant-garde movements and the development of the psychological novel lead to a new conception of sexuality. In relation to the avant-garde literature, *El poema de la rosa als llavis* (1923) by Joan Salvat Papasseit (1894–1924) features an uninhibited poet that guides a naïve young woman towards the erotic pleasures of life. This triumph of sensuality has been considered by critics the first and finest example of contemporary erotic poetry in Catalan. The Catalan psychological novel, with very few exceptions, is far from the explicitness of D.H. Lawrence. Carles Soldevila (1892–1967) explored the feminine psychology in *Fanny* (1929), *Eva* (1931), and *Valentina* (1933), which all take place in El Paral·lel. These novels were at the center of a heated controversy, since they depicted a new femininity through the portrayal of a rebellious woman that faces and frees herself from the social conventions of the bourgeois family. From a more humoristic point of view, in *Judita* (1930), Francesc Trabal (1898–1957) told the story of a passionate *amour fou* charged with sensuality. The biggest scandal, however,

## CATALAN

was provoked by Cèsar August Jordana (1893–1958) and his novel *Una altra mena d'amor* (1931). It narrates the relationship of a young man with a chorus girl of Paral·lel, from their initial desire to their final separation, and it reflects, in detail, the dissolute life of this district. This is also the topic of *Vida privada* (1932), a novel by Josep Maria de Sagarra (1894–1961) that portrays the decadence of Catalan aristocracy, corrupted by sex scandals, vices, and hypocrisy. The author depicts a cosmopolitan, two-sided Barcelona: during the day the characters live in the elegant district of l'Eixample; whereas by night they frequent the slum areas of the city.

### The Arrival of Democracy and the Rise of Erotic Literature

The strict Catholicism of the Francoist dictatorship (1939–1975) established a harsh moral censorship. Moreover, it also banned the use of Catalan. As a response to the censorship endured during 36 years, the intellectual Joan Fuster claimed in 1978 that it was urgent to save the erotic patrimony of Catalan culture. During the late 70s, democracy allowed not only a more explicit eroticism, but forms of sexuality that had never been represented so far. Democracy also brought about the desire to normalize Catalan culture in all its aspects, including eroticism and sexuality. The peak of this normalization, which included the anthology *Antologia de la poesia eròtica catalana del segle XX* (1978) by Josep M. Sala-Valldaura, arrived when the group of writers known as Ofèlia Dracs won the Spanish erotic literature prize, Sonrisa Vertical, with the book of short stories *Deu pometes té el pomer* (1980). Manuel de Pedrolo (1918–1990), a very prolific author that cultivated all genres, published the novel *Els quaderns d'en Marc* (1984) anonymously, even after the end of Francoism and the lifting of censorship. Its secret authorship converted this jovial novel about a man who devotes his life to find and seduce the most beautiful Catalan women is a milestone of the Catalan erotic genre. *Obres públiques*, his second erotic work, was published posthumously in 1991.

The poet Vicent Andrés Estellers (1924–1993) considered eroticism as one of the basic thrusts of life, and his poetry describes anonymous women that attracted the poet's desire. Sex is very present in all his work, with both a gentle

and a bad side. Eroticism also goes in varied forms through the novels by Miquel Àngel Riera (1930–1996), such as *Panorama amb dona* (1983) or *Els déus inaccessibles* (1987). They present a carnal and sensual description of life, often linked with Majorcan landscape. Gabriel Ferrater in *Les dones i els dies* (1968) and Miquel Martí i Pol (1929–2003) in *Estimada Marta* (1978) also explored heterosexual desire in his poetry.

As for the new kinds of eroticism, in 1958 Blai Bonet (1926–1997) published *El mar*, a novel with strong homoerotic content, and Manuel de Pedrolo wrote in 1959 *Un amor fora ciutat*; it could only be published in 1970 and the author was prosecuted for public scandal. However, it was the end of the dictatorship that brought an important corpus of works with lesbian and gay eroticism. In relation to prose, the following authors must be mentioned: Carme Riera (1948–) with *Te deix, amor, el mar com a penyora* (1975), Biel Mesquida (1947–) with *L'adolescent de sal*, banned for two years and finally published in 1978, and Lluís Fernández (1945–) with *L'anarquista nu* (1978) opened new homoerotic grounds. The most prolific and controversial author was Terenci Moix (1943–2003), who wrote a number of novels and short stories with gay content, such as *La torre dels vicis capitals* (1968), *Món mascle* (1971), *La caiguda de l'imperi sodomita* (1976), *Lilí Barcelona i altres travestis* (1978), and *El dia que va morir Marilyn* (1978). The combination of Catalan identity, popular culture, and homosexuality was revulsive to the literary scene at the time. Blai Bonet (*El jove*, 1978), Biel Mesquida (*El bell país on els homes estimen els homes*, 1974), and Maria Mercè Marçal (*La germana, l'estrangera*, 1985) tackled same-sex relationships in poetry. After the explosion of the 70s, during the 80s, literature about gay and lesbian concerns was scarce, although it reappeared again in the 90s with novels such as *La passió segons Renée Vivien* by Maria Mercè Marçal (1952–1998) and *El joc del mentider* (1994) by Lluís Maria Todó (1950–).

Some of the more successful novels of the contemporary Catalan literature have an important erotic charge, which shows the importance of this topic during the first years of democracy. *La magnitud de la tragèdia* (1989) by Quim Monzó (1952–) portrays the life of a man with a permanent erection, and *Un negre amb un saxo* (1989) by Ferran Torrent (1951–) describes the atmosphere of prostitution and crime in

Valencia. *Temporada Baixa* (1990), by Maria Mercè Roca (1958–) and *Amorrada al piló* (1986) by Maria Jaén (1962–) became bestsellers thanks to their erotic content linked with new conceptions of femininity. *Temporada baixa* is a novel about jealousy and sex in which Roca contrasts a frustrated and obsessed man with his wife, a self-confident and determined woman. *Amorrada al piló*, whose popularity inspired a film version, is about a young radio announcer with a program about sexuality that avoids serious relationships and enjoys sex without complexes. The scarce essays devoted to Catalan eroticism have all been published in specialized journals with the exception of the dictionaries *Bocavulvari eròtic de la llengua catalana* by Pep Vila (1987) and *Diccionari eròtic i sexual* by Joan J. Vinyoles and Ramon Piqué (1989).

During the 80s and early 90s, important publishing houses such as La Magrana, Pòrtic, and El Llamp initiated collections of erotic literature that included novels by Catalan writers and translations of writers such as Henry Miller, Guillaume Apollinaire, the Marquis de Sade, and Pauline Réage. Pòrtic also created the prize La Piga, which was awarded to young authors such as Lluís-Anton Baulenas (1958–) and Rafael Vallbona (1960–). However, once the need to incorporate all genres in Catalan literature was fulfilled, during the mid 90s there was a decline and most of the specialized collections disappeared, arguably because eroticism had been included in mainstream literary production. Some of the short stories by Quim Monzó compiled in *Vuitanta-sis contes* (1999), for example, have to be considered among the finest examples of recent Catalan erotic literature.

The annual prize of erotic literature Vall d'Albaida created in 1993, however, shows that there is still interest in the genre.

JORDI CORNELLÀ-DETRELL

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**See also Martorell, Joanot; Ferrater, Gabriel; Spanish Literature; Troubadours**

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## CATULLUS

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c. 84–ca. 54 BCE  
 Roman poet

The best known of a circle of poets who styled themselves the *poetae novi*, Catullus left a short

collection of verse in various styles—short lyrics, longer epic and narrative poems, and epigrams in the elegiac meter—altogether totaling fewer than 2300 lines. This collection of 113 poems, often audacious and fraught with sexual content,



## CATULLUS

was all but completely lost at the end of antiquity and remained unknown until a single (now lost) manuscript was discovered in the thirteenth or early fourteenth century. The poems as we now have them are based on three copies of that damaged manuscript.

Apart from the obscenity and sexual insult that he frequently employed when attacking enemies, rivals, and others who displeased him, Catullus was the most erotic poet of the Roman world, rivaled in this respect only by Ovid. He worked in the tradition of Sappho, Archilochus, Anacreon, and other Greek lyricists of the seventh- to sixth-century BC who wrote in the first person singular about sexual experience. His chief erotic involvement was with a woman he calls Lesbia as a tribute to Sappho of Lesbos. This Lesbia is most often identified as Clodia Metelli, a married woman of aristocratic lineage who was some ten years older than Catullus. To judge from the 25 poems describing their relationship (13 of them mention her by name), the affair went on over a period of time, probably years, and was frequently interrupted by her infidelities and rejections of the poet. Catullus shows himself to be intense and demanding in all his relationships, sexual or not, and the poems of what is sometimes called the “Lesbia cycle,” scattered through the collection, invite the inference that Lesbia was a woman of strongly independent, sexually adventurous ways who sometimes found the poet’s importunities tedious if not annoying.

Like Homer presenting Helen of Troy, Catullus never describes Lesbia’s appearance or the physical details of their encounters: he concentrates on the emotional effects of their turbulent affair. The couplet that best sums it up is poem 85, *Odi et amo*:

I hate and love. Why? You may ask but  
It beats me. I feel it done to me, and ache.

(Ezra Pound)

One of Catullus’ most striking accounts of love’s betrayal and abandonment, possibly the best poetry ever written in Latin, is the lament of the legendary Cretan princess Ariadne, abandoned on a desert island by the Athenian hero Theseus after she has helped him kill the Minotaur and eloped with him. In these lines (132–201 of poem 64), Catullus seems to have projected his own experience with Lesbia into the voice of

a woman. One of the features of Catullus most valued by modern readers is his comparative freedom from the strongly masculine idiom of many classical authors. Some of this is the likely result of the poet’s admiration for Sappho.

Catullus wrote other erotic poetry, ranging from a request for an afternoon of pleasure with the demimondaine Ipsitilla to a cycle of seven to nine poems about his affair with a boy named Juventius. This homosexual liaison is usually assumed to have been with a native of Verona living in Rome under the guardianship of the poet. Where the request to Ipsitilla is coarsely comical, the poems for Juventius are jealous of the boy’s affection and protective of his feelings. There is also a love idyll describing a tête-à-tête between Septimius, a young Roman of the officer class, and his Greek sweetheart Acme.

The last of these reveals another aspect of Catullus’ eroticism. He is an eager spectator of the sexual life of his friends. In poem 6 he demands the details of a torrid liaison in which his friend Flavius is engaged, tipped off by the noisy movements of the bed; in poem 10 he meets his friend Varus in the Forum and goes off with him to get a look at the new girl friend in her apartment; in poem 55 he wanders into the haunts of the “milky girls” to learn what new interest is keeping Camerius out of sight: “you can keep your mouth shut about this so long as I can be a participant in your *amor*.” Vicarious eroticism is an important part of sexual pleasure for Catullus.

Though Catullus cannot reasonably be charged with writing pornographic poetry (as least no such poems have survived), he does defend the practice of writing sexually stimulating verse in poem 16:

A poet and his verse are different things:  
He should be decent, but his poetry  
Need not. His verses, if they’re rather “soft”  
Or shocking, and are able to excite  
The readers’ itchy parts, have wit and charm  
Not for the little boys, but hairy men  
Who don’t know how to switch their tails ...

(Dorothea Wender)

The “itchy parts” in this translation are in the original *quod pruriat*, from which the modern “prurient” is derived.

Notwithstanding the raciness of his sexual language and the reckless ardor with which he pursues a disorderly and illicit affair, Catullus

reveals a character that is in some respects conservative and conventional. For some readers he appears divided between the *dolce vita* of a Rome that was preoccupied with pleasure, scandal, and style and the straight-laced probity of his native Verona. Poem 17, set in a fictitious northern town named *Colonia*, suggests half-seriously that an older husband who is ignoring the wild ways of his young wife be thrown into the swamp as a sacrifice. Even in his affair with the notorious Lesbia, he more than once writes of his love as if she were a member of his family. Three of his seven long poems celebrate the institutions and ceremonies of marriage and are thoroughly traditional in the values they present.

More than a look into the life of Rome in the age of Caesar, Catullus' lyrics provide unguarded views into the complexity of a great poet under the influence of erotic forces beyond his control.

### Biography

Gaius Valerius Catullus (c. 84–c. 54 BCE) was a native of Verona, Italy but spent most of his life as a poet in Rome. Little is known about Catullus except what he says about himself in his poems. The historian Suetonius says his father was a frequent host of Julius Caesar, but the

poet himself was openly scornful of Caesar, accusing him (among other things) of sexually abusing young girls. None of this earned him the enmity of the future dictator, who remained an admirer. The date and circumstances of the poet's death are unknown.

DANIEL GARRISON

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## CAVAFY, CONSTANTINE

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1863–1933  
 Greek poet

Cavafy's eroticism often takes the form of a hesitant attraction to masculine beauty in the full bloom of a youth mythified by being viewed through the prism of an age-old Hellenism. Diffident in its expression, Cavafy's exploration of his erotic fascination only begins in earnest from 1911 onwards and comes to be identified as a major theme. Only one, short, erotic poem, "Epithimies" (1904, *Desires*), predates this

period and anticipates frustrated desire and Hellenistic imagery as major features of Cavafy's subsequent eroticism which, as in this poem, frequently takes the form of a disillusioned meditation on the unbridgeable distance between an older poetic narrator and the ephemeral beauty of a youth he contemplates in the first-person while painfully aware of the proximity of death.

From 1911 onwards Cavafy's erotic poetry unassumingly evokes sensual moments of self-knowledge and desire in an autobiographical journey through a historically layered Alexandria,

that might be said to begin with the dilemmas presented by his 1911 poem, “Ta Epikindina” [Risks]. There, a young Syrian student and fourth-century AD inhabitant of Alexandria, when faced with a choice between ascetic Christian abstinence and hedonistic pagan surrender, chooses a path of enlightenment through the pursuit of sensual pleasures, confident that his studies and willpower can afford him intellectual detachment. Two years later, the poet alludes to a night of sexual intoxication and release in “Epiga” [I Went]. Between 1913 and 1921, Cavafy writes 75 poems of which almost half are erotic, though he invariably avoids romantic lyricism in favor of restrained allusion that does, however, often promise voluptuousness. His 1917 poem “Idone” [To Pleasure] manages to celebrate the “Hara” [delight] and “Myro” [perfume] of pleasure in four lines that culminate in a pointed condemnation of “tin kathe apolafsin eroton tis rutinas” [every indulgence in habitual loves] that both views desire as a means of transcendence and rejects hackneyed poetic lyricism. Transcendence more often than not takes place in the mundane Alexandrian spaces Cavafy frequented, as in “Stou Kafeniou tin Eisodo” [1915, At The Café Entrance]. A routine setting is typically made transcendent by a classical association revealed by a frozen moment when the first-person narrator is stopped in his tracks by the entrance of an “oraio soma” [beautiful body], which he imagines must be the work of Eros at the height of his sculptural powers.

In 1918, Cavafy writes six erotic poems concerned with love’s frustrations and the remembrance of past pleasures as the source of desire in the present: “Thimisou, Soma” [Body, Remember], “To Diplano Trapezi” [The Next Table], “Ap’ Tes Ennia” [Since Nine O’Clock], “Kato Ap’ to Spiti” [Under the House]. It is the retrospective view of these poems that also allow the first-person poetic voice to reach an acceptance of his outsider’s position in relation to his inherited social class as, in “Noisis” [Understanding] he tenderly remembers his futile attempts as a guilt-ridden young man to mend his dissolute ways. With hindsight, he draws strength from the knowledge that the pleasures of his past are the source of his life as a poet, whose vocation it seems is to revive the feelings of the past, stretching back to antiquity in the case of “Aristoboulos” or a later poem such as “Technourgos Crateron” [1921, Silversmith].

His increasing temporal distance from those pleasures allows him to reflect on the ephemeral sensations of his past and on the relationship between mortality and beauty. Other such poems are “Makria [Far Away] (1914), “Griza” [Grey] (1917), “O Ilios tou Apoyevmatos” [The Afternoon Sun] (1919), “Tou Pliou” [On Board Ship] (1919), a group distinguished by taking the form of recollections of moments of sexual pleasure and adoration of the loved ones’ now absent physical features.

Of the 51 poems Cavafy publishes in the last 11 years of his life, 23 are erotic works that, beyond developing the features I have discussed above, largely deal with the bitterness, separations, betrayals, and social degradation of homosexual love. Poems such as: “En Apognosi” [In Despair] (1923), “Prin Tous Allaxei o Chronos” [Before Time Should Change Them] (1924), “Sto Pliktiko Chorio” [In the Dreary Village] (1925), “To Eikosi Pempton Etos tou Biou Tou” [The Twenty-Fifth Year of his Life] (1925), “Mesa Sta Kapileia” [In the Tavernas] (1926), “Meres tou 1896” [Days of 1896] (1927), “Meres tou 1901” [Days of 1901] (1927), “Enas Neos, tis Technis tou Logou - sto Eikosi Pempton Etos tou” [A Young Poet in his Twenty-Fourth Year] (1928). Even among the shadows and twilight, imagery the poet favors, and the low dives and brothels he alludes to, the reader still catches glimmers in some of the pieces just mentioned and more fully in others such as “Dio Nei, 23 eos 24 Eton” [Two Young Men, 23 to 24 Years Old] (1927) and “O Kathreptis stin Eisodo” [The Mirror in the Front Hall] (1930) of the desire that makes Cavafy’s poems so vital: the wish to continue basking in pleasure and beauty, if only in the memory, before even memory dies.

### Biography

Born in Alexandria, Egypt, April 29, 1863, the youngest of nine children of a prosperous Greek merchant family. Probably educated at home until 1872, when his family moved to Liverpool, via Marseilles, Paris, and London, after his father’s death in 1870, joining his two eldest brothers, who had left earlier to take over the offices of the family cotton business there and in London. In 1877, a downturn in the family’s fortunes and the liquidation of the family business obliged most of the family to return to Egypt, after having spent a period of time in

London. Little known about this period, following the Egyptian financial crash of 1876, except that he undertook commercial studies at the Hermes Lyceum from 1881–1882. In 1882, after a period of civil unrest and the bombardment of Alexandria by the British fleet, the family was forced to leave for three financially difficult years in Constantinople, where Constantine, for the first time, explored his homosexuality in the city's brothels. In 1885, returned to Alexandria and settled there. He continued to study independently while working at the cotton exchange and writing for the *Telegrafos* [*Telegraph*] newspaper. In 1889, he entered the Ministry of Public Projects and worked there until his retirement in 1922. During this period made short visits to Paris, London, and in 1903, for the first time, to Athens. Increasingly, from 1912 onwards, withdrew from social life and devoted his time to poetry. Founded the literary review *Alexandrini Techni* [*Alexandrian Art*] in 1926. Died of throat cancer in Alexandria, 29 April 1933.

JOHN D. PERIVOLARIS

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## CAYLUS, ANNE CLAUDE PHILIPPE DE

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1692–1765

French playwright and novelist

### *Le Bordel ou le Jeanfoutre puni*

A comedy in three acts, *Le bordel ou le jeanfoutre puni* [*The Brothel or the Punished Trickster*], is attributed to the Count of Caylus. From the start, the spectator (or reader) is warned: "The scene takes place in Paris, in a brothel." Valère, a

debauched brawler, lusts after his cousin, the chaste Isabelle, who is in love with Clitandre. He sets up a rendezvous with her at Madame Bru, a famous Madam, by forging her lover's signature, whom he also invites to dine at the same place to compromise him. Thus appear Tonton, Desprez, Poirier, Fanchon, the ladies of the house. Valentin, Valère's servant, who is as debauched as his master, takes advantage of them. The plot fails. A police superintendent comes in with his archers to restore order: Valère

is jailed in For-L'Evêque, some of the girls are released, the others taken to the General Hospital.

The play shows the great popularity of the private theaters in the eighteenth-century. Nobles, farmers general, and famous actresses stage, in their private mansions, obscene parades; licentious plays that are all erotic spectacles, whose more or less clandestine audience are the libertine society of the time. Some plays from the "ribald" repertoire are still known: *L'Art de foutre, ou Paris foutant* [*The Art of Fucking or Paris Fucking*] from Baculard Arnaud, *Le tempérament* [*The Disposition*] and *La nouvelle Messaline* [*The New Messalina*] from Grandval fils, *Vasta, reine de Bordélie* [*Vasta, Queen of Brothelia*] attributed to Piron, or *Le luxurieux* [*The Lecherous*] from Legrand, a member of the Comédie-Française.... For its part, the Théâtre de la Foire regularly parodies the new creations (without reaching the same licentiousness of course). Erotic theater rests on two principles, the obscenity of the language and the parody of the classical repertoire. In *La nouvelle Messaline*, Conine, Messaline's servant, says to Vitus: "She switches prick and despises yours./ Switch cunt, too and despise hers./ If you agree, I offer you mine."

In *Le bordel* [*The Brothel*], the characters only think about pleasure, prick in hand, the word fuck on the lips. It is about "calling things by their names." Valère says no to a girl "because she looks dainty when she says the word fuck." And one goes from *foutre* [fuck] to *fouteur* [fucker], *foutaise* [trifles], or *foutu* [fucked].

Madame Dru: What is it that you want to do in this room you're asking me for?

Valère: To fuck.

Madame Dru: With whom?

Valère: A cunt.

This three-act play ignores the rules of classical theater. The arrival of the superintendent at the end of the play is itself a play on theatrical denouement (as in Molière's *Tartuffe*, e.g.). It will not be until Sade that the one who maintains order will become a hardened criminal, whose entrance signifies added debauchery.

Caylus's play became a quick success. Voltaire wrote to one of his correspondents on February 18, 1740, "I hear that Gogo, Frétilton, the écosseuses, Prince Titi, the comedy of the brothel, the andouilles are being sold with great

success. The foreigners never cease to admire the protection we grant to fine arts in France." (*Histoire de Gogo*, 1739, [*Story of Gogo*]; *Histoire de mademoiselle Cronel, dite Frétilton*, 1740, [*Story of Miss Cronel, also known as Frétilton*]; *Les écosseuses, ou les oeufs de Pâques*, 1739, [*The Shellers or the Easter Eggs*]).

### ***Histoire de Guillaume, cocher* [Story of Guillaume, Coachman]**

Every week, the count of Caylus invites to his home the members of the society of the Bout-du-banc, who also meet on Thursdays at the home of the count's mistress, the actress Miss Quinaut. Crébillon, Duclos, Voisenon, Collé, La Chaussée, Cahusac, Moncrif, and Mme de Graffigny attend these meetings. A writing-desk is set up on the table. Full of verve and wits stimulated by the competition, the members of this joyous literary society take turns to write a parody or licentious tale, a burlesque letter, a vulgar dialog written in the popular fashion, using the fishmongers of Les Halles's argot (it is in this style that Vadé publishes his *Lettres de la Grenouillère, entre M. Jérosme Dubois, pêcheur du Gros-Caillou et Melle Nanette Dubut, blanchisseuse de linge fin*, [*Letters from the Grenouillère, between Mr. Jérosme Dubois, fisherman from Gros-Caillou and Miss Nanette Dubut, washerwoman*]). Thus are also published *Les écosseuses ou les oeufs de Pâques* (1739); *Les soirées du Bois de Boulogne* (1742) [*Evenings at the Bois de Boulogne*]; *Les étrennes de la Saint-Jean* (1742) [*Saint-Jean's Day's Gift*]; *Recueil de ces messieurs* (1745) [*These Gentlemen's Collection*]; *Quelques aventures des bals des bois* (1745) [*A Few Adventures from the Woods' Balls*]; *Les manteaux* (1746) [*The Coats*]; *Les fêtes roulantes* (1747) [*The Travelling Fêtes*]; *Mémoires de l'Académie des colporteurs* (1748) [*Memoirs from the Peddler's Academy*]; *Le pot-pourri* (1748) [*Medley*].

Although Caylus's part is essential and the *Histoire de Guillaume* is generally attributed to him, it is hard to determine exactly who wrote what in the creation of these unconstrained and rambling stories. These works can not be completely associated with erotic literature. The collections from the society of the Bout-du-banc, however, retain the satirical spirit, the naughtiness that shines through parodies, as well as the representation of the Parisian low

bourgeoisie, workers, and artisans: penniless masters, coachmen, clerks, peddlers, milliners, shop girls, hairdressers, and street hawkers haunt bars and taverns in search of pleasure.

As a coachman, Guillaume is a witness to this boisterousness, to the excitement that accompanies thwarted love affairs, secret rendezvous, fights and insults, daily troubles, and money problems. The story of Guillaume is that of social climbing, not unlike the story of Jacob told by Marivaux in *Le paysan parvenu* [*The Fortunate Peasant*]. A cab driver (i.e., a public coachman), then a master's coachman, Guillaume ends up marrying a rich widow, Mme Allain, his employer. A whiff of vaudeville runs through the novel. Beyond the picturesque (of the language, the characters, and the situations), Guillaume relates the tumultuous ballet of love affairs and the effervescence of desire that drive the world.

### Biography

Anne Claude Philippe de Tubières de Grimoard de Pestels de Levis, count of Caylus (1692–1765) became a great traveler and a lover of art and antiques, after a brilliant career as an officer. A member of the Académie des Beaux-Arts and of

the Académie des Inscriptions et belles lettres, he wrote many texts on painting and archaeology. He led the society of the Bout-du-banc (“end of the bench”), writing fairy tales, libertine tales, love witticism, and comedies in the vulgar style.

PATRICK WALD LASOWSKI

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## CERVANTES SAAVEDRA, MIGUEL DE

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1547–1616

Spanish novelist

Eroticism may seem to be in short supply in Cervantes's corpus. Don Quixote himself, for instance, is the courtly lover and eternal virgin. Sancho Panza apparently has a sexless and desexualized marriage of little importance. The pair's peregrinations involve many adventures, but no sexual ones, given Quixote's obsession with remaining chaste in the name of his lady Dulcinea (who never rewards his fidelity). The ageing knight may even be “saving himself,” as per the medieval courtly love tradition, for a fictional and unattainable damsel in order to

insulate himself from the terror of making sexual approaches to a real, unromanticized woman. Some scholars argue that don Quixote indeed wanted to consummate a sexual relationship with Dulcinea (pointing to the Cave of Montesinos episode as evidence); others (like John G. Weiger) believe he was impotent. The Quixote's quest is so profoundly anti-sexual (apart from some Freudian or Jungian scholarly readings that focus on biographic hints about Cervantes's “phallic mother”) that it is difficult for the reader to perceive much sense of eros in the book. Indeed, except for occasional scatological insinuations or carnivalesque references to ample buttocks, the body and the bawdy initially seem not

to be major concerns for Cervantes. However, careful scrutiny reveals many instances of gender play, transvestitism, voyeurism, and homoerotic tension in his works, as well as ample heterosexual desire.

*Don Quixote*, Parts I and II (published in 1605 and 1615, respectively) include numerous examples of transvestitism, which Cervantes himself perhaps encountered as the legacy of two literary conventions: the wandering cross-dressers of romance and the warrior women of epic. (Cervantes also wrote for the stage, where the device was not uncommon.) In an unusual and burlesque twist, in his episode of the “doleful duennas,” men cross-dress as bearded ladies. In many cases, however, unstable gender identities in Cervantes were in part meant to provide a source of erotic titillation for the reader. Dorothea dresses as a boy to track down her seducer, don Fernando. There is an element of voyeurism as she washes her beautiful white bare feet, unaware of her onlookers. The children of Diego de la Llana take transvestitism a step further: a young woman captured by the patrols is brought to “Governor” Sancho in elaborate masculine dress. She insists she is thus attired to escape her feminine fate and see the world. She also reveals that her brother exchanged clothing with her, and the two experienced the pleasures of a night on the town having switched genders so successfully that he “look[ed] like a most beautiful damsel.” Dulcinea herself (as the “real” peasant Aldonza Lorenzo) is suspiciously butch; described as having hair on her chest, her manly height and physical strength (and masculine odor) are emphasized. Ana Félix is also a cross-dressing woman—this time as an Islamic pirate. She frequently refers to the Turks as insatiable sodomites. Thus, believing her androgynously beautiful male Christian lover to be endangered when they are in exile in North Africa, she dresses him as a woman to save him from this threat.

In Cervantes’s time, Spaniards severely punished male homosexuality in both secular and inquisitorial realms. Perhaps for this reason, sodomy was commonly attributed as a vice of the Turks and Moors, and Cervantes exploits this convention in his narratives. In the first Captive’s tale in *Don Quixote*, the Spaniard speaks of a Venetian cabin boy captured by Uchalí, king of Algiers, who makes the lad his Ganymede. As we have seen, Don Gregorio’s female lover dresses him as a woman to save him from the rapacious

appetites of the Great Turk. However, Cervantes also alludes to homosexuality among Christians and Spaniards. Homoerotic desire gives way to incestuous tension in the exemplary tale *Las dos doncellas* [*The Two Damsels*] which begins with yet another crossdressing woman, Teodosia, searching for the soldier who has seduced and abandoned her. Her own brother fails to recognize her in her male garb, and she is subjected first to his “eroticized scrutiny” as Barbara Fuchs calls it, then to a suspicion that he is restless with desire for her (as a woman) when he shares a room with her. In the exemplary novel *El amante liberal* [*The Generous Lover*], the beautiful and effeminate Cornelio is taunted by the virile Ricardo, who calls him a “Ganymede” and snarls at him, “Go, amuse yourself with your mother’s maids; they will help you to set your hair and take care of your dainty hands that are better used to wind soft silk than to wield a sword.” Overcome with “passion” (jealousy? Or something else?) Ricardo attacks Cornelio. The story also mentions gorgeous captive boys (clearly intended to be catamites) used to pay part of a ransom. In Cervantes’ Byzantine romance, *Persiles and Sigismunda*, the cross-dressed heroine evokes homoerotic desire in an itinerant poet, who fantasizes about the beautiful “man” he sees, dressing him/her in his mind’s eye in various stage costumes both male and female.

Cervantes also alludes to lesbianism in scenes such as the erotically charged meeting between the eponymous heroine of the pastoral romance *La Galatea* and her friend Florisa. When it comes to men, Galatea is “sexually exciting but not . . . sexually excited” as Edward Dudley terms her, perhaps because she prefers her own gender. Similarly, in the exemplary novel *Las tres doncellas*, Alicia Newberg points to a possible lesbian attraction between Nise and her maid Luisa.

Some recent scholars have speculated about Cervantes’s own sexuality. It has been posited that during his five-year captivity in Algiers after the Battle of Lepanto, he had a sexual relationship (consensual or coerced) with his master, Hasan Pasha, given that Cervantes was accused of having committed “vices” in Algiers—a charge he went to great lengths to clear his name of. Yet, although Cervantes initiated four escape attempts, and helped other notable prisoners to escape, Hasan Pasha, who was

renowned for his cruelty, never seriously punished him.

Of course there are also many examples of heterosexual desire in Cervantes's works. Besides the many beautiful women who appear and disappear from the winding narrative of *Don Quixote*—Dorotea, the fictional Dulcinea, Marcela, the Duchess, Camila, Lucinda, Zoraida—numerous Cervantine women turn the heads and melt the hearts of various fortunate and unfortunate suitors. Many are fairly conventional objects of male desire, exquisitely dressed and bejeweled, with teeth like pearls and hair rivaling the sun. But there are notable exceptions, such as the carnal and independent Halima (whose name means “one who has a lascivious dream”), who defies Islamic convention to pursue Ricardo lustfully in *The Generous Lover*; Leonora, who rejects the “jealous Extremeñan” who has married her; or Leonisa, the determined virgin who chooses her own husband. Even Maritornes, the ugly tavern-wench who ends up mistakenly in the arms of don Quixote in the darkness of the inn, selects her own man (the mule-driver), struggling against and punching anyone who gets in her way. (Does the fact that don Quixote embraces her, flatters her, and prevents her escape from his bed, while simultaneously verbally rejecting what he believes is her amorous pursuit of him, point to his sexual interest in women or to his rejection of them?)

Cervantes has been variously described as asexual, prissy about sex, guilty about sex, and obsessed with sex. It has been alleged that he feared women, hated his mother, had a repressed Oedipus complex, was a closet homosexual, wrote blatant sexual allegories, and feared the destructive nature of sexual desire. His writing has been described through the ages as coarse, anti-sexual, and rife with sexual symbolism, depending on which commentator one encounters. It remains the individual reader's delectable duty to decide who and what is right about Spain's greatest and most erotically elusive author.

### Biography

Cervantes was born in 1547 in Alcalá de Henares, near Madrid, the son of a physician. In 1570, following his studies in Madrid, he

became a soldier and in 1575 a ship he was on was captured by the Turks and Cervantes spent five years as a slave in Algiers. Upon his return to Madrid he held several temporary administrative posts and began his literary career. His first major work, *La Galatea*, appeared in 1588. In 1605, the first part of *Don Quixote* appeared, bringing him international recognition. Cervantes died in Madrid on April 23, 1616.

C.A. PRETTIMAN

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# CHAMPSAUR, FÉLICIEN

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1859–1934  
French novelist

### *Dinah Samuel*

Although he published more than thirty novels and collections of short stories over the course of a career which spanned half-a-century, Félicien Champsaur is remembered today, if at all, for his first work of prose fiction, published while still in his mid-twenties: *Dinah Samuel* (1882). The most straightforward way of approaching Champsaur's principle work of fiction is to consider it as one of a number of scandalous *romans-à-clef* prompted by rumors that the great French actress Sarah Bernhardt was planning to write her memoirs. Among the earliest of these were Edmond de Goncourt's *La faustin* (1882) and Marie Colombier's *Mémoires de Sarah Barnum* (1883). Both of these, like Champsaur's *Dinah Samuel*, emphasize the actress's Jewish extraction, rendering her not only vulgar and materialistic but also as alien and sexually threatening. But if Colombier's book is salacious and unpleasant, that of Champsaur is quasi-pornographic in its treatment of Bernhardt as a figure of fantasy and revulsion. Indeed, it might be claimed that *Dinah Samuel* is a study in sexual obsession.

Marie Colombier knew Bernhardt well (the two women had trained as actresses together), and many of the incidents in her fictional account, though distorted, are probably based on an element of truth. Whether Champsaur enjoyed a personal acquaintance with Bernhardt is not known. In any event, intimacy with its

subject was hardly necessary for the production of such a work since most of the stories concerning Bernhardt were already public property, the author's task being to take such elements as were required and to fit them into an alternative narrative of his own devising. One such story that did the rounds was that Bernhardt's mother, having been a prostitute herself, acted as a procuress with regard to her own daughters while they were still in their early teens. This story even found its way into the *Journal* of Jules and Edmond de Goncourt, who claim to have overheard it in a restaurant. In other versions, Bernhardt is said to have preferred elderly lovers since they alone had the means of supporting her lavish lifestyle.

Indeed, Champsaur's novel depends on such a view of Bernhardt's materialism since the plot, slight as it is, hinges on the fact that Dinah prefers a sixty-year-old Jewish banker of unprepossessing appearance to the charms of the much younger Patrice Montclar, the central male protagonist of the novel. Montclar, who clearly represents the author himself, is sexually fascinated with Bernhardt/Samuel from the outset of the novel, though this fascination is presented as highly fetishistic in nature. In the opening chapter, for example, Champsaur/Montclar attends a matinee performance at the Comédie Française during which the actress raises an arm to reveal that her armpit is unshaven, much to the delight of the voyeuristic spectator. (In defence of this passage, it should be noted that the armpit was treated in a similarly erotic manner by other French writers and artists of the same period.) During the course of the subsequent narrative, Montclar employs a

number of stratagems to gain sexual satisfaction, including sleeping with the actress's double.

In addition to this fictionalized and sensationalist biography of Sarah Bernhardt, *Dinah Samuel* is also a sprawling discursive novel which includes (among much else) a literary manifesto in favor of the bohemian cultural life associated with the Montmartre of the late 1870s, a sequence of 45 sonnets purporting to be the work of Montclar, the complete text of a Pierrot play (also said to be by Montclar), and the prospectus for an advertising agency which claims to have harnessed natural star light for commercial purposes. Not surprisingly, much of this material is ephemeral in nature and has little relevance to the main plot of the novel. In subsequent versions of the novel, published in 1886, 1889, and 1905, Champsaur considerably abridged this extraneous material. Of equal significance, the 1889 version contained a new chapter ("La grande prostituée") in which Montclar, having finally seduced the actress, reduces her to the level of a prostitute. By the time of the 1905 edition, when Bernhardt would have been sixty, Champsaur was complaining of the "odour étrange de cimetièrè" (i.e., "peculiar mortuary odor") of her skin, so adding a suggestion of necrophilia to the book.

More than a hundred years after its initial publication, the focus of interest in the novel is the reverse of that which prevailed in 1882. Salacious gossip concerning the life of Sarah Bernhardt having little power to shock today, what is significant about *Dinah Samuel* is the manner in which the author reveals the extent of his own racist misogyny. The systematic devaluing of women who occupy a place in the public eye, especially by means of allegations of sexual misconduct, has been a common element in French writing since the late eighteenth century (one thinks, for example, of the pornographic pamphlets directed against Marie-Antoinette). Not surprisingly, allegations of lesbianism are also made against the actress. The level of resentment and hostility to Sarah Bernhardt displayed by Champsaur can only be seen as an indication of the actress's astonishing popularity, a popularity which extended from the early 1870s through to the eve of World War I. Champsaur's anti-Semitism, of course, was a product of the age in which he lived, though no

less reprehensible for that (significantly, the great tragic actress Rachel, who preceded Sarah Bernhardt as the star of the Comédie Française, would not seem to have been the subject of such attacks).

On a more positive note, the late 1870s and early 1880s were marked by the creation of a new type of entertainment space—combining elements of the theater, the literary café, and the beer-hall—which sought to appeal to a broad public seeking a taste of Bohemia. With its cheap cafés, rustic atmosphere, and low rents, Montmartre was the ideal setting for such ventures. Typical of such establishments were Emile Godeau's *Le club des hydropathes* and Rodolphe Salis's *Le chat noir*, both of which Champsaur frequented. In many respects, the highly charged erotic atmosphere of the cabarets (significantly, it would appear that Champsaur's novels were touted around *Le chat noir*) with their routines of comic sketches and popular songs was the very antithesis of the staid Comédie Française. Paradoxically, as general and academic interest in the Montmartre of the early *fin de siècle* has revived in recent years, the material Champsaur systematically expurgated from *Dinah Samuel* has assumed a fresh significance. More than fifty writers and artists active at the period make an appearance in the novel, the portrait of André Gill (Albert Max in the novel) being particularly noteworthy.

### Biography

Born in 1859 in Turriers (near Digne) in southwest France. He had already made a modest name for himself in the Bohemian world of the cafés and cabarets of Montmartre by the time he was twenty. After his early participation in the production of small circulation newspapers and magazines, he became increasingly involved with the stage, devising several ballets and Pierrot plays among other works. Published more than thirty novels and collections of short stories. Died in Paris in 1934.

TERRY HALE

### Editions

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## CHARRAS, PIERRE

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1945–  
French writer

### *Marthe jusqu'au soir (Marthe till the Evening)*

Marthe is a middle-aged, well-educated, good-looking, Dior-wearing bourgeois woman whose husband Jean, a business lawyer by training, has just been appointed a government minister. Their social and professional success is complemented both by their solid and stable relationship and by the potential of their 20-year-old son Brice, currently studying at Princeton. One day at lunchtime, Marthe receives an allegedly urgent phone call from Lacombe, a nondescript secretary and speech writer working for her husband, who has openly praised his efficiency and intellectual qualities. Lacombe tells her they need to meet urgently and suggests a little restaurant nearby, not far from the church of La Madeleine. Once there, he gives her a black and white still from a videotape he also has in his briefcase. Albeit of poor quality, the photo distinctively shows Brice in college uniform fellating a man. Lacombe threatens to sell it to the press, which would lead to the ruin of Jean's career and put an end to all their ambitions for Brice. Marthe, initially believing Lacombe's blackmail to be financially motivated, promises to pay any amount of money—but Lacombe explains that he does not want any money: he wants her. He will give her the tape if she accepts to be his for the next five hours, that is if he can have Marthe till the evening, *Marthe jusqu'au soir*, hence the title of the book.

Incredulous at first, she rapidly realizes that she has no choice and must obey. The next five hours are worse than her worst nightmare, a descent into hell both for her body and soul alike, in a fine, upper-class brothel just behind the restaurant. With the help of a valet called Albert, Lacombe, who is as ugly as Marthe is elegant, gradually humiliates and degrades her. Albert notably makes her piss in a transparent

jug by punching her abdomen and detachedly penetrates her using lots of greasy gel in order to lubricate her for Lacombe's much larger penis. Lacombe also obliges Marthe to slowly strip (Marthe hates being seen naked and who has only been naked in front of her husband), kisses her by force everywhere and eventually has sex twice with her on the bed. When she thinks it is over, he reveals to her the second part of the script he has been planning since he first met her and started fancying her: she is to spend the next three hours working as a prostitute in the brothel itself—and should she fail to attract any client, Albert will sodomize her. Lacombe's plan is precise and thoroughly thought-out: to stop seeing her as a highly desirable and ideal woman, he must make her literally become a whore. He will then have sex with her one last time in the late afternoon, but by then his feelings will hopefully have changed. She complies, calling herself Olga and having sex with three more men—though what exactly happens with them is not mentioned, not even hinted at, though Lacombe watches everything from behind a hidden mirror. In the event, Lacombe nonetheless fails to fall out of love with her: he tells her how even after seeing her pleasuring and serving other men, he still idealizes her. He is ready to let her go without even having sex with her one more time; a man of his word, he nonetheless gives her the videotape and decides to disappear from her life forever. He will either leave the country or kill himself, whatever she decides: he will call at ten in the evening to get his sentence, shortly before Jean arrives from his constituency. To stop Lacombe from committing suicide, she just has to pick up the phone when he calls. When he calls, at the agreed time, Marthe does not pick up the phone.

*Marthe jusqu'au soir* is an interesting novella in three main respects. Firstly, it uses sexual blackmail as a narrative cornerstone, whereas that topos of erotic literature is often just a secondary element as a pretext for sexual descriptions. Secondly, it offers a pleasantly

written erotic illustration of hard concepts such as power, domination, and sacrifice. Thirdly, and most controversially, it succeeds in presenting both protagonists' viewpoints. Marthe may be the saintly victim of Lacombe's wicked plan, but Lacombe too is disturbingly presented as a victim—victim of his own ugliness and failure with women, victim of his impossible love for Marthe. His last words to her as he leaves the brothel room, '*Je vous aime*,' emphasize both the dramatic ending of the story and its human if not humane dimension. Yet he is so confused and deluded that the very fact that if he really loved her he would not treat her with such hatred does not seem to enter his psyche, and in a dodgy way the book almost seems to justify

why Lacombe designed his sophisticated method of rape.

### Biography

Pierre Charras was born in Saint-Etienne in 1945. He originally trained as a teacher. He now lives and works in Paris.

LOYKIE LOÏC LOMINÉ

### Selected Works

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## CHAUCER, GEOFFREY

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c.1345–1400  
 English poet

### *The Miller's Tale*

A bawdy and licentious narrative, *The Miller's Tale* is told by a drunken and quarrelsome narrator. It tells the story of a clerk named Nicholas and the successful cuckolding of his master, an Oxford carpenter, and Nicholas's affair with the carpenter's much younger wife, Alisoun. The courteous Nicholas is in love with the wild and flirtatious 18 year-old Alisoun. In order for them to have time alone together, Nicholas tricks Alisoun's husband into believing that a second Biblical flood is about to take place. To save himself, the carpenter decides to sleep in a large tub that hangs suspended underneath the rafters of the house. This leaves Alisoun and Nicholas free to enjoy the sensual pleasures and secret love that Nicholas has long desired and to sleep in the marital bed together without fear of being disturbed. However, Alisoun has another admirer in the amorous parish clerk Absolon who desperately tries to

win her love. When Absolon comes to declare his love, Alisoun begs him to leave her alone. He promises to leave if she grants him a single kiss. Alisoun then promptly thrusts out her backside, which Absolon kisses in mistake for Alisoun's lips. Humiliated by this scene, Absolon determines to have his revenge on the laughing couple within and returns to beg another kiss. This time Nicholas offers his backside through the window, which Absolon brands with the red-hot iron he brought with him to enact his revenge. The subsequent noises from below (particularly the screams of agony from Nicholas and his calls for water) wake the carpenter in his rafter resting place and result in his assuming the floodwaters have begun to rise. He swiftly cuts the cords suspending his tub and plunges down from the attic into the scene below. Overall, the Tale alternates between the coarse and the light-hearted, but the early description of the young and beautiful Alisoun, in which she is said to be more beautiful to behold than an early-ripe pear ("She was ful moore blisful on to see / Than is the newe pere-jonette tree") reveals Chaucer's awareness of the importance of the erotic

description, as he seductively introduces details about how Alisoun's apron ("A barmclooth as whit as morne milk") hangs around her loins, and his knowing reference to her "likerous ye," or flirtatious nature.

### *The Wife of Bath's Tale*

The tale told by Alisoun, Wife of Bath, develops the idea of woman's mastery over her husband or lover that she promulgated in her Prologue, in which she also discussed and described in detail the varied relationships she had endured with her five husbands. The Wife of Bath is open and unabashed in providing her fellow pilgrims with stories of the "wo that is in marriage." She speaks openly of her luck in selecting five husbands rich in both their wealth and their more physical endowments: "I have picked out the beste / Bothe of hir nether purs and of hir cheste." While the Prologue focuses upon the overtly sexual, and often quite coarse nature of the Wife's own sexual experience (there are passages of great length on the genital differences between the sexes), her Tale focuses more upon the eroticism of sexual desire. Set in the realm of Arthurian legend, the tale concerns a lecherous knight who rapes a young maid: "maugree hir heed, / By verray force, he rafte hire maydenhed." Instead of being punished by King Arthur, the knight is handed over to the jurisdiction of the Queen and her court of ladies. The Queen sets the knight a challenge. He must discover within one year "what women love moost"—what it is that women most desire. After hearing many contradictory replies during his travels, the knight is about to return and confront his fate when he meets "a fouler wight ther may no man devise"—an ugly old hag. He asks her the same question that he has asked all the other women, promising to reward her for any instruction she might give. The old woman offers to tell him the answer only if he grants her the next thing she requests of him. He rashly agrees, whereupon the woman whispers the answer to him. Returning to court the knight declares that what women desire most is sovereignty over their husbands. He is granted a pardon, but the old woman immediately steps forward and demands that he marry her. The knight tries to break his word and implores the woman, "taak al my good, and lat my body go."

The knight is forced to keep his promise, and as the couple lie in bed after their marriage, the old woman asks what is troubling him. When he replies it is her ugliness, she states that this can soon be remedied and offers him a choice: either he can have her ugly and faithful or beautiful and faithless. Despairing at the impasse he is in, the knight flippantly offers her the choice, with the result that he is rewarded with a beautiful but faithless wife.

### *Troilus and Criseyde*

*Troilus and Criseyde* is Chaucer's longest complete poem. It was probably written during the late 1380s, and was adapted from Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato* [*The Lovestricken*]. The story narrates a love affair set in Troy between Troilus, a young warrior, and Criseyde, widowed daughter of the astronomer Calchas. Troilus sees Criseyde, falls in love with her, and through the help of Criseyde's guardian, her uncle Pandarus, the couple begin a secret affair. Criseyde is subsequently returned to her father in exchange for a prisoner of war. Although she promised to return to Troilus, Criseyde is forced to take the Greek Diomedes as her lover. Troilus, desolate and distraught at Criseyde's betrayal (which he sees in a dream) devotes himself to the ongoing battle and dies in glory, ascending to the seventh sphere from where he looks down upon the earth and realizes the vanity of human relationships. Chaucer's poem has been acclaimed for its depth of characterization (in sharp contrast to Boccaccio's original), but the poem is also interesting in its frank portrayal of the ideal of *fine amour*. As summarized by D.S. and L.E. Brewer, "*fine amour* may be said to be essentially (a) masculine, (b) sexual, (c) symbolic, (d) humble, (e) improving, and (f) private." The ideal allowed for an elevation of sex by moving the definition away from a purely biological and reproductive vision of physical love to an idealization of the sexual act as something to be enjoyed in its own right. Troilus's total absorption in Criseyde is thus both sexual and emotional. While Troilus desires erotic satisfaction, the poem stresses that the physical element of the relationship must be restrained in many ways in order for it to develop fully. Both promiscuity and marriage change relationships and stifle the possibility of fulfilling the

aims of *fine amour*. The poem reflects the ambiguity between love in an earthly or natural sense and religious love, with both forms eroticized within the text. Troilus is perceived to be a better man through his love of Criseyde, but this is largely because he seeks to elevate natural love to the status of religious love and believes that his love of Criseyde is essentially holy. Troilus's use of language to explain and define his love is demonstrated in his prayer to Venus, which serves as a useful example of his attempt to combine the two seemingly contrary elements of emotional need and erotic desire. Ultimately, though, it is human or natural love that is seen to be fallible within the story, with Troilus's death suggesting the impossibility of combining the two ideals of religion and *fine amour*.

### Biography

Chaucer was the son of the wealthy London vintner John Chaucer. He may have attended St. Paul's Cathedral School before he studied at the Inner Temple. During 1357 and 1358, Chaucer was a page to Elizabeth, Countess of Ulster. He was involved in the military campaigns in France (1359/1360) and returned to England after being ransomed in March 1360 (King Edward III contributing towards the ransom payment). In the late 1360s, Chaucer married Philippa, a relation of his patron John of Gaunt. Granted a pension by the king in 1367, Chaucer served as a diplomat throughout the 1370s and early 1380s and held many official positions during that period. His travels in Europe on behalf of the king brought Chaucer into contact with the European literature of the period and traces of these encounters can be found within his writings—the most obvious example being the influence of Boccaccio upon *The Canterbury Tales*. After 1386, with the absence of

John of Gaunt, Chaucer fell upon harsher times and even after the granting of a pension by Richard II in 1394 his frequent supplications for advanced payments make clear his increasingly desperate financial state. Henry IV raised his pension in 1399 and so Chaucer's last months, after he returned to London to live in Westminster, were spent in relative comfort. Chaucer died in 1400 and was buried in the section of Westminster Abbey that since his death has been known as Poets' Corner.

MARK LLEWELLYN

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## CHEKHOV, ANTON

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1860–1904

Russian short-story writer and playwright

Anton Chekhov's "A Nervous Breakdown" ["Pripadok," also translated as "A Nervous Fit," "A Nervous Attack," "An Attack of Nerves," and "The Fit"] is an important part of the canon of nineteenth-century Russian literature devoted to the problem of prostitution. Written in 1888, it was published the following year in a collection of stories to honor the memory of the recently deceased writer Vsevolod Garshin, whose "An Occurrence" (1875) and "Nadezhda Nikolaevna" (1885) had developed the long-standing theme of the "fallen woman." Though a few of Chekhov's critics attacked the story for its subject matter, "A Nervous Breakdown" was not only well-received, but even met with little difficulty at the hands of the tsarist censors. The story was rejected only once, when it was to be reprinted in a collection called "For the Fallen" [Za padshikh'] in 1891. The entire collection was banned.

"A Nervous Breakdown" is the story of a law student named Vasil'ev, who, against his better judgment, is convinced to join his friends on a visit to a series of brothels on the notorious S\_\_\_ Street (clearly modeled on Sobolev Street, a well-known red-light district in prerevolutionary Moscow). Prior to this excursion, Vasil'ev's familiarity with "fallen women" was limited to books and newspapers, but he had already developed strong opinions on the matter: "He knew that there were such immoral women, who, under the pressure of fatal circumstances—their environment, a bad upbringing, necessity, etc.—were obliged to sell their honor for money." Vasil'ev's attitude clearly falls within the "progressive" side of late nineteenth-century Russia, since he assumes that prostitution is—at heart—a social problem. At the same time, his attitude is also based on romantic or religious concerns rather than on pure materialism: he is convinced that, despite their sins, prostitutes are still made in God's image, and can still hope for redemption. He agrees to join his friends not out of any

conscious sexual desire, but rather to become more knowledgeable about this moral problem.

Vasil'ev's disenchantment is almost immediate: first and foremost, he is appalled by the sheer vulgarity of his surroundings (the decor, the entertainment, the servants, the women's dresses and manners), and then by the mercantile basis of all brothel interactions: in the first house they visit, Vasil'ev naively spends his money buying drinks at a prostitute's request, unaware that the madam has instructed all her "girls" to get their clients to spend as much on food and drink as possible. After witnessing a scandalous scene where a client beats a drunken prostitute to the accompaniment of screams and tears, Vasil'ev refuses to continue his expedition and has a falling out with his friends. Upon returning home, Vasil'ev cannot stop thinking of the women and their fates, desperately trying to devise a solution to their plight. Eventually, his friends bring him to a psychiatrist. He asks the doctor if prostitution is evil, to which the psychiatrist responds: "My dear man, who could argue?" The psychiatrist gives him some medications, and soon Vasil'ev feels well enough to go back to the university.

Chekhov's approach to prostitution in "A Nervous Breakdown" is noteworthy for a number of reasons. Like most Russian prostitution narratives, it addresses the problem while remaining decidedly discreet in referring to sexual activity itself; Chekhov's story goes even further in that the protagonists visit several brothels without even having sex at all. "A Nervous Breakdown" maintains the high moral tone established for such stories by previous writers (especially Garshin), but it adds an element of self-consciousness that was previously absent. Vasil'ev has one advantage over the heroes of other tales of attempts at rescuing the "fallen woman": he has read their stories, and he knows how they usually end. In a clear reference to Nikolai Chernyshevsky's radical novel *What Is To Be Done?* [*Chto delat?*] (1863), which established the pattern for Russian literature about prostitution for decades to come, he

recalls cases in which men have liberated individual prostitutes from their madams and their pimps, set them up in their own apartments, and bought them “the inevitable sewing machine” to help them learn an honest trade. None of these attempts ends well, and all of them are a piecemeal solution to a wide-scale social problem. If prostitution stories are usually narratives of salvation (attempted or successful), Vasil’ev finds them unsatisfactory at least in part for their focus on the individual woman.

“A Nervous Breakdown” problematizes prostitution by placing it on the very cusp between the personal and the social: the story is about the lives of individuals, but the context is such that the main character can never be satisfied with an individual, small-scale answer. Indeed, Chekhov’s brothel expedition can easily be interpreted as a microcosm for the entire Russian public sphere: besides Vasil’ev, a law student, the other two men on the S\_\_\_ street tour are an artist and a medical student. Each of them represents the professions that, in theory, should be most concerned with this phenomenon, yet only Vasil’ev even considers it a problem. And none of them brings his expertise to bear when visiting the brothel: it is Vasil’ev, rather than the artist, who objects to his surroundings on aesthetic grounds, but Vasil’ev himself never considers prostitution from a legal point of view. This intersection between the established professions (such as medicine and law) and the “oldest profession” would be developed further in Alexander Kuprin’s encyclopedic potboiler *The Pit [Iama]* (1908–1915).

### Biography

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov was born January 17, 1860 in Taganrog, Russia. Completed medical school in 1884. Began his writing career in 1880, initially as the author of humorous short stories for popular newspapers and magazines, before moving on to longer narrative forms. His work in the theater in the 1890s and early 1900s established his reputation as one of the greatest playwrights of the modern era. After suffering from tuberculosis for twenty years, he died of the disease in 1904.

ELIOT BORENSTEIN

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## CHEVRIER, FRANÇOIS ANTOINE

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1721–1762

French satirist, political publicist, pamphleteer, and journalist.

A prolific writer, Chevrier tried many genres; in addition to several plays he published numerous writings based on private scandals, on the history

and politics of several European countries, or a mixture of the two. There are sketches of social types in the manner of La Bruyère (*Les ridicules du siècle*), but really Chevrier was a scandal-monger; at best he aspires to be a sort of chronicler of the life of his times, like Restif de la Bretonne after him; and like Restif he seems



## CHEVRIER, FRANÇOIS ANTOINE

to thrive on spying and reporting the gossip he has collected (*Almanach des gens d'esprit*), with, in his case, a particular fascination for, perhaps obsession with, the women of the Comédie Française and Opéra. A few writings in verse, like *Étrennes voluptueuses*, are similar to the playfully erotic poetry in the style of Dorat's *Fables or Baisers*, with the same sorts of pastoral themes and conventional motifs: for example, the five senses, the four parts of the day. All of Chevrier's work has been virtually forgotten; *Le colporteur* alone having been republished three or four times since the eighteenth century.

*Le colporteur* [*The Book Peddler*], which surfaced in France just months before Chevrier died, was a sort of clandestine bestseller. It is not a novel but a long dialogue in which the peddler, whose putative occupation is really just a cover for his role as rumor monger and police spy, relates all the scandalous gossip he has garnered from his rounds, which take him to all social circles and even to Versailles. The main subject is the sexual conduct and misconduct of numerous characters, some of whom are given their real names and some, like the promiscuous Belise, are not; many of the latter are all but impossible to decode today.

When Belise contracts syphilis from a capricious coupling in a carriage, the guilty party, the Marquis de Sarzanne, comes to her aid by using an actress to entrap her husband so he will believe it was he who, having gotten the disease from her, transmitted it to his wife, rather than the reverse; on this the narrator comments: "nothing about this should scandalize the austere reader: a husband, although the occurrence is remarkable, may sometimes sleep with his wife." Venereal disease (as the peddler says, "what was a horror when America was discovered has become in our time an accident to which the best people are subject") is the token of general circulation characterizing the mores in general. The detailing of the sources of Belise's case, like a similar passage in *Candide*, is a parody of generalized sexual dissoluteness:

[Sarzanne] complained to Miss Deschamps of the Opera, who blamed the misfortune on a foreign minister, who in turn attributed it to the wife of a tax farmer; she imputed the cause of the indisposition to a standard-bearer of the Musketeers, who maintained it came from a neighborhood grocer's wife, who swore that for six months she had spoken with no

one but a Capuchin brother who collected alms; the monk complained bitterly to Duchesse de \*\*\*, who protested she saw no one other than a Portuguese priest, who admitted he got it from a most tender conversation with Mademoiselle Brillant of the Comédie Française; the actress, to exculpate herself, cast the blame on the Marquis de C\*\*\*, but as this nobleman had been killed at Rosback, the research went no farther, and the genealogy of the disease that had just struck Belise remained imperfect.

The book is a long sequence of such gossip, dealing mostly with the nobility and their ties to the theater underworld. Chevrier does not lack wit, though it is cruel and vengeful.

As the quotation suggests, Chevrier had an anticlerical bent and pursued some specific priests with particular fury (*Vie du fameux Père Norbert*). The French police liaison in the Hague reported hearing that "some obscene works were found among his papers," but nothing that could merit that qualification is known to exist.

### Biography

Chevrier was born in Nancy. He became a lawyer in 1743, but apparently practiced little if at all. He had little luck with his first publications in Paris. In 1746, he went to Italy and then to Corsica; was a member of the Corsican Academy (1749) and wrote a history of Corsica. He moved often, even among several cities—Paris, Nancy, Frankfurt, Brussels—and made himself undesirable in most of them because of his political meddling and caustic writings. In 1758, he was sentenced in absentia to the galleys for writings offensive to religion and state, but persuaded the court to commute the sentence. Later, pursued by the French police for his political intriguing and expelled from the Austrian Netherlands, he moved to the Hague, and was about to be arrested at the request of the French crown in June 1762 when he traveled to Rotterdam where he died virtually penniless.

PHILIP STEWART

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## CHIKAMATSU MONZAEMON

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1653–1725  
 Japanese kabuki and bunraku playwright

Chikamatsu Monzaemon sprang from warrior origins, but wrote about *chônin*, townsmen or plebeian inhabitants of *chô*, urban administrative districts in Japan’s Edo period (1600–1868), who constituted a class, the upper members of which were wealthy merchants who had no part political issues and could do nothing but make money or look for various pleasures, art properties, silk arrays, *sharebon* or licentious books, ruinous sex adventures or love stories with prostitutes, courtesans or cute male actors, and so on.

The urban culture of the Genroku era (1688–1704) thrived in the Kamigata. The theaters, set near the pleasure quarters, offered representations of the *ukiyo*—floating world—a realm of appearance, where nothing, neither love nor fortune, could ever last. The erotic mood or overtone of the show was typical of such plays, in which a lover vainly tried to buy the prostitute he was in love with, but had no tricky slave to rely on as in Plautus’ comedies. Not only *chônin* faced up to debts and money problems, but they sometimes were torn between *giri*, duty, and *ninjô*, human feelings.

Most of Chikamatsu’s plays dealt with this difficult choice, as they offered “moving stories of ordinary people trapped by their situations—constrained by obligation (*giri*) and driven by affection (*ninjô*)—who finally asserted their dignity, refusing to abandon their love for another despite the cost of insistence” (C. Totman),

and the desperate lovers eventually committed a double suicide, *shinjû*. Although money was the main factor leading to death, the suicidal act for the sake of love was modelled upon death taken for one’s feudal lords by warriors. The *chônin*’s ethics competed with the *samurai*’s one, also working as a warning against social injustice, and prostitutes often proved to be highly virtuous. The lovers died, but were saved by the Buddha. The *seppuku*’s spectacular and heart-rending final scene was the proper way to salvation.

Although love was at the bottom of those prostitute-buying plays, and places or figures associated with prostitution—a road inn in Tanba Yosaku, a madam in Kasane izutsu, etc.—eroticism was a rather indirect motive or theme and definitely not the main issue of the plays. The latter display at least three kinds of erotic scenes: seduction; homoeroticism; and *shinjû*.

Chikamatsu’s dramas are not devoid of scenes where women, wives, or prostitutes seduce men. In *Horikawa nami no tsuzumi*, Otane, a samurai’s young wife, resists the advances of Yukaemon, another samurai, but Genemon hears them and thinks they have become lovers. Otane, frightened and drunk, tries to seduce Genemon to keep him silent about what he heard, traps him by making him exchange a fateful cup of *sake* with her, unlaces his belt, and they embrace and lie down with their heads on the same pillow.... Nothing very much different from the erotic passages in the works of Ihara Saikaku, except that the latter conceived love, *kôshoku*, as a

means to connect people of different classes and celebrate life.

Homoerotic scenes are not rare in Chikamatsu's plays, but they are nothing but traditional and stereotyped, quite typical of the time's *nanshoku* or male love literature. *Shinjū mannen-gusa* takes place in mount Kōya, a monastery reputed for its *chigo* or pretty young pages the local monks often fell in love with and initiated to anal sex. One of the characters says: "A page in a monastery is the equivalent for a wife in the secular world," and male love shows through the whole first act. In *Shinjū yoi-gōshin*, the samurai Hanbei has to choose one male lover for his brother and opts for the one who will accept to disembowel himself. The anecdote demonstrates the hero has remained a true samurai. Lesbianism wasn't absent either from Chikamatsu's scenes. In *Satsuma uta*, Sangobei, dressed up as a woman to hide, is chatted up by the female servant Oshun who tells him: "Let's sleep as husband and wife. And as for tonight, would you like to be the woman, unless you'd prefer acting as the man?"

*Shinjū* means the heart's bottom and is translated as: double-love suicide. The word often recurs in the titles of the plays of Chikamatsu. It designates any behavior producing evidence of one's sincere feeling. It follows that death out of love is the highest expression of amorous sincerity. Killing the beloved or showing one's will to die for the sake of her before killing oneself is so to speak the ultimate sex or love act and goes along with a production of erotic effects. In *Sonezaki shinjū*, the courtesan Ohatsu must hide her lover Tokubei under the verandah and sits on the step. She then explains to Koheiji, Tokubei's unreliable friend, that Tokubei is in such a hopeless economic situation that he must die. She wonders aloud whether Tokubei is firmly resolved to die and asks the question to Tokubei by touching him with her naked foot. Her lover nods, takes her foot by the ankle and rubs it on his throat so as to signify he is going to kill himself. Eroticism is linked with death through Ohatsu's foot.

But nothing is more erotic than the dying female lover, for example in *Ikudama shinjū*, shaking as if she had an ultimate orgasm.

## Biography

Not much is known for sure about the life of Chikamatsu Monzaemon: he descended from a *bushi* or samurai family from the province of Echizen; after his father quit his feudal service and moved to Kyoto, he was a page boy in the service of Ichijō Ekan, the local court's prince abbot, and became well-versed in Chinese, Japanese, sacred and profane literature, as well as in *jōruri*, a sort of epic recitative with dialogues, accompanied by *shamisen's* music and illustrated by a *ningyō* or puppet's play; his biography then consisted in the nomenclature of at least 150 dramas—he composed from 1673 on for *kabuki* and *bunraku*, oscillating between *jidaimono*, historical pieces, and *sewamono*, domestic ones.

GÉRARD SIARY

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## CHILD-LOVE

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The book commonly called *Child-Love* has on its title page "Private Letters from Phyllis to Marie on the Art of *Child-Love* or the Adventures and Experiences of a Little Girl/Showing how pretty little maidens indulge those secret passions, alone and with others, which but too often lead to their seduction at an early age/ London and Paris 1898."

It takes as its epigraph the rhyme

"When apples are ripe they are ready for plucking,  
When girls are twelve they are ready for sucking,  
At fourteen years they are ready for fucking."

The book is a form of seduction manual detailing all the sexual activities which can be performed with girls short of breaking the hymen. The narrator and ostensible writer is Phyllis Norroy who dedicates *Child-Love* to "Pretty Little Girls who while satisfying their own desires and those of their lovers, be they new women or children like themselves have retained their virginity and 'Never told tales out of school.'" Purporting to be twelve letters from Phyllis to her friend Marie, it follows the familiar pattern in erotica of a more experienced woman warning a less experienced one of sexual danger, while giving explicit descriptions.

The specific and reiterated danger is the loss of virginity in under-age girls, an event described in terms of grotesque horror. Phyllis sanctimoniously warns of how "my passions being aroused, I consented to my own seduction at the age of twelve years, and this, instead of adding to only destroyed the pleasure I had in the secret practices of childhood." The storyline describes how, over one summer on the South Coast of England, Phyllis goes through the gamut of sexual experience over the ages of twelve and thirteen.

Marie is in France producing nude photographs of little girls for sale. Phyllis encourages her in the first letter and gives advice on posing the children, as "there is no doubt a great and increasing desire among men to arouse and share their pleasures with little girls from ten to fifteen years of age."

In the second letter Phyllis tells how she was introduced to sex when she was twelve and was living with her aunt and uncle on the south coast. A wealthy Baronet, Sir Harry Norton, lives nearby and Phyllis finds that he has been watching her while she undresses to bathe in the sea. He leads her to a grassy bank where he kisses her, feels her vaginal lips and urges her to touch his penis but she is frightened and refuses. He smacks her on the behind and then brings himself to a climax by rubbing his penis on top of her vagina.

Letter three introduces Lady Norton who invites Phyllis to lunch and tells her story. She was orphaned as a child and found a playmate in Sir Harry who was also an orphan though ten years older than her. Her guardian, seeking to deny the future Lady Norton her inheritance, sought to corrupt her so that "she would have no further love for Sir Harry." He gave her sexually explicit books and pictures and encouraged her to masturbate while unsuccessfully attempting to seduce her. At fifteen she eloped to Paris under an alias with Sir Harry and "finding her lover bent on accomplishing his wishes, which was the climax of her own desires also, she gave him every help by bending her knees and keeping her legs apart...then came to her that indescribable sensation when a young girl's vagina is for the first time distended by the fully grown organ of a man many years older than herself."

The fourth letter describes how Lady Norton takes Phyllis into a secret chamber to the manor house and seduces her saying, "I want your child-love and to arouse and gratify your girlish desires." She ties up Phyllis' legs in a raised position and gives her cunnilingus then greases her anus and stimulates her manually.

Phyllis has a slightly younger friend called Helen who are playing among the sand dunes, letter five recounts, when they witness a young man raping a woman who is so overwhelmed by the experience that she surrenders to it and confesses love for him. They later find, as told in

## CHILD-LOVE

letter six, that this was an Earl's son and a Bishop's daughter.

In the seventh letter Phyllis is again with lady Norton who gives the girl an elaborate strap-on dildo with which to penetrate her and has the girl birch her until she climaxes and the dildo squirts milk. Lady Norton teaches Phyllis the technique of fellatio which "if properly carried out by a little girl, [is] the greatest protection to her virginity." The novel is now in full satiric flow: while supposedly protecting the virginity of girls, that staple of nineteenth-century sexuality, in fact its morality leads them to practice the most extreme acts of oral, anal, and flagellatory sex.

Lady Norton introduces Phyllis to her cousin Algy who buys her presents then fondles her vagina, greases her anus, and sodomizes her, "as I felt his cock entering my body I realised for the first time how different and how infinitely more delightful it was to submit to the real action of being buggered by a strong man than to the artificial means employed so often among girls alone...each warm jet of spunk that he had shot into me while he lay himself naked between my childish legs, had sealed a loving bond of union between us."

Letter nine has Algy and Phyllis having sex in the drawing room of her aunt's house on her thirteenth birthday while her relatives are conveniently away and she has sent the servants off with a gold coin each. She fellates Algy and, at the point of his orgasm, thrusts her finger up his anus. Now her friend Helen joins them in an orgy in which the girls stimulate each other orally and he sodomises Helen while Phyllis stimulates him anally.

The writer has no plot mechanism to take the story further, so the only complication which can be produced to create more material for the novel is the introduction of a new character in letter ten. Phyllis' pretty fifteen-year-old cousin Ethel, therefore, comes to stay. Phyllis encourages Sir Harry to watch unobserved while she, Helen, and Ethel undress. She procures Ethel for Sir Harry "for I thought it is a shame that so pretty and well developed a girl, who was nearly sixteen year so age, should any longer fret over the fact that she was still a virgin." Consequently Phyllis and Lady Norton tie up Ethel in a pose open for sex and she is penetrated vaginally by Sir Harry.

The last two letters give the climax in which, to add an erotic charge, for the first time Phyllis describes herself: "My great mass of rich brown hair was falling about my face and shoulders down to my waist, my little breasts were just beginning to form, and my slit, without a trace of hair about it, stood out from between my rounded legs."

She and Algy can restrain themselves no longer, and Phyllis is finally penetrated vaginally: "Oh that bursting pain was so awful that I never dreamt that such agony could be produced in the body of a child without its killing her, but nature came to my aid, and before a second pang I fainted." He is frightened at the physically debilitating effect of this sex on Phyllis and calls on Lady Norton, who organizes sal volatile, beef tea, and an ice pack, in a characteristic Victorian invalid scene.

The story ends with the traditional Victorian happy ending: Phyllis marries Algy who has come into a considerable fortune and become "one of the most promising officers in the Navy." Sir Harry becomes High Sheriff of the County and a Member of Parliament. Ethel is engaged to a younger brother of Sir Harry and Helen stays as Lady Norton's companion.

The book is obviously subversive of the division between child and adult sexuality but is also subversive of the aristocracy, the family, and of gender and generational roles in having girls penetrate men. By containing all these transgressions within the settings of the Victorian home and holiday it achieves a satirical edge which raises it above the mundane level of its prose. Phyllis writes, "Ah! Marie, it is a naughty world!"

JAD ADAMS

### Editions

Supposedly published in aid of "The charitable organisation for the protection of pretty little girls," the book was most probably printed in Paris for Leonard Smithers and his French associate Duriège (his first name is unknown). A French translation, *Amours précoces: Scènes de la quinzième année* [Early loves: Fifteen-year-old Action] is in the British Library with a tentative date of 1900. Other English language editions were produced in Rotterdam (c. 1899–1900) by Bergé with the title *Love and Debauch* in Paris with a reprint in 1905. Another edition was printed in Paris in c. 1915–1920, and there was at least one U.S. reprint in New York, c. 1935.

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## CHOISEUL-MEUSE, FÉLICITÉ DE

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c. 1770–c.1824  
French novelist

Félicité de Choiseul-Meuse was a prolific novelist who mainly published respectable tales of love and adventure such as *Amour et gloire* [*Love and Glory*] (1817). She even wrote edifying stories of a morally undemanding kind, such as *L'Ecole des jeunes filles* [*School for Young Ladies*] (1822). But she also produced, in her earlier years, a series of more daring works: *Amélie de Saint-Far, ou la fatale erreur* [*Amélie de Saint-Far, or the Fatal Mistake*] (1802); *Julie, ou j'ai sauvé ma rose* [*Julie, or I Saved my Rose*] (1807?); and *Entre chien et loup* [*Twilight*] (1807). None of these three novels could be called pornographic, but they all deal with libertine themes, and all are concerned with women's sexual pleasure.

*Amélie de Saint-Far* is a story about feminine innocence. Amélie, a beautiful young girl on the verge of womanhood, is in the keeping of an unscrupulous guardian, Alexandrine, who is not virtuous herself, and is impatient at the sight of Amélie's flourishing virginity. Alexandrine has a lover, the impetuous Colonel Charles, who is powerfully attracted to Amélie, and one night forces Alexandrine to allow him into the young woman's room. But the sleeping virgin is so utterly charming that the would-be rapist lingers in contemplation of her beauty, enchanted by her sweet murmurings. He delays his attack for so long, in fact, that he eventually runs out of time, and Amélie remains intact. So powerful, so seductive is her innocence that it actually wins the aggressive male over to a gentler, more feminine form of sensuality. But Amélie's innocence does not guarantee her a passage through every erotic trial. The "fatal error" announced in the novel's title occurs later, when Amélie revives her

dear friend, the Duke de Nemours, who has almost drowned, by lying on him, and rubbing herself on him. First aid turns into copulation, but even this is not the end of Amélie's metaphorical virginity, because she is too innocent to know what she has been doing. Only when she yields to the duke a second time, having rather enjoyed the first, is she declared to have made the fatal error.

*Julie, ou j'ai sauvé ma rose* examines virginity in narrowly technical terms. The heroine, who recounts her own story from the point of view of successful maturity, tells how she elected to save her "rose" (her virginity), not by avoiding sexual contact, but by finding all sorts of ways to divert her male partners into other forms of pleasure, so that she would never be penetrated, and never risk pregnancy. This tactic is not presented in the novel as the height of virtue: it is just a sensible, yet pleasurable thing to do. Julie does not see herself as a tease, and does all that she can not to be a true erotic partner for her lovers, bringing them to satisfaction by practicing the most refined "caresses." At times, she doubts whether she has made the right choice, and on one occasion desires ardently to lose her cherished rose. But the man with whom she finds herself at that time is impotent. Julie's success depends on good fortune and on deceiving her partners. But her approach is presented as a viable set of tactics for women who wish, with safety, to make a career out of pleasure.

*Entre chien et loup* is about conjugal infidelity. A group of women are staying together in a country house during the hunting season. While the men are away on a hunting trip which lasts several days, the women take part in twilight sessions of intimate story-telling. Each tells how she deceived her husband in some way, usually by

not being a virgin at the time of marriage. They indulge and forgive each other's peccadillos, and moral complicity within the group extends to organizing financial support for the legal defence of one of their number. The story-telling is not a time of wildly licentious behavior: it is simply a period of permissiveness. Confessions are heard in the twilight, while male-centered rules are briefly suspended.

Around 1800, there tended in France to be a clear gender division in the production of stories about love and passion. Women novelists such as Adèle de Souza, Sophie Cottin, and Félicité de Genlis wrote sentimental stories in which young men and women died of unrequited love. On the other hand, male authors such as Mirabeau, Restif de la Bretonne, and Andréa de Nerciat were setting up the pattern of modern pornography, by writing forthright stories in which people took their sexual pleasure quickly and often. Choiseul-Meuse's erotic work, while self-consciously feminine, does not fit this gendered pattern. She focusses on women's pleasure and seductive tactics, attempting to make room for nuanced desires and gentle pleasures.

Choiseul-Meuse's later novels do not simply leave behind the earlier themes, although they focus less on feminine intimacy. Léonce, the hero of *Amour et gloire*, is a soldier, but not of the kind usually found in pornographic novels of that period, such as *Les Amours de garrison* [*Love-life in the Garrison*], where being a soldier is associated with straightforward sex, unencumbered by sentimentality or lengthy seduction. The expeditious use of women as sexual partners is very much the style of Léonce's fellow officer, the experienced Frédéric. But the focus of Choiseul-Meuse's novel is on Léonce, the young man in search of a pleasurable moral path which gives each woman the respect she deserves, but no more than that. The hero does in fact make one very bad error of judgment in this regard. He throws himself on the young, recently married, and pregnant Ursule. But Ursule goes cold and stiff—so cold, in fact, that her baby is said later to have died at that very moment. Despite Frédéric's observation that Léonce should not have been deterred by this "show" of reluctance, the hero comes to realize that Ursule's coldness is in fact a drastic symptom of genuine virtue. He thus learns to distinguish, in the course of his maturation, between women

like Ursule and those who, like the housekeeper Mariette, are available for seduction. It is fitting that, at the end, Léonce should marry a poised widow with whom he has been in love for some time. Mature love, in Choiseul-Meuse's work, seems to be beyond the moral agony that surrounds virginity. She certainly exploits the theme of virginity in narrative, as many libertine writers, including Sade, did before her. But she also seeks a way out of the confines of that theme, opening out into a world where feminine vice and feminine virtue are not so drastically opposed.

### Biography

Nothing can be said with any authority about the life of Félicité de Choiseul-Meuse, not even the dates of her birth and death. She is believed to have been the mistress of the well-known cabaret singer, Gouffé. Her last published novel dates from 1824.

PETER CRYLE

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## CHOISY, FRANÇOIS-TIMOLÉON, ABBÉ DE

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1644–1724

French historian and memorialist

Although a prolific writer of works on religious thought and on ecclesiastical and royal history, the Abbé de Choisy is nowadays best known for his memorial writings, and in particular for the collection of autobiographical fragments known as the *Mémoires de l'abbé de Choisy habillé en femme* [*The Transvestite Memoirs of the Abbé de Choisy*]. Although written in the early Regency period at the request of the marquise de Lambert (1647–1733), Choisy's "transvestite memoirs" were published only posthumously and—initially, at least—in parts (in 1735 and 1839). They chronicle in a light and lively manner a number of relationships which Choisy claims to have conducted, while dressed as a woman, with a succession of young women from various backgrounds. Like Sidney's *Arcadia* and d'Urfé's *L'Astrée*, Choisy's memoirs thus offer variants of a popular early modern *topos* in which a male protagonist cross-dresses for purposes of seduction. Such works frequently aim to "reconcile eroticism and innocence" (Reynes, 1983) by blurring the boundaries between inter-female friendship and genuine heterosexual desire. The ease with which some such characters—and Choisy in particular—succeed in seducing women *while dressed as women* suggests the early modern period's relatively tolerant stance towards what would nowadays be called "lesbian" acts and desires. At the same time, Choisy's apparent skill at passing as a woman in even the most compromising of circumstances can certainly stretch credibility. Although his great-nephew, the marquis d'Argenson, vouches for the memoirs' authenticity, one cannot always tell whether Choisy might at certain points be embellishing the truth, seeking to bluff his reader, or being unwittingly duped by his own masquerades.

Whatever the case, cross-dressing is never simply a means to sexual conquest for Choisy. As the lavish descriptions of clothing throughout the memoirs illustrate, female attire can also have an erotic thrill of its own. Choisy attempts to justify the "bizarre" pleasure he derives from cross-dressing in two different ways; he attributes his transvestism both to his mother's idiosyncratic decision to have him brought up dressed as a girl and to a more general theory of mankind's self-love. Since love is born of beauty, which "is usually the lot of women," then it is only natural, he argues, that men who believe themselves beautiful will adopt feminine accoutrements. Choisy's personal vanity is considerable, yet also highly dependent on others. Indeed, although his sexual tastes are essentially heterosexual (he is particularly attracted to girls in their early teens), he enjoys and even requires the attention of male admirers as testimony to his feminine beauty.

Although the two principal sections of the memoirs are similar in structure and content, the nature of Choisy's transvestism differs in each. In one section, Choisy poses as a widow, the "comtesse des Barres," and moves to the country town of Bourges. Using his female persona as a disguise, he starts a secret liaison with a sixteen-year-old girl of noble stock, Mademoiselle de La Grise, who is apparently so innocent that she fails to recognize Choisy's true sex even during their sexual relationship. In a remarkable scene, Choisy has sexual intercourse with the girl in full view of a crowd of onlookers who, he claims, "increased the delight even more; it is sweet to deceive the eyes of the public." This remark is typical of Choisy's memoirs, throughout which the pleasures of theatrical and sexual performance are deeply intertwined. Choisy's second partner is an actress, Roselie, whom he dresses in male attire for his own pleasure. This "harmless amusement," however, stops



once the young “man” starts to develop morning sickness.

In the other principal section, Choisy lives openly as a transvestite under the name of “Madame de Sancy.” He starts a liaison with a young lady named Charlotte, whom, like Roselie, he also dresses in men’s clothes; at one point, they stage a parodic marriage ceremony with both wearing the clothes of the opposite sex. Although public gossip about their activities prompts Choisy to abandon Charlotte, he is apparently happy for the sexual nature of his relationship with his next partner, Mademoiselle Dany, to become public knowledge. At one point, as in the other section of the memoirs, Choisy invites some dinner guests to watch him and his new partner in bed—even though this time he is fully recognizable as a man in women’s clothing.

Choisy’s memoirs suggest that the “Histoire de la Marquise-Marquis de Banneville” (“Story of the Marquise-Marquis de Banneville”) is also his own work, although some attribute it to the pen of Charles Perrault. This curious tale of mistaken gender identity is clearly based on Choisy’s own unconventional youth; it is, however, by his own admission an idealization of the truth: “The little Marquise could do many things which were forbidden to me, her superb beauty putting her under everyone’s protection.” Although the tale is not as sexually frank as the memoirs—no sexual activity takes place until the final page—its evocation of taboo sexuality is perhaps stronger. The tale’s heroine is brought up unaware that “she” is in fact biologically male, and falls in love with a dashing young marquis who reciprocates “her” affection but is curiously unwilling to marry “her.” When the marquise is finally told the truth of “her” own sex, “she” is appalled at “her” supposedly unnatural desires. However, physical pleasure takes over from reflection, and “her” initial shock is erased by her partner’s caresses. Eventually, “she” persuades the marquis to marry, and only after their wedding is his reluctance explained: “he” is in fact a woman, and heterosexuality is restored. The conclusion to this tale is perhaps typical of Choisy’s writings in that its ultimate assertion of heterosexuality cannot fully neutralize the eroticism that derives precisely from his playful, if at times a little insistent, troubling of gender boundaries.

## Biography

Born in Paris, France, 16 August 1644. Studied theology at the Sorbonne, 1662–1666. Traveled to Italy, England, Siam. Accepted as member of the Académie Française, 1687. Died in Paris, France, 2 October 1724.

JOSEPH HARRIS

## Editions

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## CHOPIN, KATE

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1850–1904

American novelist and short story writer

### *The Awakening*

*The Awakening* was published to a deeply hostile reception in 1899, condemning its author to public ostracism, and subsequently fell into obscurity and then oblivion, from which it was not rescued until its reappearance in French translation in 1953. Its heroine's pursuit of sexual autonomy challenged Southern reactionary views of women which held maternal domesticity to be wholly adequate to their capacities and aspirations, and her liberation of an anarchic, promiscuous female sexuality undermined prevailing cultural myths which presented women as passive, passionless creatures characterized by an innate sexual apathy. A female-authored novel of adulterous passion, in which a wife deserts her husband, neglects her children, takes a lover, and commits suicide, was also a radical departure from the conventions of a genteel women's fiction devoted to historical romance and celebrations of marriage and motherhood.

The novel charts the newly awakened erotic yearnings of Edna Pontellier, a Kentuckian who has married unsatisfyingly into French Creole New Orleans society, during a long summer at the idyllic holiday retreat of Grand Isle in the Gulf of Mexico. As an outsider, Edna is confused by the Creoles' ambivalent sexuality, misled by a grossness which masks a real lack of sexual disturbance in their lives, and she is

troubled equally by both. In their freedom from prudery and their uninhibited frankness of speech on the intimacies of sex and childbirth the Creoles appear to enjoy a guiltless, sophisticated sensuality which thrives in the lush ambience of the American tropic, but in reality this apparently open sexuality operates only within the closed conventions of marriage and is complemented by a fierce chastity and strict Catholic piety. In this chastely monogamous context, the devotions of her young admirer Robert Lebrun and his flirtations with other men's wives are merely conventional affectations, socially acceptable because they are unserious. Robert's unconsummated pinings are the aristocratic diversions of a latter-day courtly lover, a wholly pretend-affair which never poses any real danger to wifely chastity, and he mistakenly supposes Edna, as a woman of her class, to be familiar and complicit with the courtly code. When she, as an American, misconstrues both the code and his attentions, and his pretended feelings become real, Robert has to escape to Mexico to prevent the code (and the woman) from being violated, whereupon she starts an unfulfilling affair with a local philanderer, Alcée Arobin, who is willing, in the case of the non-Creole woman, to put the code aside.

For Edna, raised in a Presbyterian mistrust of sexuality, passion is not some bland property to be talked openly about and away, in Robert's fashion, but an obscure, suppressed force, a hidden thing that is secretly awakened and is mysteriously occasioned by the absence as much

## CHOPIN, KATE

as by the presence of the lover. Her desire for Robert, aroused when he is away in Mexico, is primarily a fantasy eroticism, associated with her pubescent passion for a cavalry officer during her Kentucky girlhood, and the more distant the object of infatuation, the wilder and fiercer grow her yearnings. In Edna's consciousness, desire is habitually conceived in an imagery of unfathomable ocean currents and remote underground volcanoes, evoking "awe" and "delirium," and the passive narrative voice which has her lashed by every imaginable kind of wave—oceanic, musical, electrical—denotes a submissive longing to be engulfed and swept away by something uncontrollable. Her conformist businessman husband, the conventional rake Arobin, and the mannered effeminate Robert—all pallid, insipid creatures without any strong physical or sexual presence—are merely incidental to this "secret great passion." Thus the novel is, of necessity, a study in sexual solipsism, its erotic energy entirely a projection from its heroine's self-generated sexuality. Significantly, when Edna finally takes the sexual initiative with Robert, the only man for whom she shows any real desire, the phallic tropology is given to the woman while the man takes the female role. She bestows "a soft, cool, delicate kiss, whose voluptuous sting *penetrated* his whole being" and looks into his face "as if she would never *withdraw* her eyes more" (emphases added). Even before the rival claims of motherhood break symbolically into Edna's adulterous passion (she is summoned by her friend Adèle who is giving birth to another child), Robert's passive, squeamish response to her assault indicates that their love will not be consummated, abandoning her to the empty prospect of sterile liaisons with men like Arobin. Appropriately, even the sea, the site of her erotic adventure in which she learns spontaneously to swim "far out where no woman had ever swum before" and which appears at her death to enfold her in a sensuous, seductive embrace like a lover, is imaged as "an abyss of solitude" (the book's original title was *The Solitary Soul*). If Edna, as some mythopoeic critics have suggested, is archetypally reborn from her drowning into the mythic identity of Mermaid, Gulf Spirit, or Venus Aphrodite, goddess of sexual love, it is a lonely birth which takes place in an existential solitude far from the city world of men, and her final nakedness in the sea suggests, alongside her sexual awakening, a broader metaphysical communion

with the universe in which all social disguises are stripped away to reveal the radical aloneness of her essential, elemental being.

*The Awakening* is a masterpiece of condensed sensuous lyricism, abandoning chapter titles and employing surging oceanic imagery to maintain the impressionistic wave-like flow of Edna's reverie. Not surprisingly, given the novel's stylistic voluptuousness and its author's francophone background, elements of French *fin-de-siècle* writing—its hedonistic free-love mentality, erotic morbidity, and romantic fatalism—have been detected in Chopin's prose, while her theme of woman's victimization by her passions has been linked with the biological determinism of the American Naturalists (for Dr. Mandelet, love is merely Nature's decoy to secure mothers for the race). In Chopin's impromptu synthesis of styles, modes, and worldviews, European aesthetics and Mediterranean Creolism are drawn into the American cultural mainstream, resisting any definitive closure. At its climax, the novel, like its still-swimming heroine whose surname denotes a bridging agent, is left suspended in flux, in a process of becoming, and it can be read as a parable of Chopin's own literary awakening, demonstrating her openness to the many developing literary forms and influences that were fermenting as the new century dawned.

### Biography

Born Katherine O'Flaherty in St. Louis, February 8, 1850 to an Irish immigrant father and Creole mother descended from French settlers. Educated at St. Louis Academy of the Sacred Heart, 1859–1868. Married Oscar Chopin, French Creole cotton trader, in 1870 and moved to New Orleans. Five sons and one daughter. Husband died of swamp fever, 1883. Published two novels, *At Fault* (1890) and *The Awakening* (1899), and two collections of short stories, *Bayou Folk* (1894) and *A Night in Arcadie* (1897). Died of a brain haemorrhage, 22 August 1904, while visiting the St. Louis World's Fair.

DEREK WRIGHT

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## CHORIER, NICOLAS

c. 1609–1692  
 French lawyer, historian, erotic writer

*L'Académie des dames*

The many editions in Latin and French of *Aloysiae Sigea* (sometimes titled the *Meursius français*, etc., or, of course *L'Académie des dames*) were apparently widely read. This is because Chorier's book is the second publication in France to merit the name of sex manual—not just who might be having sex with whom, but in a practical way, how to do it. In terms of sexual possibilities, it goes much farther than Millot's *Ecole des filles* of 1655 (q.v.), into such areas as lesbianism and group sex, although the author was apparently not given any grief by the authorities.

Chorier's book, like Millot's *Ecole des filles* or Aretino's *Ragionamenti* (q.v.), is a dialogue between an experienced, (married) woman, Tullia, and an about-to-be married younger woman, Octavia. The book offers seven dialogues. The seventh is of questionable authenticity. The first finds Tullia and Octavia in bed together, as

Octavia accepts Tullia's request that she place her fingers in Tullia's vagina and bring her to orgasm.

Things build up from there. Relations between Tullia and Octavia continue, and Tullia demands that Octavia recount in minute detail her wedding night, which is spied upon by her own mother, who puts her into bed with her heroically endowed new husband and then watches through the keyhole. Actually there is a lot of spying in *L'Académie des dames* and a lot of worrying about heroic members. Octavia learns that her mother, who enjoys a reputation of enviable virtue, is actually a dedicated libertine.

Things continue to develop. At the instigation of her mother, Sempronia, she, and Octavia are whipped by a priest. They find it exhilarating and ask for more. There are chastity belts, which mysteriously have extra keys.

Tullia explains how on a journey to the Rome region, and with the help of a middle-aged woman, Ursine, she spent an interesting afternoon with four merry men—a Frenchman, a German, and two Florentines. Starting with the Frenchman:

I obeyed him; but I had hardly moved my behind when I felt myself at the same time sprayed with a sweet liquid which sent me to seventh heaven. It was then that I shed all my modesty; I cared neither for honor, nor good manners (*honnêteté*); I lost even the memory of who I was and, among the confusion of all these pleasures, I came with extraordinary transports

The two Florentines, when their turn comes, practice what in French is called “*le goût italien*”—anal intercourse. There’s more than one way to be deflowered, they declare, and proceed to *passer à l’acte*.

Eventually, Octavia finds herself with Tullia’s friends Cléante and Médor. Octavia will have sex with Médor to return a favor owed by Cléante. Tullia directs the action, which is similar to the preceding. (The French surrealist writer Louis Aragon once remarked that while he had the greatest respect for those who believed that sex was forever different, he himself thought it was always pretty much the same.)

But now things take another turn. A recurring theme in Chorier is the unquestioning obedience women owe authority, their husbands, and the maintenance of wifely honor. Tullia explains that

It is permitted that a husband impose whatever laws he likes on his wife, and she must prudently observe them without objection. She’s stupid if she imagines that there is something wrong with her obedience to him.”

Before Tullia’s marriage, her mother advises her that

You should consider Oronte . . . as a divinity on earth, you should cherish him and almost adore him and make yourself agreeable to all of his desires without imagining that they include anything dishonest in themselves. Those are, she continues, the prerogatives and the privileges of man; and here are the advantages of woman: She should believe if she is wise (*sage*), that since she was born for the pleasure of her husband, all the other men in the world are put there for nothing but her pleasure . . . .

Paradoxically, Tullia declares, “You have to believe that there is nothing that is not permitted to you, but that everything is forbidden.” The general tone of the book suggests that this argument should perhaps be turned around the other way: everything forbidden and everything permitted.

Somebody might worry about so inconsistent a doctrine, but things take yet another turn. As it happens, Médor is late for the rendez-vous. The governor of the city likes to carouse with the young nobility. Cléante has managed to sneak out, but Médor has been retained. When Médor finally arrives and settles in, they are well on their way to realizing their goal of making love with Octavia ten times each, when there is a knock at the door. The two women’s husbands are safely out of town. The call likely comes from the governor.

There follows what can only be described as an apology of hypocrisy. Tullia declares that:

Honesty consists only in appearances: *honestum est honestum videri*. Men never get to the bottom of things; and since their mind is limited, they can see only what falls under their noses. We must put on the appearance of virtue in our actions, even the most criminal ones (speaking according to conventional mores); we will pass for honest even in the mind of the severest critics and the most austere censors of the pleasures of life. This, Octavia, is what we should work at, not imitating certain women who live without prudence, who cannot love without making known their passion, and who would find no pleasure in sex if they didn’t tell everybody (contrast. Brantôme, *infra*).

Octavia responds that “It’s a strange thing that we have to be so careful with actions which should be entirely free.”

Tullia declares with conviction that “these are unjust and rigorous laws, which these fake wise men have imposed upon us.” We learn that the governor’s messenger has indeed arrived and Tullia concludes that “You have to obey. The invitations of the great are so many commandments.”

Elsewhere, in similar doctrinaire fashion, Tullia declares that notions of modesty and virtue are a “prejudice of our mind, which allows itself to be tyrannised by usage and custom.” Octavia has remarked earlier that there is nothing rarer than “a wise [*sage*] and educated woman [*a femme savante*]” who stays within the limits of conventional conduct.

Actually, Tullia, her lover Cléante, and her husband Oronte formalize a contract in which, in exchange for some of Cléante’s fortune, he gains free access to Tullia’s body (improbable contracts are perhaps characteristic of classicist erotic literature; cf. La Fontaine, *Les troqueurs*).

Later on in the narrative, as Tullia goes to meet her four partners, Ursine dresses her in a white silk dress, so fine and so transparent that “I felt surrounded by a brilliant white cloud, rather than ordinary clothing . . . .”

### Biography

Nicolas Chorier was a lawyer and polygraph in Vienne (France) and Grenoble in the seventeenth century. He wrote numerous “serious” books in Latin and French, including a *Histoire générale du Dauphiné*. He is remembered, however, for his erotic classic, printed and reprinted in Latin and French under various titles.

The publication history of Chorier’s book is the result of elaborate subterfuge. The “serious” jurist apparently didn’t want to be identified with his erotic book—or at least wanted to give the appearance of anonymity. The first edition was apparently published in Latin in Grenoble toward 1660. It was attributed to a learned Spanish lady of the sixteenth century, Luisa Sigea. The first title was *Aloisiae Sigea Toletana Satyra sotadica, de arcanis amoris, et Veneris*. The first edition was further attributed to a supposed Latin translator, one Joannes Meursius, a seventeenth-century Leyden scholar who died in

1653, before the first edition came out. The first French language edition was apparently published in 1680.

HERBERT DE LEY

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## CHRISTIAN, M.

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1960–

American short story writer and novelist

After writing for nearly a decade with no publishing success, M. Christian took a class in erotica in 1992. The instructor, Lisa Palac, liked his story, “Intercore,” so much that she published it in her magazine, *Future Sex*. From there, the story was selected for publication in *Best American Erotica 1993* and M. Christian’s career as an erotica writer began.

Christian is often quoted as saying that the only thing he likes more than sex is writing. It is

a statement easily borne out by his prolific and highly literate output since his first published story in 1992. He has crossed gender as well as sexual orientation lines in his work with chameleonic seamlessness, often leaving readers uncertain about who he is in real life. An intensely private person with an abundance of empathic emotion, he relishes the confusion he inspires and continues to write from perspectives he cannot experience but easily imagines.

With over 200 published stories, nearly two dozen anthologies, four collections, and two novels (one in the works) to his credit, Christian

## CHRISTIAN, M.

not only adores writing but has found a highly receptive audience for his work. Yet, it is not the sexual aspect of his writing that keeps him interested and busy—it is the process of storytelling. “I rarely write about things that turn me on,” Christian says. “My biggest excitement is in the writing itself, the use of plot, characterization, description, etc.”

Viewed widely throughout the genre as a master storyteller, Christian has been instrumental in helping to move erotica closer to mainstream fiction. His stories frequently deal with larger issues, such as moral ambiguity and crises of faith, within the context of a sexual situation. His emphasis is not so much on sexual acts as the motivations behind them. In many cases, sex is absent from his stories except as a means to an end for a character or as a backdrop to more universal, emotional dilemmas.

Proving himself even more versatile than simply writing from gay, lesbian, as well as straight viewpoints, Christian is also the author of some three dozen well-received horror and science fiction stories for such publications as *Space & Time*, *Talebones*, *Night Terrors*, and many anthologies and Web sites. He is also the co-editor (with Maxim Jakubowski) of two mainstream anthologies, *The Mammoth Book of Future Cops*, and *The Mammoth Book of Tales of the Road*.

In *Dirty Words*, his first collection of gay erotica, the emotional landscape of his characters is revealed through the sexual situations in which they find themselves. The book was nominated by the Lambda Literary Foundation as the best collection of gay erotica in 2002, a rare distinction for a heterosexual writer.

His next book, *Speaking Parts*, was a collection of lesbian erotica that even *Curve* magazine, a magazine for and by lesbians, lauded. Because Christian never purports to be anything other than a heterosexual male, writing erotic fiction for certain orientations or genders, he is rarely condemned for writing outside his experience. On the contrary, his ability to capture the nuances of lesbian relationships in this collection was generally deemed extraordinary.

*The Bachelor Machine* echoed elements of Christian's first published story as well as his first anthology in its treatment of technology and science fiction. The stories are geared to a heterosexual and bisexual audience and take place in a future with surprising technological

advances but timeless human quandaries. The book met with rave reviews from not only the erotica community but the professional science fiction world as well.

In his second collection of gay male erotica, *Filthy*, Christian's provocative, literary style is at its zenith. Through his signature style of eloquence and humor, he presents men at their best as well as their worst.

Over the years, Christian has been a respected columnist for a variety of publications and Web sites, including his celebrated “Confessions of a Literary Streetwalker” for the Erotica Readers and Writers Association (Web site). He has also authored various columns on everything from weird and unusual sex, to an analysis and celebration of movie villains (“They Only Wanted to Rule the World”).

In addition, he is a Celebrity Author at Custom Erotica Source ([www.customeroticasource.com](http://www.customeroticasource.com)), where he writes customized erotic fiction for individual clients. Beginning a new and exciting time in his professional life, he has also joined with the owner of Custom Erotica Source, Sage Vivant, in new writing projects, including the editing of five anthologies to date.

Christian's first novel, *Running Dry*, is not explicitly erotic but does deal with the power dynamic and love between two gay males amid a reinterpreted vampire ethos. More novels are in the works, both erotic and non-erotic.

### Biography

Born in Whittier, California, 28 March 1960. Moved to San Francisco, 1988. Collection *Dirty Words* nominated for Lambda Literary Award, 2002.

JILL TERRY

### Selected Works

#### Novels

*Running Dry*. 2006.

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## CLARK, DAVID AARON

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1960–  
 American novelist

One of the most mesmerizing themes in erotic fiction is obsession—think of Sir Stephen with O, Humbert Humbert with Lolita. In certain erotic novels, the narrator is haunted, by the object of his obsession. The narrator of David Aaron Clark's first novel, *Sister Radianance*, is haunted through the ages by a ghost lover named Luna.

*Sister Radianance* demonstrates that Clark knows obsession with an olfactory, tactile, kaleidoscopic familiarity.

Like William S. Burroughs—to whom he owes no small debt for the narrative freedom of *Sister Radianance*—Clark turns to post-modern science fiction as the most effective way to express his bleak, horrific vision of our times. His intensity keeps us with him on his trip through the lands of the dead even when the pace sometimes falters. *Sister Radianance* is a loosely structured series of stories, satires, scraps, even scenes from a film script, united by the narrator's search for the lost Luna—and by Clark's densely metaphoric language. This poetic approach to the eternal dance between Eros and Thanatos enables Clark to mystify, horrify, and

intrigue the reader, while shuffling a dazzling deck of literary cards.

One of Luna's incarnations is a haughty and unapproachable redhead named Wanda. We meet her in a chapter entitled "Aphrodite in Ermine," the conceit of which is that the narrator has written a letter to the editor of *Penthouse Forum*. He tells of going up to Wanda/Luna's hotel room. Aware that she embodies his ideal woman, she tortures him, at first psychologically, and then physically—she drives a knife through his hand. He fights back and flees, but concludes his letter to *Penthouse Forum* with a declaration of undying love. The level of S/M play is matched with rhapsodies about murder and cozily domestic scenes of cannibalism. Drugs are used to flagellate the narrator's undeserving soul, and are an insufficient anodyne for his suffering. At the end of this long hallucination of a novel, he is living in a teepee, the last apparition of Luna before him, arrayed in bright colors and decked in gold and precious stones. With few specifically erotic passages, *Sister Radianance* reflects an ability to absorb and transmute a dizzying range of media and technology overload.

Clark's *The Wet Forever*, his second novel, features a doomed hero named Janus, an original



creation seldom seen in erotic fiction: the Dostoyevskyan Underground Man with a sexual obsession. When Janus meets a dominatrix named Madchen, sparks fly—illuminating the dungeon environment of the novel, which moves as in an urban nightmare from New York to Berlin. (At the time of writing, Clark was playing in a punk rock band, The False Virgins, and living with his lover, who later committed suicide. He has said that the Janus and Madchen characters were to some extent taken from his own life.)

Sadomasochism is a dominant theme in all of Clark's work, which is why he was asked by the publisher Richard Kasak to write *The Marquis De Sade's Juliette: Vengeance on the Lord*. It is an epistolary novel, a la Bram Stoker, heavily influenced by the film directors Abel Ferrara (and Freddie Francis, who made many of the classic Hammer horror films. Juliette, as envisioned by Clark, is the most destructively powerful domina ever to appear in New York. Clark deliberately sets out to rival Sade's *Juliette* in its horrific, hallucinatory presentation of nightmarish sadomasochism.

Clark's next novel, *Into the Black*, was commissioned by Maxim Jakubowski for his series, *Eros Plus*, and appeared in the United Kingdom in 1996. It is a horror novel in a way his previous fictions were not, with the supernatural in the forefront this time. Once again his protagonist is a professional dominatrix—Mary Ellen Masters—who has an encounter with a demonic force, an experience which deepens her perceptions of New York and the denizens of its sexual underground. Clark's dark vision is implacable and ferocious in *Into the Black*, and not for the squeamish.

Clark co-edited the anthology *Ritual Sex* with Tristan Taormino in 1996. Its theme is the many

intersections of sex and religion, and includes contributions by Pat Califia, Samuel R. Delany, Alice Joanou, Thom Metzger, and Genesis P. Orridge.

*True Blood*, a collection of photographs by underground photographer Charles Gatewood, chronicles San Francisco's blood-play world. Clark contributed a poetic text that has a Rimbaudian intensity.

The unifying vision in Clark's world is spiritual. There is a God, and angels, but this makes no difference. Only the extremes of sadomasochism can express the horror of the damned souls he writes about, and the Sadean, subterranean worlds he creates.

### Biography

Born in Camden, New Jersey in 1960. He graduated from Rutgers University with a major in journalism in 1985. He is the author of four novels, the editor of an anthology of erotic fiction, and has collaborated on books with photographers and comic artists. The first novel he wrote, *Sister Radiancance*, was published second, in 1994, following the appearance of *The Wet Forever* in 1993. He has been a performance artist, musician, and magazine editor, and lives in Los Angeles, where he directs erotic videos.

MICHAEL PERKINS

### Selected Works

*The Wet Forever*. 1993.

*Sister Radiancance*. 1994.

*The Marquis De Sade's Juliette*. 1995.

*Into The Black*. 1995.

*Ritual Sex* (anthology, with Tristan Taormino). 1996.

*True Blood*. 1997.

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## CLELAND, JOHN

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1710–1789

British novelist, playwright, and journalist

John Cleland is without doubt the most well-known of British writers of eighteenth-century, erotic literature. Whereas Eliza Haywood, Edmund Curll, or Matthew Lewis may also be familiar to the specialist, even students otherwise ignorant of the details of British literature are quick to remember John Cleland as the author of that infamous novel, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, or, as it is more commonly known, *Fanny Hill*. Illegal in the United States until 1963 and in Great Britain until 1970, *Fanny Hill* is now frequently included in undergraduate surveys and is required reading for all serious students of the British novel. As well-known as the novel is, however, John Cleland has himself never emerged as a literary figure deserving more than “minor” status. His life—regardless of William Epstein’s excellent 1974 biography—remains shrouded in mystery, and, with the exception of *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, his works are for the most part unread and out of print. Beginning in the 1990s, scholars have begun to make amends and realize the degree to which Cleland’s life and work are both representative of the complexity of the eighteenth-century cultural marketplace and richly deserving of the renewed critical interest.

John Cleland was born in Kingston-on-Thames sometime during the late summer or early fall of 1710. Christened on September 24th at Kingston’s All Saint’s Parish church, he was the first child of William Cleland of Edinburgh and Lucy DuPass of Surrey. At the time of his son’s birth, William Cleland was a struggling Army officer desperate to make ends meet. Although of respectable lineage—the Clelands were a well-known Scottish family—William had nevertheless grown up without the benefit of a family estate, which had been sold out of the family in 1640, and so had purchased a commission and served under Lord Mark Kerr at Almanza. When it became increasingly difficult

to support his family, William used his connections to acquire a position in the Civil Service. Appointed to the Commission of Customs in 1713, he was to remain employed throughout the most tumultuous years of the eighteenth century, a feat that offers eloquent testimony to his social and political skills. Indeed, he was well-known for his learning and conversation and evidently cultivated a wide circle of influential friends both in Edinburgh and London, among them Alexander Pope, Lord Orrery; Edward Harley, 2nd Earl of Oxford; and Richard Lumley, 2nd Earl of Scarborough. He was aided by his wife Lucy who, from contemporary reports, thoroughly enjoyed the circles in which her husband traveled.

In January 1721, at the age of ten, John Cleland entered the fourth form at the prestigious Westminster School, preparatory school for England’s elite. For William Cleland, of gentle birth and moderate income, John’s matriculation would have been quite an accomplishment, one that promised great things for son and father alike. The rigorous education and the easy transition to either Oxford or Cambridge were no less important than the invaluable social connections. School mates were the sons of the country’s most powerful families, and many were destined to be England’s leaders. John’s tenure at Westminster, however, was to be brief. Although he distinguished himself in one short year and was chosen to be a King’s Scholar—expenses paid by the crown and a berth at Oxford or Cambridge guaranteed—John left the school in 1723, two years after he had arrived and the same year that his younger brother Henry arrived. The reasons for John’s departure remain unclear. Given his scholarship and his strong academic standing, financial difficulties or a poor performance seem less likely than some kind of embarrassing youthful indiscretion. Whatever the reason, John’s circumstances changed abruptly, and by the age of seventeen, just about the same time he would have been off to the university, he had enrolled as a common foot soldier for the East

## CLELAND, JOHN

India Company and left London on board the schooner *Oakham* bound for Bombay.

The considerable difference between Westminster graduate and East India foot soldier suggests the possibility of some kind of breach between father and son. Either John Cleland was a strong-minded adventurer eager to throw his father's ambitions to the wind or an unlucky malcontent who was banished from the family circle. Either way it seems strange that the socially conscious Clelands should have supported a career that would take their eldest son so far from the elite circles of Edinburgh and London. On the other hand, the Clelands were certainly no strangers to military service, and the DuPass family did have considerable experience in India. Perhaps John Cleland sought the economic security promised by a career with the East India Company and was willing to risk the difficult and extended apprenticeship. In fact, Cleland moved rapidly up the ranks of the East India Company hierarchy. He moved first to the Bombay Island gun room and then to assistant, or "montross," to the gunners. He then switched into civil service, becoming an assistant secretary to the Mayor's Court and then Attorney. He applied for and received a promotion to "Writer" in the company's service in February 1731, and although this position was the lowest on the civil service ladder and paid a mere five pounds a year, and although Cleland was older than most of the other men at his rank, the promotion suggests that he was proceeding with long-term achievement in mind. He also had the full support of his father, who was required to secure the 500 pounds "security." A short three years later (the writer's standard apprenticeship is five years), Cleland advanced to "Factor," a promotion that both increased his salary to fifteen pounds a year and his responsibilities. This smooth advancement was, however, soon to hit a rough spot. In December 1734, Cleland was appointed attorney for one Lollaboy Soncurr, a Hindu, who had brought a suit against Henry Lowther. The latter was the Chief of the East India Company's Custom House at Surat, the former a merchant who asserted that Lowther had not paid his debt in full. The politically expedient course of action was obvious, but instead of towing the company line, Cleland countered with an unexpectedly impassioned defense: Lowther did not make a simple error but was consistently and irremediably incompetent, a

disgraceful and unscrupulous embarrassment to the Company. The hearing quickly became the sensational event of the season, and when the Court ruled, Lowther was vindicated and Cleland disgraced. To add insult to injury, the Bombay Mayor's Court not only arranged for Cleland's banishment to parts unknown, but also for the event to be stricken from the records heading back to London. At the last moment, one of the Council, John Braddyll, changed his mind and insisted by way of his dissent that the entire hearing become public. The result was that Cleland's fate now hinged upon a verdict from London. He had to wait for more than a year, and in the ensuing months Lowther was dismissed for gross mismanagement, and the unthinkable became real: a low-level bureaucrat attacked a corrupt superior and emerged victorious. Several key promotions followed until in October 1737 Cleland attained the rank of Junior Merchant at thirty pounds a year. He was then appointed Secretary to the Council in January 1739, the same Council that only four years earlier was ready to end his career. Whether his success was largely attributable to skill or luck, John Cleland managed to overcome several obstacles and, against the odds, establish for himself a respectable position and a secure future with the East India Company.

Although there is no record of Cleland's intellectual pursuits during this period, one curious item now in the possession of the Bodleian Library at Oxford suggests that he was anything but idle. The book, a collection of miniature portraits of Indian rulers, was given to the library by Alexander Pope in 1737 and bears this inscription: "This Book, (containing one hundred & seventy eight Portraits of the Indian Rajahs, continued to Tamerlane & the Great Moguls his Successors as far as to Aureng-Zebe) Was procured at Surat by Mr. John Cleland, and given to the Bodley Library, as a token of Respect, by Alex. Pope." Working strenuously to resuscitate his career with the East India Company, Cleland also had time to collect books and pursue a correspondence with the most famous literary figure of his day.

No sooner was his career back on track than Cleland suddenly requested leave to return to London. On 5 September 1740, he informed the Council that "Certain Concerns of the utmost Importance to my private Fortune (require] my personal Attendance in England." A short two

weeks later, Cleland boarded *Warwick* and sailed for England. After thirteen years in India, John Cleland was once again ready to seek his fortune back in his native land.

Cleland arrived home to disturbing news. His father, so successful for so many years, had finally been relieved of duty. Now sixty-six years old and in declining health, William Cleland was no longer useful to the Walpole administration. Neither his emotional remonstrance nor his more than twenty-six years of service proved effective: he lost his job in early June 1741. When his son arrived in August, he found his father dangerously ill from the kidney stones he suffered from for the last decade. After a brief reunion with his first child, William Cleland died on 21 September 1741. According to Pope, Cleland dutifully assisted his mother and sister, helping them move to a new house in St. James and generally supporting them through their painful loss. After this mention, however, details of Cleland's activities disappear. It is not until February 1747 that Cleland reappears in the historical record, when he was sued by one Thomas Cannon for 800 pounds and imprisoned in debtor's prison. Whether or not Cleland actually owed the money is not clear, but scholars agree that sometime during his imprisonment Cleland decided to write for money. Consequently, advertisements for Cleland's first by far most famous novel, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, appeared while its author was still imprisoned in the Fleet.

### *The Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*

Appropriately enough, given Cleland's imprisonment, *The Memoirs* is preoccupied with boundaries and their transgressions. Although, for example, the narrative follows the confessional model of Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) and *Moll Flanders* (1722) and takes us quite deliberately from innocence to experience to perversion and then back to a "normal," middle-class marriage based on love and sexual compatibility, the boundary of most interest to Cleland is that between love and lust. Novels like Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* (1741)—one of the most important models for Cleland's fictional experiment—celebrate the former only by overpowering the latter. They begin with religious ideals—virtue, chastity, love—and work themselves grudgingly downward to the rather

embarrassing facts of the body. Cleland, on the other hand, begins with the material reality of the body, of pleasures that can't be denied, of desires that are inescapably and profoundly human. He then works his way up—quite satirically at times—to the emotional truths of human love.

Indebted as much to Hogarth's *A Harlot's Progress* (1732) as to Defoe's and Richardson's novels, Cleland begins with the orphaned, young Fanny leaving the peaceful countryside for the dangerous opportunities of London. Following its more respected predecessors, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* will focus upon the relationship between female identity and female virtue. Like *Pamela* and *Shamela* and *Moll Flanders* and *Roxana*, *Memoirs* wants to understand the mystery of womanhood. Unlike those predecessors, however, *Memoirs* refuses to make an ethical state (virtuous or corrupt) contingent upon a bodily condition (virginal or experienced). Fanny will engage in an amazing variety of "fallen" activities but will emerge virtuous (and married) in the end because virtue has been redefined as a state of the heart independent of sexual behavior. Love and lust, in other words, do not have to compromise each other because corporeal desire is an appetite like hunger whose appeasement is natural rather than sinful. Throughout the novel, Fanny will participate in sexual activity—sometimes for money, sometimes for love, sometimes for spite, sometimes to escape boredom, sometimes only because she wants to feel sexual pleasure—yet she is allowed to retain her character, her essential humanity, her innate and indissoluble "goodness" because—in the logic of the narrative—she is "real."

Fanny's reality results directly from her various and complex motivations, from her own conflicts and confusions, and from her willingness to assume the masquerades necessary to survive life in mid-eighteenth-century Britain. When her lover Charles is abducted and she is left at the mercy of an avaricious landlady, Fanny allows herself to be sold to Mr. H—. The scene of her surrender is crucial to the narrative because Fanny falls into a life of prostitution, into a world where her material survival is contingent upon sexual favors given and received. She also falls, with her attentive reader, into a narrative that justifies corporeal pleasure as inescapable from both human and literary experience.

As Fanny explains, she was (and presumably continues to be) “in love” with Charles and thus committed to traditionally romantic notions of sexual fidelity. But her “circumstances” overwhelm her “virtue”: faced with unwanted intercourse, she faints dead away and awakens to find Mr. H— “buried in me.” Fanny makes it clear that she was more acted upon than acting, that she was paralyzed by economic desperation and victimized by her lack of options. But she also makes clear that her fall, like Eve’s before her, is a kind of awakening, a revelation bringing a certain kind of unanticipated knowledge. Although she awakens from her “trance” “passive and innocent of the least sensation of pleasure,” thus proving to the reader her sincere love of Charles, the sexual body will not be denied for long. However much she would wish it otherwise, Fanny’s body has a reality, a truth, that she can not control.

The passions of Fanny’s body will of course retain center stage. She is, after all, a whore-in-training. As a result, we are not surprised when she loses her moral outrage and guilt and acquires a “grateful fondness” for Mr. H—. At the same time, she develops a thirst for “more society, more dissipation.” When she discovers her “keeper” having his way with her maid—who is portrayed, by the way, as a false Pamela protecting a “*vartue*” she is all too willing to lose—Fanny revenges herself in kind with Mr. H—’s valet. This young, handsome, country lad is untutored in the ways of love but is equipped by nature with “such an over-sized machine” that even our experienced heroine is given pause. Fanny hardly profits—financially, that is—from the encounter. In fact, she herself pays the valet for his services. Why, then, does the narrative make so much of the event? And in what sense is Fanny now a “professional”? By way of an answer, consider an aside to Fanny’s correspondent provided after another long account of intercourse with the valet:

And here, Madam, I ought perhaps to make you an apology for this minute detail of things that dwelt so strongly upon my memory after so deep an impression. But, besides that this intrigue bred one great revolution in my life, which historical truth requires I should not sink upon you; may I not presume that so exalted a pleasure ought not be too ungratefully forgotten or suppressed by me, because I found it in a character in low life where, by the by, it is oftener met with, purer and more unsophisticated, than

amongst the false ridiculous refinements with which the great suffer themselves to be so grossly cheated by their pride....

This interlude is crucial, Fanny tells us, because it marks her understanding of the highest pleasures of purely physical sex. Will, Mr. H—’s valet, is not her equal: he has no education, no experience, no feelings, no real “self” to speak of. He is merely an animal, a male body that needs to satisfy its desires, a prodigious penis animated with all the energies of youth. It is precisely because of his essential physicality and corresponding lack of “self” that Fanny is able to experience a sexual intensity unmarred by distractions of any sort. This event is “revolution[ary]” for our heroine because it introduces her to the highest pleasures the body can attain. She is a “professional,” in other words, not because she has sex for money, which she doesn’t, but because she has sex only to have sex, only to feel pleasure and satisfy her own desires. Like the book that bears her name, Fanny is now committed to passion.

Predictably, Fanny is soon caught in the act by a suspicious Mr. H—. She is given “fifty guineas,” thrown out on the street, and forced to take up residence with Mrs. Cole, a good-natured Madame whose house of prostitution epitomizes “decency, modesty, and order.” That these events bring Volume I to a close and that Volume II is almost exclusively preoccupied with Fanny’s adventure as a “professional” in Mrs. Cole’s residence should remind us that Cleland’s exploration of the mystery of female sexuality, his celebration of the “mechanical” pleasures of the female body, is inextricable from Fanny’s experiences as a “whore.” Issues of female pleasure, in other words, are intimately tied to issues of female identity, and that identity is always already criminal in the sense that Fanny is by definition aberrant and perverse.

After a variety of minor adventures, the generous Mrs. Cole proposes a lucrative deception: the sale of Fanny’s “fictitious maidenhead” to one “Mr. Norbert,” a slightly dissipated young man of fertile imagination for whom female chastity is the Holy Grail of sexual fetishes. The price is 400 guineas, and the sale requires that Fanny play the part of the blushing maiden whose fear of defloration is such that no advantage be sacrificed without great struggle. The scene is farcical because Mr. Norbert is barely

up for the job and because Fanny is contemptuous of his notions of female innocence but all too willing to play her part to the extreme:

All my looks and gestures ever breathing nothing but that innocence which the men so ardently require in us, for no other end than to feast themselves with the pleasure of destroying it, and which they are so grievously, with all their skill, subject to mistakes in.

Norbert's fantasy is, according to Fanny, entirely solipsistic. His adoration of innocence has less to do with women than with his own need to be the conquering hero, the all powerful ravisher of virgins and other defenseless creatures. The long descriptions of Norbert's lame efforts thus work in conjunction with Fanny's editorializing to make clear that Cleland's real target was the idea of female chastity that made Samuel Richardson a famous man.

As comic as it is, however, the lengthy account of Fanny's supposed "defloration" by Mr. Norbert serves serious satiric ends. Cleland's target is Richardson's fetish: the male adulation of female chastity. Rewriting *Pamela*, Cleland returns to the scene where the predatory Mr. B—hesitates before the struggling virgin and the encouraging whore. The polar opposition so necessary to Richardson's fantasy (and Norbert's) collapses in on itself as Fanny finds it entirely possible to play both roles at once. Her story, of course, like both Pamela's and Shame-la's before her, like Moll Flanders' and Roxana's as well, is itself a masquerade, a fictional account of female experience authored by a man eager to establish a new "realism." Cleland ups the epistemological ante, however, by tying the truth of his narrative to the truth of the female body. Those other stories, *Fanny Hill* suggests, are male fantasies as deluded as those of Mr. Norbert: first, because they omit graphic sexual descriptions; and second, because the pleasures they describe are exclusively male. *Fanny Hill*, on the other hand, speaks both the truth of human sexuality generally and of female sexuality in particular. *Fanny Hill* is real, Cleland would have us believe, because it describes and recreates for its readers the "reality" of women's pleasure.

Cleland's insistence on the reality of Fanny's pleasure stands in marked contrast to the inadequacies of its linguistic representation. Fanny apologizes repeatedly for her inability to represent the pleasure she feels, and the "subject" of her memoir is, regardless of its infinite variety,

"eternally one and the same." That subject is of course sexual pleasure, and Fanny complains that words like "joys," "ardours," "transports," or "ecstasies" simply cannot represent the physical bliss of orgasm. To the author's unavoidably repetitive vocabulary, the reader must add her own "imagination" and "sensibility." Only then will the "pictures" of pleasure spring to "life."

Fanny's comments on the importance of the imagination to the fictional representation of physical pleasure are crucial to the narrative as a whole. Regardless of the inadequacies of language, for instance, Cleland goes to some trouble to emphasize the imaginative interplay between real sex and its fictional counterpart. Fanny, for example, plays the voyeur on numerous occasions, deriving real, physical pleasure from observing the erotic activities of others. At the very beginning of the novel, while under Phoebe's tutelage, she masturbates in a closet as she watches Mrs. Brown and her lover at play. Much later, during her first and only experience with group sex, her "imagination" becomes so "heated" by "all the moving sights of the night" that when she finally has intercourse the pleasure is almost unbearable. Then, at the very end of the novel, when Fanny describes her reunion with Charles, the imagination plays what at first appears to be a similarly important role:

My thighs, now obedient to the intimations of love and nature, gladly disclose, and with a ready submission resign up the lost gateway to entrance at pleasure: I see! I feel! The delicious velvet tip!—he enters might and main with—oh!—my pen drops from me here in the ecstasy now present to my faithful memory! Description, too, deserts me and delivers over a task, above its strength of wing, to the imagination; but it must be an imagination exalted by such a flame as mine, that can do justice to that sweetest, noblest of all sensations....

With this scene the reader reaches the self-consciously humorous climax of *Fanny Hill*, a sexual experience with a pleasure so intense that its memory can conflate past and present, male and female, character and reader all into one moment of ecstatic union. We are to understand that with the reappearance of Charles, the "mechanical" pleasures of the body described earlier merge rather conveniently with the transcendent pleasures of true love. The result is a pleasure of theological import, of body and spirit together, that is accessible only through an "exalted"

imagination. Seemingly more romantic than his nemesis Richardson—who, after all, ends *Pamela* with an obnoxiously practical marriage manual—Cleland insists all along on a powerful female sexuality, authentic and autonomous, but in the end he positions that sexuality within the reassuring confines of true love and the happily-ever-after of a middle-class, romantic marriage.

*Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* did not go unnoticed by the authorities. Early in November 1749, a Messenger of the Press knocked on Cleland's door and off he went to court. Letters were written; strings were pulled; fines were paid. And then, just when Cleland appeared to be in the clear, an unusual event occurred. On February 8, and then again exactly one month later on March 8, earthquake tremors rattled London complacency and reminded residents that it is never too late to repent. Exact reasons for the divine wrath were temporarily unclear, and, predictably, explanations varied, until, on March 16, the Bishop of London, Thomas Sherlock, set matters straight in a Pastoral Letter to his urban flock. The earthquakes, he explained, were sent to punish bawdy books and prints, in particular those "vile books" that relate the histories of whores. Just in case the Secretary of State, Thomas Pelham-Holles, First Duke of Newcastle, missed the subtlety of the Pastoral Letter, the good Bishop wrote directly to complain that *Fanny Hill* was "the Lewdest thing [he] ever saw" and that the Secretary should "give proper orders, to stop the progress of this vile Book, which is an open insult upon Religion and good manners, and a reproach to the Honour of the Government, and the Law of the Country." Unable or unwilling to argue with earthquakes, Newcastle issued a warrant the next day.

Once again, John Cleland appeared to be in serious trouble. But the Bishop of London could not bring about prosecution for a literary crime whose very status as crime was culturally undefined. Somehow or other, Cleland emerged unscathed. The Bishop of London continued to pressure the Duke of Newcastle; the Duke of Newcastle continued to pressure John Sharpe, the Attorney General; and Sharpe evidently endured the pressure manfully, but did little to pursue the case. Even if Cleland was eventually summoned before the Privy Council—and we are not sure that he was—the repercussions were negligible. The author of *Fanny Hill* was now securely in place at *The Monthly Review* where

he continued to churn out essays for his friend and co-conspirator, Ralph Griffins. Although no one could know it at the time, Cleland had officially embarked upon a literary career that had unfortunately already seen its zenith.

### *Memoirs of a Coxcomb*

When circumstances forced Cleland to try his hand at the novel once again, the author of *Fanny Hill* was a sadder and wiser man. Beaten down by poverty and cowed by the courts, he resorted to formula: he rewrote his first novel from the male perspective. The passions of *Memoirs of a Coxcomb* (1751), however, are nothing like the passions of *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*. Yes, William Delamore, the novel's hero, will, like Fanny before him, fall in love early on, experience a variety of sexual conquests, and then be happily reunited with his beloved at the novel's close. But William Delamore is more discreet than Fanny Hill. Although he confesses to having had sexual activity, the descriptions of his experiences are mild enough for Samuel Richardson or Jane Austen. Gone is the unbridled licentiousness; gone is the passionate storytelling; gone is the desire to arouse the reader. This new-found modesty, accompanied as it is by weak writing and unremarkable characterizations, has led numerous commentators to bemoan Cleland's sudden loss of talent. Where, they ask sadly, did the vitality of *Fanny Hill* go?

The answer seems clear enough: fear of prosecution, the burdens of poverty, and writing under deadline all conspired to produce mediocrity. But the real answer may be more complicated. Consider, for example, two remarkable and mutually illuminating passages from *Memoirs of a Coxcomb*. The first is a polemical aside offered by Delamore early in the novel:

I cannot here refrain from observing, that, not without reason, are the romance, and the novel writers in general, despised by persons of sense and taste, for their unnatural, and unaffecting descriptions of the love-passion. In vain do they endeavour to warm the head, with what never came from the heart. Those who have really been in love, who have themselves experienced the emotions, and symptoms of that passion, indignantly remark, that so far from exaggerating its power, and effects, those triflers do not even do it justice. A forced cookery

of imaginary beauties, a series of mighty marvelous facts, which spreading an air of fiction through the whole, all in course weaken that interest and regard never paid but to truth, or the appearances of truth; and are only fit to give a false and adulterated taste of a passion, in which a simple sentiment is superior to all their forced productions of artificial flowers. Their works in short give one the idea of a frigid withered eunuch, representing an Alexander making love to Statira.

This is a blistering critique of popular fiction for not being realistically passionate, and one would expect that the author of *Fanny Hill* would make good on his promise to deliver the “truth” of human desire. But now consider a scene at the beginning of the third volume, in which the hero visits a whorehouse, and, in what appears to be just a rewriting of a similar scene in *Fanny Hill*, the young prostitutes are asked, one after another, to tell their stories. In *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, the women are beautiful, and the stories they tell are of their sexual initiation. In *Memoirs of a Coxcomb*, the situation is the same, but the treatment is quite different. The women are as young and as pretty as those in *Fanny Hill*, but our narrator is not impressed. He notices that their dress is “tawdry,” that it pretends a connection to “real high life” that their behavior belies. He notices too that their make-up is intended to conceal “the ill effects of their night vigils,” but that it actually does the reverse: it establishes “the finished look of their trade.” In short, both masquerades fail. Both reveal exactly that which they were intended to conceal. The same is true of the stories that are told. The first woman (they are all unnamed) claims to be “the daughter of a reverend clergyman” who was left “destitute” by his death and who was then “betrayed” into prostitution by a supposed friend of the family. Our hero’s partner for the evening, who is by the way the least attractive of the group, scoffs at this recitation. She scoffs again at each of the other stories, as each relates “some tragical circumstance” and some rogue’s “betrayal.” When her turn finally comes, she speaks “very naturally”:

Gentlemen, if you have any curiosity concerning me, I hope you will be so good as to suspend it, ‘till my story is *made* too; at present, I have not one ready, unless you will be contented with the plain truth, which is, that I am the daughter of an honest chairman, and as

soon as I came of age to feel desires, having no education to awe, and instruct me of the danger of humoring them, I honestly gave way to their force, and was soon let into the great secret, by a young prentice in our neighbourhood, since which, after various adventures, I came at length to harbour here.

No manipulative fictions, no seductive fantasies, no self-serving masquerades. Indeed, she insists that there is no “story” at all—just “the plain truth.” The latter is embarrassing, not to the men who listen, “they did not think a whit the worse of her for it,” but to her fellow whores who are exposed and humiliated. Suddenly, the whore’s story goes from a romantic tale of bad luck and betrayal, of good women losing out to bad men, to a devious and self-serving fiction. The moment is one of adjudication, of separating the good from the bad, the truthful from the deliberately deceptive. In that moment when a new “real” is trotted out, standards shift, measurements recalibrate, and prostitution and its stories are together brought up short.

When the unattractive, unnamed whore in *Memoirs of a Coxcomb* refuses to tell a story, she claims a “real” that exposes her fellow prostitutes as liars. Their stories, after all, are designed to absolve the tellers of all responsibility: whores are made, it would seem, only from bad luck and bad men. It is, she says, simply not so; whores are actually made from ignorance. Had she the “education to awe and instruct” her in the ways of desire, all would have been different. Cleland’s unnamed whore also directly and powerfully challenges the novel of which she herself is a revision. The whores’ stories in *Fanny Hill* are not about bad luck and betrayal, poverty and powerlessness; they are instead titillating, romantic, and without adversity of any kind. Their heroines fall into a sexual experience that is “natural” and loving, and they come to Mrs. Cole’s establishment with no more regret than they would accept employment as barmaids or governesses. Thus with one short speech in an otherwise unremarkable novel, two separate fantasies about prostitution, about women and their criminal pleasures, are exposed as artificial claptrap. At the same time, as the earlier polemic suggests, Cleland issues a challenge to his fellow novelists: your stories, your whores, your pleasures are contrived, unreal, insubstantial; my story, my whore, and my pleasure are all real; listen and hear the truth.



## COCTEAU, JEAN

### Biography

Born in Kingston-on-Thames in 1710. First child of William Cleland and Lucy DuPass. Left Westminster School in 1722 after only two years of formal education. Served in Bombay first as a soldier and then as an administrator for the East India Company, 1728 to 1740. Returned to London, 1741. Imprisoned in Fleet Prison for debt, February 1748 to March 1749. First volume of *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* published in November 1748; second volume appeared in February 1749. *Memoirs of Fanny Hill*, an expurgated abridgement of *A Woman of Pleasure*, is published in 1750, the same year as Cleland's first play, *The Oeconomy of a Winter's Day*. Followed by *The Case of Catherine Vizzani* and *Memoirs of a Coxcomb*, 1751; *Memoirs of the Present Age*, 1752; *The Dictionary of Love*, 1753; *Titus Vespasian*, 1755. Begins a thirty-year career as letter writer to the *Public Advertiser*, 1757. His second play, *Tombo-Chiqui*, appeared in 1758. Followed by *The Times*, a poem in two epistles, 1759 and 1760; *The Institutes of Health*, a medical treatise, 1761; *The Romance of a Night*, a collection of romances, 1762; *The Surprises of Love*, 1764; *Physiological Reveries*, a medical treatise, 1765; *The Way to Things by Words and to Words by Things*, a linguistic treatise, 1766; *The Woman of Honor*, a novel, 1768. Dies in London, 1789.

BRADFORD MUDGE

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## COCTEAU, JEAN

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1889–1963

French artist, entrepreneur, filmmaker, socialite, and writer

Infused by a sense of the mystery of the universe and of the power of myth, much of Cocteau's

artistic production—which included costume jewelry, mosaics, neckties, posters, pottery, tapestries, various objects he called “transformations,” and work in the Chapels of Villefranche-sur-Mer et Milly-la-Forêt—was also

fueled by an aesthetics of sensuality. As Milorad observes, sexuality drives his œuvre, permeating it like the invisible energy of a high-tension cable. Despite the eroticism of much of what Cocteau produced, spanning works as diverse as his drawings of naked sailors engaged in sexual activity with each other or his “Preparatory Notes on an Unknown Sexuality” for editions of Jean Genet’s novels to his own cinema, which is deeply marked by a preoccupation with the male body as specular object and metaphorical source, Cocteau paradoxically shied away from openly admitting his own sexual identity. This prompts Robinson, for example, to observe that he reflected a deep-seated malaise, a form of self-rejection.

### *Escapes*

Light quatrains recounting episodes reminiscent of Cocteau’s adolescent experiences in the port town of Marseilles, these rhymed legends evoking the licentiousness of sailors on shore leave were published in 1920 in a volume with illustrations by André Lhote. There was also a special private edition that contained a “secret museum” consisting of more overtly erotic poems and pictures than the rest: prostitutes Alice, Carmen, and Flora each engaged in sexual activities with their clients and Céline washing herself of the traces thereof as a ship leaves port.

### *L’ange heurtebise*

In this deeply homoerotic poem purportedly written under the influence of opium, published in 1927 in the poetic collection *Opéra*, and inspired by Cocteau’s love for Raymond Radiguet, who died of typhoid in 1923, a “brutal” and “bestial” angel swoops out of the sky to possess the poet. Whether read as an allegory of artistic genesis or fantasy of passive love and erotic surrender, at its essence it is a vision of the creative process: fertilization, possession, and fecundation, ultimately resulting in poetic birth. For Cocteau, the poem was as important in his œuvre as the *Demoiselles d’Avignon* was in Picasso’s.

### *The White Paper*

First published anonymously and in twenty-one copies in 1928 with the aid of Maurice Sachs, by its very title *Le livre blanc* [*The White Paper*]

suggests an official collection presenting a specific problem: in this case a plea for social acceptance of homosexuality. The short autobiographical novel was accompanied by an editor’s note claiming that the literary talent contained within it outweighed by far its indecency and that the moral it contained disqualified it as a libertine work. It was republished—anonymous again—two years later but this time included provocative illustrations of young men. In the preface Cocteau writes: “I highly approve of the theory, that love begets respect, and that respect paralyzes desire, and that the erotic achieves best expression if none but the senses are allowed entry into the picture, the heart being left outside it.” From the three episodes that ostensibly marked the narrator’s love for the stronger sex forever and that begin this homosexual reverie—encounters with a naked farmboy on a horse, two undressed gypsies in a tree, and a hired waiter with a suggestive but out-of-reach bulge in his crotch—to the narrator’s pseudo-conversion at the end, Cocteau juxtaposes erotic and compelling images of sexual joy and pain. He rehearses many of the literary and artistic themes he will explore elsewhere, including those of the man-horse, Pierre Dargelos, sailors, and religion. Moreover, Cocteau provides a key to his other works with their frequent translation of homosexuality into heterosexual symbols or codified images. As Robinson observes, he is nevertheless ultimately negative in his implications, for unhappiness is a constant undercurrent of the work and each episode ends in death or separation.

### *Erotiques*

Difficult to date and—with the exception of “Dargelos en Athalie”—first published in 1981 in the edition of *The White Paper* edited by Milorad, the figures featured in the poems of this collection range from the sexually promiscuous Dargelos killing a chicken between his legs, demonstrating his self-pleasuring techniques, or displaying his anus and penis to a young, muscled cyclist masturbating against a wall. In addition, *Erotiques* includes the translation by Cocteau of a poem he believed to have been written by Peter Doyle for Walt Whitman.

**Its**

This collection of drawings was edited by Annie Guédras and is divided into seven sections: “Eveil,” “Marins,” “Mythologie,” “Etreintes,” “Facéties,” “Faunes,” and “Innamorati.” Included are erotic sketches of Greek figures, of naked bicyclists, of Dargelos engaged in solitary pleasure, and of wrestlers, fishermen, and cooks sharing in sexual pleasure. It also contains those scenes of brothel life and depicting the homosexual seduction of sailors that were included in the first edition of Jean Genet’s *Querelle de Brest*.

**The Blood of a Poet**

Like the poem “L’ange Heurtebise,” *Le sang d’un poète* [*The Blood of a Poet*] can also be considered an allegory for the origin of a poem. With its dreamy erotic images, its surrealism *avant la lettre*, this first film—of six directed by Cocteau—is a vehicle for and self-revelatory investigation behind the origins of creation as well as the prologue and prelude for the exploration by Cocteau of a new art form: the cinematic poem. With no technological knowledge of cinema, no direction, and restricted only by his million-franc budget, Cocteau conceived of the work as an animated cartoon, with faces and places chosen to correspond to the inventive freedom of a cartoonist and with the end result a cinematic celebration of the Orphic force and experience. Although some consider it a “glacial” work, others underline its disturbing, erotically charged images. For Williams, the view of the tight backside, the curve and slit of the young poet in the never-ending spiral that is *The Blood of a Poet* establishes the sexual economy, the general anal erotics of viewing that characterizes Coctelian cinema.

The “sodomitical” charge of the male gaze marking this sexual economy and anal erotics of viewing extends to Cocteau’s other films too. In Cocteau’s cinematic adaptation of the fairy story *La belle et la bête* [*Beauty and the Beast*], for example, both male and female homoerotic representations share in the symbolic construction of subjectivity, the recognition and love of sexual sameness. As Hayward notes, the homoerotic representation of the Beast is not the exclusive domain of Beauty and her male entourage. Similarly, in *Orphée*, which intensifies and extends the interval corresponding in the earlier

play by the same name to Orpheus’ descent into Hell and casts a lovely young princess as Death—echoing his earlier mimodrama *Le jeune homme et la mort*—, Cocteau uses mirrors to suggest the artist’s need to escape convention via an erotic relationship with the self.

**Biography**

Born on 5 July 1889 at Maisons-Laffitte, near Paris. Attended Petit and Grand Condorcet and l’École Fénelon but never passed his baccalauréat exam. Although Cocteau is probably best known for his films, he only turned to the cinema in midlife, by which time he had already collaborated with such artists as Darius Milhaud, Vaslav Nijinsky, Pablo Picasso, Érik Satie, and Igor Stravinsky on libretti, oratorios, and ballets. Furthermore, he had produced and published a considerable number of often complex works of various genres and influences himself: criticism, drawings, journals, novels, plays, and poems—ranging from futurist and dada to cubist. Inspired by the public’s rejection in 1919 of Stravinsky’s *Rite of Spring*, whose premiere he attended, Cocteau was harshly criticized, even discounted for dilettanteism early in his career and admitted that since the age of fifteen, he had not stopped for a minute. Ultimately his multidimensionality, influence, flamboyance, and originality helped him garner wide respect and many honors including: election to Belgium’s Académie royale de langue et de littérature française and immortal seat number thirty-one of France’s Académie française, replacing Jérôme Tharaud; an honorary doctorate from Oxford University; honorary membership in the National Institute of Arts and Letters of New York; commandership in the Legion of Honor; and the title “Prince of Poets” in 1960. He died on 11 October in his château at Milly-la-Forêt, near Paris, an hour after learning of the death of his dear friend, singer Édith Piaf, that same day.

BRIAN GORDON KENNELLY

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## COHEN, ALBERT

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1895–1981  
 Greek francophone novelist and journalist

Cohen began writing in his mid-twenties, when he published a volume of poems (*Paroles juives*) and several short texts, in the *Nouvelle revue française*, notably (1922–1923). In 1927, he completed a one-act play, *Ezéchiël*, which would be performed at the Théâtre de l'Odéon (1931) and the Comédie Française (1933) but which would be published much later (1956). Early in his career, he settled upon the novel as the exclusive genre for his imaginative writing.

Soon after publishing his first novel, *Solal* (1930), he envisaged it as part of a three-volume cycle. He spent much of the 1930s working on this project and in 1938, under pressure from publisher Gaston Gallimard, extracted a discrete part of a lengthy manuscript in-progress to produce his second novel, *Mangeclous*. The dust jacket of *Mangeclous* announced as "imminent" the principal and concluding volume, to be entitled *Belle du seigneur*, but the project would be interrupted by the war. *Belle du seigneur* would not appear until 1968, thirty years after *Mangeclous*. Cohen's best-known work, *Belle du seigneur*, is both a monumental love story and a

jeremiad against "passion-love," to borrow Stendhal's term (*De l'amour [On Love]*). Published when the author was seventy-three years old, it represents the philosophical and artistic culmination of his long activity as a writer. In 1969, a fourth novel, *Les Valeureux (The Valiant)*, followed. The latter been contained in the manuscript of *Belle du seigneur* but appeared in a separate volume at the publisher's request.

Cohen's other published works are autobiographical. Originally published in installments in *La France libre* during the war, *Le Livre de ma mère* is a memoir, a work of mourning, and an essay on filial love. *Ô vous, frères humains* is an autobiographical essay devoted principally to the theme of love of neighbor, and *Carnets 1978* is a journal whose central themes are passion and filial love, friendship, the struggle for faith, and death.

Cohen's novelistic world is comprised of two realms. The first belongs to his protagonist Solal who, after leaving the Jewish ghetto of his native Cephalonia, rises to the heights of power in Paris and Geneva (Member of Parliament, Undersecretary General of the League of Nations) becomes immersed in a series of Western-style passionate romances. The other realm is of Solal's burlesque

uncle and cousins, Saltiel “*Mangeclous*,” Michaël, Mattathias, and Salomon—known as “les Valeureux”—comic characters who embody old-world Cephalonian Jewry in the Rabelaisian form Cohen gives it. For practical reasons Cohen gathered many of the adventures of the latter group in two separate volumes (*Mangeclous*, *Les valeureux*), whereas *Solal* and *Belle du seigneur* are chiefly concerned with the passions and pursuits of his Westernized hero. The two realms remain interwoven, however, and together comprise the author’s fictional universe: Solal is constantly reminded of his origins, and “les Valeureux” are absorbed by his romantic and professional conquests.

The novelistic cycle begins, in *Solal*, with the title character’s Bar Mitzvah on Cephalonia and his conquest of the wife of the French consul (around 1911). It concludes on the eve of World War II and the Shoah (1937). Influenced by Joyce and Proust, among early contemporaries, Cohen developed a unique voice and style in the late 1920s and 1930s. His fiction did not evolve in response to subsequent literary currents. *Belle du seigneur* and *Les Valeureux* improve upon and complete, but do not significantly reform, a project begun almost four decades earlier.

At the core of Cohen’s writing is a dualistic conception of human nature. In the novels this view is principally expressed by Solal, who perceives individuals—women in particular—as animalistic creatures attracted by power and passion who are nonetheless capable of rising above these limitations to fulfill their higher potential as human beings. In his terms, people are subject to the laws of nature, which govern base instincts, including their sexuality and their worship of physical beauty and power. To this fallen state of humanity, he opposes the possibility of redemption inspired by the Laws of Moses and especially the Sixth Commandment interdiction against killing. Expressed by a character who engages in a profound but ultimately futile search for faith, this vision is humanistic rather than theological. The Sixth Commandment is evoked in the broadest sense, as calling on human beings not only to refrain from the act of killing, but also to transcend their animalistic nature, which is responsible for both enacted and implied aggression.

The theater for the conflict between animalistic tendencies and fully realized humanity is

love. He—or she—who heeds the Sixth Commandment *desires* differently from lovers still bound by the natural laws. The latter are attracted to power and physicality—although they believe they are experiencing noble and exalted sentiments. “Redeemed” humans, in contrast, perceive and desire the gentle soul hidden behind the mask, seeking a love based on tenderness and free communication rather than tumultuous passion. This is the point of view of Solal who refers to sex as “the two-backed beast” (in Coward’s fine translation) and declares: “I adore you but why must I always be straddling you like an animal to keep you happy[?]” (*Belle du seigneur* 883). This sort of redemption retains the status of an ideal, even a myth, however. Neither the implied author of Cohen’s novels nor the autobiographical writer of the *Carnets* presents complete escape from the prison-house of the body as a viable possibility. For this reason, moreover, the elderly Cohen is unable to believe in an afterlife: “Is not sexuality the crude component of the human being and of what is called the soul?” (*Carnets* 98).

In Cohen’s first novel, Solal follows a trajectory much like that of Julien Sorel in Stendhal’s *Le Rouge et le noir* [*The Red and the Black*]. He seduces an older, respectable woman, and leaves his place of origin for Paris. There he becomes personal secretary to an important political figure, whose daughter he wins over and marries. As in the case of Stendhal’s hero, a dazzling rise to power accompanies these amorous successes, followed by a precipitous fall to which his own internal passions greatly contribute. Many of the themes that dominate *Belle du seigneur* are already present in *Solal*. The young hero’s father, rabbi and patriarch of Cephalonian Jewry, teaches his son to “disdain women and what is called beauty” (*Solal* 35). Solal will indeed scorn “females,” and males, when, behaving as animals, they fail to realize their higher potential as human beings. Occasionally, the narrator is able to look upon the “glory of the beginnings” of passion love with tenderness and compassion. Addressing Solal and his second lover, Aude, he exhorts: “Play, friends, amuse yourselves, become drunk with love” (*Carnets* 31; *Solal* 74). Such moments are dependent on unstable conditions, however, and fleeting.

To a certain degree Cohen’s representation of passion follows Stendhal’s theory of crystallization. Stendhal describes how crystals form

spontaneously on a twig which is introduced into a salt mine. For Stendhal, the lover acts like the mine, creating, through projection onto the bare frame of the beloved, a highly idealized object of love which when combined with requisite dynamics of doubt and jealousy gives birth to passion-love. Unlike Stendhal, however, who is content to celebrate the wonder of this creation, Cohen's Solal (and Mangeclous) constantly deflate the *élan* by recalling the unromanticized physicality of the twig. Solal regards kissing, for example, as "that soldering of two digestive tubes" (Solal 121). This tension between the joy of love and the painful awareness that it is ill-borne, of illusions and deceptions, advancing inexorably toward ruin, runs throughout Cohen's work. It is bound to an existential condition summed up by Solal in response to an ecstatic Aude: "He was disturbed by that pitiful enthusiasm and yet he was happy" (Solal 173).

Sometimes referred to as a novel of "anti-passion" whose intertexts in the broadest sense include the whole literature of adulterous love from the courtly romance to Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina*, *Belle du seigneur* is organized around two seduction scenes. In the first, at the beginning of the novel, Solal arrives at Ariane's home on horseback, valet in tow, and breaks in through her bedroom window. He then disguises himself as an old Jew with a tattered greatcoat, fur hat, and blackened teeth. After he has had a chance to read Ariane's diaries and to listen to her musings from the bath, he confronts her: "One evening at the Ritz, an evening decreed by Destiny, on the occasion of the Brazilian reception, I saw you for the very first time and loved you at once," he said, and again he smiled his dark smile where two fangs gleamed" (BS 33). Claiming to have been present as a waiter at this high society function, and thus continuing to dissimulate his social and professional position as well as his physical beauty, Solal makes an impassioned speech, singing Ariane's glories, lyrically declaring his love for her, and begging her to receive the love of a feeble old man, with a white beard and just two teeth, but who promises to love and honor her as no other. In the style of the Hebrew Bible and liturgy, blended with Cohen's baroque turns of phrase, he goes on to declare her to be "she who redeemeth all women. Behold the first woman!" (BS 37). Then, the narrator relates: "He bent his knee before her, a gesture which made him look

quite ridiculous, then stood up and came towards her, towards their first kiss." Ariane, emitting a "yelp of fear and hate," hurls a glass at "that antique face." At this, Solal abandons his disguise, grins with all his teeth, stomps his boots and makes a second speech, in which he proclaims: "I shall leave now, but first, female of the species, hear me! Female thou art and as a female shalt be done by. Vilely shall I seduce you as you deserve and as you want" (BS 38).

Solal makes flawless preparations for the second seduction in his apartment at the Ritz Hotel. He shows favor to Ariane's crass husband, promotes him and arranges for him to go on an extended mission abroad. Inspired by the conquest of Anna Karenina by Count Vronsky, whose close-set teeth are continually evoked by Tolstoy's narrator, the seduction of Ariane is at once expository and performative. Surrounded by the trappings of wealth and power, blessed with his own thirty-two gleaming white teeth, the Undersecretary General seduces her with neither the libertine's promise nor the poet's encomium, but rather with an analytical exposition of the tactics essential to a successful seduction. Because it serves so effectively as a meta-discourse, thoroughly demystifying the very passion that it is instilling, and because the lovers' behavior so clearly confirms his message as they desperately seek to maintain the intensity of their initial passion by preserving its conditions of possibility, Solal's speech speaks a certain "truth." A constitutive element of this "truth" is his postulate of female heterosexual desire as tantamount to the worship of force.

In a brief but crucial scene mid-way through the novel, Solal makes a visit to Berlin where, again dressed as a traditional Jew, he is beaten unconscious on the street and taken in by the hunchbacked daughter of a wealthy Jewish antique dealer, now in hiding in a secret cellar. Peering from below out a small window, he takes in the sight of a column of marching German soldiers:

. . . mechanical and victorious, the young hopes of the German nation paraded, singing their joy at Jewish blood spilt, proud in their strength, proud in their strength in numbers, cheered by sweating girls with blonde plaits and arms inanely held high, gross sexual creatures excited by the spectacle of so much jackbooted manliness (BS 497).

This image of a group of girls aroused by the “jackbooted manliness” recalls Solal’s own boots, which he stomps conspicuously in Ariane’s bedroom and again at the Ritz. We know, however, that Solal’s show of virility is the price he must pay in order to have that which he deeply needs: Ariane’s love. It is not that he is any less driven by animalistic, sub-human drives than she. Indeed, on this point she has already taken him to task, asking why he does not simply declare his love to a humpbacked old hag. He responds:

Because I am a miserable male! I accept that hairy men are carnivorous creatures! But not women! I cannot accept that of Woman, in whom I believe!...

‘And as to admiring the beauty of women, who shall demur? For it is the promise of tenderness, a kind and loving heart, and motherhood. Those nice girls who want nothing more than to care for the sick and rush off to the front to be nurses when there’s a war on warm the heart, and I am morally entitled to love their meat. But I cannot stomach the horrible attraction women feel for male beauty which signifies physical strength, courage and aggression, in other words animal virtues! That’s what makes them unforgivable!’ (BS 338–339).

What, then, about Ariane? Is she not once more confirmed as a “female of the species,” lusting after “male power,” like these “gross sexual creatures”? And how is the reader to react to Solal’s double standard? These questions raise an important question of their own—of the reliability of Solal’s point of view.

Whatever authority Solal may gain from his shrewd demystification of passion love, his voice should not be mistaken for the point of view of the implied author or novel as a whole. Several signposts warn against a naive reading of Solal’s discourse. First, Solal would have us believe that the fallen state of the love relationship, the fact that it had to take the perilous path of passion, results from a blindness on the part of Ariane, from her failure to see through his disguise to the inner beauty of the “old Jew of my heart.” Yet this is of course a preposterous expectation, for the circumstances and disguise do not have the effect Solal attributes to them. He may appear old and ugly, but certainly not powerless. Standing with her alone in the bedroom, he naturally instills fear.

More important still, Solal’s staging of this pure, redemptive love replicates passion love as

much as it defies or inverts it. The old Jew declares:

And on that evening, decreed by Destiny at the Ritz, she appeared unto me, noble in the midst of the ignoble did she appear... Other men take weeks, months to fall in love, and love but little.... All I needed was the instant of one flutter of her eyelashes. Call me mad but believe me. A flutter of lashes . . . and suddenly I beheld the glory of spring and the sun and the warm sea and the transparency of water near the shore and my youth restored, and the world was born (BS 33–34).

The old Jew insists that Ariane fall in love instantly, as in courtly romances and as Solal has with her. What he fails to recognize, but which the novel as a whole makes clear, is that she becomes a sub-human woman, a “female,” in his view, by refusing to participate in the very passion love that he later vehemently condemns.

In *Les valeureux*, Mangeclous pronounces himself rector of his own University, modeled after the Sorbonne, and located in the kitchen of his humble abode in the Jewish ghetto of Cephalonia. His first and only lesson—on seduction—serves as a farcical counter-point to the scene at the Ritz. If Solal’s jeremiad was chilling, Mangeclous’s is hilarious. Like Solal’s, however, it provides a forceful point of view, and one must look beyond the discourse itself, to its narrative context, for further clues to the way in which the novel presents this discourse as mystified. In Mangeclous’s own rendition of the image of the boots as a sign of virility and aggression, for example, he explains that the seducer “must shine his boots so that she will notice them and know that he is a vigorous knight, which will give her guilty thoughts, as she tells herself that he is muscular, capable of throwing punches, and endowed with a great power of copulation” (V 148). At this, one of Mangeclous’s students exclaims ecstatically: “All that because of his boots!” Even in the Jewish ghetto, untainted by the world of western culture and literature, the performance of the anti-passion discourse arouses and seduces the listener. “Animal virtues” may appear no more noble as a result, but the image of the pure Old World as an alternative to the plight of Western lovers is demystified.

Ultimately, the *Solal* cycle invites us to have compassion for the sensitive, desperate protagonist who deflates powerful myths of passion according to which human beings lead their

lives, but who also lives under the influence of other grand ideas. Shaped in large part by the prospect of fierce aggression beyond the realm of love, by the feeling of helplessness and dread before the emerging Nazi menace, Solal's cynical views of power and desire may be as illusory as the myths disseminated by what Mangeclous calls "all those European novelists who paint seductive pictures of passion and who, liars and poisoners, hide from our view the calls of nature, large and small, of the adulterous heroine and her accomplice!" (V 181).

### Biography

Born on Corfu, 1895. Moved to Marseilles 1900. Educated in a Catholic elementary school and a public lycée. Studied law and literature in Geneva (1914–1919); obtained Swiss citizenship. Founded *La revue juive* (Editions N.R.F., 1925); Albert Einstein and Sigmund Freud on editorial board. Diplomatic Division, International Labor Bureau, 1926–1931. Representative of Chaim Weizmann, Paris 1939. In London during war, liaison for Jewish Agency for Palestine between governments in exile and Jews fleeing Nazism; wrote for Resistance press. Legal counsel to Inter-Governmental Committee for Refugees, 1944–1946; authored international agreement. Headed Protection Division, International Organization for Refugees, 1947–1948. International Labor Bureau, 1949–1951. Grand Prix du Roman de l'Académie française for *Belle du seigneur*, 1968. Officer of Legion of Honor, 1970. Controversial appearance in silk dressing

gown on Bernard Pivot's *Apostrophes*, 1977. Died in Geneva, 1981.

L. SCOTT LERNER

\*Translations of *Belle du seigneur* are from the Coward edition, with minor modifications. All other translations are my own.

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## COHEN, LEONARD

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1934–  
 Canadian poet, novelist, songwriter

### *The Favorite Game*

This classic autobiographical novel (a *bildungsroman*) details Cohen's coming of sexual age. It

weaves several threads of women variously pursued, bedded, lost, and rediscovered into a tapestry of tragicomic hedonism. Seeking love for sex's sake, and crafting art for love's sake, the erotic escapades of the relentless young poetic protagonist, Larry Breavman, earned Cohen the



literary reputation of a Jewish-Canadian Henry Miller writing with the pen of a J.D. Salinger. “Breavman” connotes both “brave man” and “bereaved man.” Breavman’s bravery is manifest in his unabashed ardor and uninhibited lust, but his bereavement is more complex. He mourns not only loves unrequited, unattainable, and unforgettable, but also his father’s premature death, his mother’s gradual insanity, his tribe’s impossible covenant, and his art’s inevitable compromise. A more precise characterization of Cohen’s maiden novel emanates from a purely Canadian literary perspective. From this vantage he is a successor of poet Irving Layton and novelist Mordecai Richler, and a spokesman for his generation of the Jewish experience in Montreal. But that experience also builds ineluctably on, and falls into the lacuna characterized by Canada’s classic historical novel, namely Hugh MacLennan’s *Two Solitudes*. While Canada’s founding “families,” the French and the English (or Scots) live unbridgeable peaks apart, Cohen introduces yet a *Third Solitude*: Canadian Jews, at once accepted and reviled by the *Two*, yet necessarily engaged with both in a complex cultural *ménage-à-trois*. This provides a backdrop for Cohen’s insatiable erotic quest, defined in the mouth of Breavman:

“What else is there? Conversation? I’m in the business and I have no faith in words whatever. Friendship? A friendship between man and a woman which is not based on sex is either hypocrisy or masochism. When I see a woman’s face transformed by the orgasm we have reached together, then I know we’ve met. Anything else is fiction.”

### *Beautiful Losers*

This masterwork of the mature artist reveals Cohen’s latent attraction to Taoist philosophy, in its balanced treatment of the sacred and the profane. The sacred thread of the plot recounts a fanciful history of Saint Catherine Tekakwitha, who flirted with her native Iroquois culture while resisting her scheming aunts’ attempts to have her deflowered by young braves. Through experiments in asceticism tinged with female eroticism and masochism, Catherine transforms her sexual energy into spiritual radiance, and in so doing entralls priests and performs miracles. The profane thread deals with a literal *ménage-à-trois*, a triangle involving the anonymous

protagonist (Cohen’s alter-ego), his wife Edith (an Indian descended from Catherine), and his best friend, F. Each pair in the triangle has sex of several different kinds, with exploratory kinkiness as a norm, and the realization of fantasy an expectation. Through his anonymous tormented writer, Cohen tells a tale of tormented characters engaging in tormented sex. Eros herself becomes transformed by the accompanying poetry, politics, and polemics. Cohen also resorts, albeit with moderation and reasonable taste, to abstract impressionistic episodes that lend the work distinctly Joycean overtones. He interleaves these threads with great dexterity, leading all the players except his leading character toward their various deaths by suicide, insanity, and asceticism—with Eros as a constant companion. In so doing, he recombines the clays and myths of his earlier novel, composed of English-, French-, and Jewish-Canadian elements, with that of the elemental indigenous Indian. The erotic glaze on this richer mixture is flecked with both miracles and misdeeds, and speckled with Cohen’s wit.

—You lousy fucker, how many times, five or six?  
 —Ah, grief makes us precise!  
 —Five or six, five or six, five or six?  
 —Listen, my friend, the elevator is working again.  
 —Listen, F., don’t give me any of your mystical shit.  
 —Seven.  
 —Seven times with Edith?  
 —Correct.

...Catherine Tekakwitha, I wanted to believe him. We talked until we exhausted ourselves, and we pulled each other off, as we did when we were boys in what is now downtown but what was once the woods.

### *Poems and Songs*

Leonard Cohen is best-known and most admired for his poems and songs. These are not strictly separable, since many of his songs—most famously *Suzanne*—are poems set to music. Like his novels, Cohen’s poetry is flush with the dialectic of love and the antics of sex. It also abounds with misplaced religious imagery, sado-masochistic allusion, and post-Holocaust defiance. Hence one encounters crucifixes without worship, razor blades without shaving, and *Flowers for Hitler* without condolences. Cohen has made his reputation first and last as a poet.

While his novels are centered in Montreal, and are arguably best-understood by Montrealers, his poems are universal in their desire for desire, love of love, and musings on the Muse.

### Biography

Born in 1934 in Montreal, Quebec, to an affluent Jewish family. He was educated at McGill and Columbia. He has published two novels, eight volumes of poetry and songs, and has recorded ten albums of songs, or poems set to music. He declined a Governor General's Award in 1968, but accepted one in 1993.

LOU MARINOFF

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### Music

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*New Skin for the Old Ceremony*. 1974.  
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# COLETTE, SIDONIE-GABRIELLE

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1873–1954

French novelist, short-story writer, autobiographer, and dramatist.

Her earliest work consisted of a sequence of novels following the progress of an exuberant, and highly sexual, young woman from adolescence to adulthood: *Claudine à l'école* (1900), *Claudine à Paris* (1901), *Claudine en ménage* (1902), and *Claudine s'en va* (1903). Their

mixture of engaging spontaneity with a playfully perverse sensuality ensured an immediate success. Her first husband, Henry Gauthier-Villars ("Willy") whom she married in 1893, exploited his wife's work (as he did all those who worked for him) by signing these works with his own pen-name until she left him in 1906.

Among her literary works from this period (she now signed herself Colette Willy) are *La Vagabonde* (1910) and its sequel, *L'Entrave*

(1913), both about music-hall life, which examine the situation of the divorced woman. Though Colette is often portrayed as the victim of Willy's salacious commercialism, there can be no doubt that she herself not only shared but also deliberately exploited the general fascination of the period with the erotic nature of human relationships. This is particularly true with regard to three novels, often considered among her best work, dating from this period: *Chéri* (1920), *La fin de Chéri* (1926), and *Le blé en herbe* (1923).

Colette's most sophisticated—and perplexing—works as far as the depiction of adult sexuality is concerned are *Chéri* and *La fin de Chéri*. Both concern a protracted love affair between an aging but wealthy courtesan, Léonie Vallon (Léa), and the adolescent son, Frédéric Peloux (Chéri), of one of her contemporaries. The age gap between this experienced woman of the world (she is in her mid-forties at the time the affair commences around 1909) and her teenage gigolo (he is only nineteen) should not be minimized: *Chéri* is by no means the straightforward story of the sexual initiation of a younger man. Peloux is not only exquisitely handsome but also intensely moody, vain, egoistical, and brutally insensitive. These psychological defects are partly explained by his illegitimacy, the lack of genuine affection that exists between himself and his mother, and social circumstance (not only does he lack a positive male role model but he also spends much of his time in the company of his mother's narrow circle of ageing, crotchety female friends and acquaintances). As the novel progresses, moreover, he becomes unhealthily emotionally dependent on Léa—so much so that even after his marriage to Edmée in 1913, the nineteen-year-old daughter of another of his mother's friends, he is unable to feel any great affection for her. Indeed, it is implied that neither finds the act of love-making satisfying. Shortly after the honeymoon, Peloux, in a highly enervated condition (betrayed by a spasmodic twitching of his jaw muscles), and still besotted with Léa, abandons his bride to racket around Paris in the company of a male friend.

Though Colette discreetly draws a veil over the actual act of sexual congress, in other respects *Chéri* is an extremely intimate novel which offers a wealth of detail concerning every aspect of how a wealthy mondaine such as Léa

organizes her household from the breakfast menu to bathroom design. Of even more interest, however, is the probing of the psychological motivations of the main protagonists. It is particularly worth noting, for example, that Léa gains considerable sexual pleasure just from watching Peloux in a state of undress or semi-undress, even organizing open-air boxing lessons for her lover for this purpose. Peloux, who is extremely narcissistic by nature (he is continually looking at himself in the mirror), is only too willing to oblige her in this respect.

Though reviewing the entire five-year liaison between Léa and Peloux, *Chéri* is mainly set in the period just before World War I. It concludes with Peloux, after a final night of passion with Léa, finally abandoning his mistress, who suddenly looks very old (and undesirable) to him, to return to his wife. *La fin de Chéri* takes up the story five years later, Peloux having returned to Paris after an undistinguished (as befits his character) military career. In contrast with *Chéri*, which is undoubtedly an erotic classic, *La fin de Chéri* might almost be described an anti-erotic classic. Peloux, disgusted by his wife's pursuit of a career in hospital management (and her flirtatious relationship with a doctor) and his mother's new-found interest in share-dealing (this is the Paris of the Jazz Age), is progressively emasculated by all the women in his life. Even Léa, by now not only prodigiously overweight but also ill-kempt, has adopted a masculine persona, especially as she discusses in his presence their earlier affair with another elderly female. Discovering a secret cache of photographs of Léa in her prime, he tortures himself with wild imaginings about her previous lovers before shooting himself in the head. Not only is he a victim of the nostalgia, listlessness, and disillusionment of his generation, he is also a late male victim of that catch-all *fin-de-siècle* malady: neurasthenia.

In comparison with the morbid sexuality and pessimism of *La fin de Chéri*, *Le blé en herbe* (1923; tr. *Ripening Seed*, 1955), which deals with awakening adolescent sexuality, is positively bucolic. *Ces plaisirs* (1932), on the other hand, is a jaundiced study of sexual depravity. Almost all of Colette's work has been translated into English, though some of the earlier translations are now extremely dated. Between 1951 and 1964, the British firm of Secker and Warburg

undertook a 17-volume complete works. Only these translations have been retained below; many were later reprinted in paperback by Penguin in the United Kingdom and, with one exception, all were also published in the United States.

### Biography

Born in Burgundy on 28 January, 1873 (her father, wounded at the battle of Magenta in 1859, was a local tax inspector), Colette's literary career initially evolved as a consequence of her relationship with the notorious writer and critic Henry Gauthier-Villars ("Willy") whom she married in 1893. The marriage was not a happy one, and Colette left Willy in 1906, earning a living as an actress and music-hall performer. In 1912, she married Baron Henry de Jouvenal (divorced 1925). Over the course of the next thirty years she published a variety of autobiographical writings, occasional adaptations and theatrical works, as well as producing a considerable body of journalism (it was only in 1923 that she began signing herself simply Colette). Her third marriage, to Maurice Goudeket, took place in 1935. *Gigi*, her final important work dealing with the politics of sexuality, was published in 1944.

TERRY HALE

### Selected Works

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- Ces Plaisirs* (1932). Translated by Herma Briffault, *The Pure and the Impure*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1968; New York: Farrar Straus, 1967.
- Claudine à l'école* (1900), tr. Antonia White, *Claudine at School*, London: Secker and Warburg, 1956; New York: Farrar Straus, 1957.
- Claudine à Paris* (1901), tr. Antonia White, *Claudine in Paris*, London: Secker and Warburg, 1958; New York: Farrar Straus, 1958.
- Claudine en ménage* (1902), tr. Antonia White, *Claudine Married*, London: Secker and Warburg, 1960; New York: Farrar Straus, 1960.
- Claudine s'en va* (1903), tr. Antonia White, *Claudine and Annie*, London: Secker and Warburg, 1962; New York: Penguin, 1963.
- Chéri* (1920), tr. Roger Senhouse, *Chéri*, London: Secker and Warburg, 1951; with *The Last of Chéri*, New York: Farrar Straus, 1953.
- La Fin de Chéri* (1926), tr. Roger Senhouse, *The Last of Chéri*, London: Secker and Warburg, 1951; with *Chéri*, New York: Farrar Straus, 1953.
- Gigi* (1944), tr. Roger Stenhouse, *Gigi*, London: Secker and Warburg, 1953; with other works, New York: Farrar Straus, 1955.

### Further Reading

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- Judith Thurman. *Secrets of the Flesh: A Life of Colette*. London: Bloomsbury, 1999.

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## COLLÉ, CHARLES

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1709–1783

French playwright and songwriter

### *Chansons qui n'ont pu être imprimées et que mon censeur n'a point dû me passer*

Collé's *Chansons qui n'ont pu être imprimées* (1784) is a classic example of the *grivois* or *graveleux* influence in eighteenth-century French songwriting. The epigram to the collection,

*Sunt quaedam bona, sunt mediocria, sunt mala multa*, attests to the mixed quality of the collection. The majority of the collection is comprised of *vaudevilles* (new lyrics written to existing and usually well-known melodies, identified by their title) or parodies of movements from eighteenth-century French operas (particularly Rameau's *Hyppolite et Aricie*, and *Les indes galantes*, both 1733); the remaining minority of works are short verse forms—Epigrammes, Couplets détachés, Sonnets, etc. Some of the original

songs were themselves vulgar in origin, such as the air 'Lampons, lampons' which Collé uses several times—others were not. The structure of the collection has not been studied, but broadly speaking, Collé groups the vaudevilles in a first section (approximately pages 1 to 80), and keeps opera parodies together in the longer second section (pages 81 to end). Within this rough framework, however, the arrangement of the individual pieces is free.

The individual pieces are similar in their licentious and impertinent tone, where no theme is taboo. Some dominant themes are worth noting. The presence of the clergy is striking, from the opening strophic piece, 'La béquille perdue et retrouvée,' sung to the melody 'du Père Barnabas,' with its clear phallic metaphor, through 'Le bon catholique,' the 'Portrait de notre Abbessé,' and concluding with a *romance* sung to the melody 'Un jour le malheureux Lisandre,' alluding to the supposed homosexuality of the Jesuits, a theme which is developed in a number of songs in the collection. Female homosexuality is also described, as in 'On ne dispute point des goûts,' centered on Socrates and Sappho.

The innuendo-laden 'Comment l'esprit vient aux filles' picks up a common *topos* of mid-eighteenth-century libertine writing, centered upon an innocent, young (usually peasant) girl and her progressive acquisition of *esprit*, designating not only intelligence but also practical sexual experience. Other songs are more direct, such as 'Sur une femme' which provides a lesson in female anatomy, concluding with the sexual organs: 'Le feu qui prend sa part vers le milieu, / Brûle le cul, & la place voisine.' Women are generally seen as licentious and dishonest, such as the narrative 'Chanson malhonnête,' where the *Je* decides to try to find 'une honnête femme / Qui ne fût pas trop putain,' but who is forced to conclude, at the end, that bourgeoisie women are worse than the infamous dancers of the Opéra. The importance of social class is considerable; much of the humor of these songs comes at the expense of the nobility, such as 'L'éloge de Léandre,' who 'se dit Gentilhomme étant fils de putain, / Et voici le sujet où sa Noblesse il fonde: / Car sa mère foutant avecque tout le monde, / L'a bien pu faire noble aussitôt que vilain.' Mondain society is also frequently mocked, as in 'Sur le mariage de Mde. la Duchesse de Chaulnes avec Mr de Giac.'

Humor is also produced by the unexpected or the unrevealed, such as songs where the reader/singer must supply the missing or incomplete word which ends a verse line, as in the 'Vaudeville du mois de mai.' But much of the humor of the parodies is surely lost today, where readers are less familiar with the original opera from which a melody is borrowed. Whereas the contemporary public would have immediately grasped the distance between the new words and the old context from which the melody was borrowed, which with the serious *tragédies lyriques* of Rameau would have produced an effect of burlesque, such references today would need copious footnoting.

The theatrical aspect of this collection also deserves attention, because some of the pieces are not only derived from previous operas, but were also almost certainly written for inclusion in theater, as the title 'Vaudeville de Parade' indicates. The first of these is a strophic song where verses are taken successively by the characters of the *Commedia dell'arte* and the Fairs: Isabelle, Léandre, Cassandre, Gilles. Similarly, the inclusion of a Vaudeville de rentrée, or the 'Sur le théâtre italien,' suggests a level of borrowing between Collé's song collections and theatrical writing which would deserve further attention.

### Biography

Born in 1709, Collé was the son of a *Procureur* at Châtelet, and intended for legal studies, which he never undertook. One of the first members of the Paris group of songwriters, the Société du Caveau, Collé's first works were songs, which were later to be published collectively; from these he started writing licentious *parades* and *comédies de société* (plays for private society theater). Protected by the Duc d'Orléans, his literary and material ambition grew, and he was also the author of libretti for *opéras-comiques* and plays performed at the Comédie-Française, including *Dupuis et Desronais* (1763), and *La partie de chasse de Henri IV* (first performed at the Comédie Française in 1774). On its publication in 1805, his *Journal* provoked reactions of shock, mixed with great curiosity for the material it includes on eighteenth-century cultural life.

MARK DARLOW

**Editions**

*Chansons qui n'ont pu être imprimées et que mon censeur n'a point du me passer* ([n.p.]: [n. pub], 1784).

**Selected Works**

*Théâtre de société, ou Recueil de différentes pièces, tant en vers qu'en prose, qui peuvent se jouer sur un théâtre de société*. 2 vols. (a Haye-Paris: Gueffier, 1768); Nouvelle édition, 3 vols. (Paris: Gueffier, 1777).

*Chansons joyeuses mises au jour par un âne-onyme, onisime*. Nouvelle édition, 2 vols. (Paris: [n. pub.], 1765).

*Chansons nouvelles et gaillardes, sur les plus beaux airs de ce temps. Mises au jour rue de la Huchette, par un asne onime*. Paris: Imprimerie de la veuve Oudot, 1753.

*La Partie de chasse de Henri IV (comédie); Le Galant Escroc (comédie); La Vérité dans le vin, ou Les Désagrèments de la galanterie (comédie); La Tête à Perruque ou le Bailli (petit conte dramatique)*. Four plays published in *Théâtre du XVIIIe siècle*. ed. by Jacques Truchet (Paris: Gallimard, 1974), vol. 2, pp. 599–727.

*Journal et mémoires sur les hommes de lettres, les ouvrages dramatiques et les événements les plus mémorables du règne de Louis XV (1748–1772)*. 3 vols. (Paris: Didot, 1868).

*Correspondance inédite*. Edited by Honoré Bonhomme (Paris: [n. pub.], 1864).

**Further Reading**

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## COLLECTED WRITINGS OF FRAGRANT ELEGANCE

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c. early twentieth century

**Chinese Compendium**

Such is the translation given by Robert van Gulik to *Xiangyan congshu*, a huge collection of writings on what culture added to nature to adorn life in the relationship between sexes. The collectanea are divided into 20 installments published between the years 1909 and 1911 totalling twenty volumes, or *ji* in Chinese. Dorothy Ko offered a slightly different translation for the title: *Collectanea of the fragrant and the beautiful*. She mentioned the year of publication as 1914 and referred to 20 volumes, instead of the 80 specified by van Gulik, a mystery easy to solve, for “volumes” may be translated two ways in Chinese: *ji* (20) and *juan* (80), the latter of which literally means a “roll,” in fact a text of shorter size and perhaps better rendered as “chapter.” As each *ji* is divided into four *juan* we get eighty volumes for the whole collection. The year 1914 refers perhaps to the second edition of the twenty installments put together. Whatever the case, the Taipei reproduction in 1969 of the movable-typed

edition is conveniently numbered on each of its 5868 pages, including some three to four hundred works in full or in lengthy extracts.

The compiler informs us at the end of his preface dated 1909 that he did not observe any chronological order or choose items for their surprising or enjoyable nature, not aiming at inciting any rapture of the senses. Little poetry is included. That need was met by a compendium published by Lei Jin in 1914, *Poems of Fragrant Elegance by Five Hundred Authors* [*Wubaijia xiangyan shi*], from which Georges Soulié de Morant selected the *Poèmes de lascivité parfumée* of his *Anthologie de l'amour chinois* (Mercure de France, Paris 1932, 247 p.).

Zhang T'ing-hua, our compiler, aware of the risks of hasty alterations, warns us that he abstained from any critical editing of the texts, culled from book collectors. They are quoted as he found them. Topical groupings, if any, are more or less haphazard. There is unfortunately no general table of contents for the twenty collections. Titles of books or other excerpts are simply at the head of each of the twenty installments. Authors are mentioned after the titles

only when they reappear, followed by the texts. It can be rather cumbersome to find one's way, as no detailed indices are available, but the *General Catalogue of Chinese Collectanea*, published in Shanghai in 1959–1962, is a useful guide for the specialist. There the listing takes no account of the arbitrary division in four juan. Instead it informs of the number of chapters of the works copied in the collectanea, usually one, at most six. Unfortunately headings within the works copied are ignored. Authors are simply dated by vague dynastic slices which may cover one to three centuries. Still the *General Catalogue's* indices do work as a welcome, if rather coarse guide.

### A Source Book of Chinese Sexual Life Through the Ages?

There is but one work possibly originating from before the Christian era and hardly more than two or three from writers who died in the Republican era starting in 1911. Some texts are rare items, others well-known and to be found in several earlier collections. Sorting out each item for different kinds of analytical classification would be required before making proper use of such a massive amount of material, the range of which may turn out to be both too large and too restricted. Medical or other technical books are discarded. Popular genres in colloquial language are ignored as well as jests or joke books. No material from this collectanea contributed to the rich harvest of Chinese sex jokes collected by Howard Levy. However, the wife-fearer as a favorite laughingstock is well represented in many kinds of literary pieces to be found in the *Collected Writings of Fragrant Elegance*. Of those translated, for example, in Levy's *Warmsoft Village*, one is in the seventh collection, the other in the first, the *Dulü* or *Rulings to Curb Jealousy*, attributed to Chen Yuanlong (1652–1736) by Yang Fuji (1747–1820); but it was already included in an earlier collection, *Chaodai congshu*. Parody of judicial sentences is a fairly early literary genre, a relaxing exercise better appreciated by scholars expected to join the higher bureaucracy empowered as judges. Feminine jealousy was rampant in the polygamous families of the well-off. It is no surprise to find the same work included in still another collected writing, *Qiuyu'an suibi* [*Notes from the refuge against autumnal rains*]. Of a similar parodic stance, *The Confession of a Wife-fearer* [*Junei*

*gongzhuang*], in the seventh collection, probably belongs to a much later genre which may not be found anywhere else.

### A Rare Item

On the other hand the piece immediately following the *Rulings* in the first *ji* is of a quite different order. Under the title, *Notes on The Peony Pavilion commented by three wives* (*Sanfu ping Mutan ting zaji*), it is a long and moving piece of nearly twenty pages (211–230) signed by Wu Ren, a minor poet of Hangzhou who in 1694 published this annotated edition of the famous play of Tang Xianzu (1550–1616). It is the source document, directly or indirectly used by Dorothy Ko. An abridged version of her account (p. 70–71): “Chen Tong (ca. 1650–1665), like many other females of her times, was absorbed in the world of love evoked by *The Peony Pavilion*, an instant success upon its first publication in 1598. She became a devotee of the play, spending hours collating and correcting the different versions that book merchants purveyed. One day, she obtained a copy of the authentic edition. Unable to put it down, she starts writing comments on the margins of the pages. Even after felling ill, she stayed up all night reading. Her mother, worried about her health, seized and burned all her books. Chen's wet nurse, however, rescued volume one of her prized edition of *The Peony Pavilion*. Tucked away under a pillow, it was used to press dried flowers. Chen died not long before her wedding. The nurse then took the book to the home of Chen's betrothed, Wu Jen, together with a pair of shoes made by Chen for her future mother-in-law, and sold it to him for one ounce of silver. A drama aficionado himself, Wu Jen delighted in the tiny scribbling, full of Zen Buddhist insights, left by Chen Tong. Soon Wu Jen married another local girl, Tan Ze (ca. 1655–1675), who was as fond of the play as Chen Tong had been. Tan committed Chen's commentary to memory, completed the second half in Chen's spirit, and hand copied her comments and Chen's onto the margins of an original edition of the play that Wu had bought. She lent the copy to her niece, but reluctant to appear boastful about her talent, she pretended that the commentary was her husband's work. In 1675, three years after her marriage, Tan Ze also died. The ill-fated husband married a third time, more than a decade

later, Qian Yi. She too, stayed up all night reading *The Peony Pavilion* and the comments by her two elder “sisters.” She managed to convince her husband to reissue the play with commentary under the three women’s names and sold her jewellery to finance the block-cutting and printing.”

### The Wife-Fearer

The fourteenth installment is almost entirely devoted to comments around the illustrious novel *The Story of the Stone*, while nearly half of the fourth collection deals with flowers and the art of arranging them. There, however, a Miss Hibiscus, in spite of her flowery name, is not dabbling with that sort of skill, but has drawn rulings issued from the inner apartments, pleasantly divided between six ministries as does the imperial government. Though the title, *Gui lü*, is translated by Howard Levy as “*How to Regulate the Bedroom*” (p. 52–61) it aims first of all at restricting the polygamous husband. To quote the first and the last penalties: “He is not allowed to meet girls from brothels whatever their beauty or skills. Transgression would be dealt as treacherous collusion with a foreign state. A hundred blows of heavy bamboo; hard labour outdoors.” “Maids receive dresses, shoes, ornaments from their mistresses. Males are not allowed any secret donation. Transgression would be dealt with as abuse of power: sixty heavy blows, confiscation of the properties.” For each of the thirty-one rules due penalties are tagged on.

### Against Footbinding

Many a piece are far from being in a jocular tone. In the second installment, the great historian Zhang Xuecheng (1738–1801) pleaded for spreading learning among women in his essay negating the popular saying, *nüde wucai* (Feminine virtue is ignorance), *Fuxue* (p. 501–512), followed by the colophon of the same Yang Fuji (1747–1820) who picked it from the *Yihai zhuchen* [*Dust of Pearls from the Sea of Arts*] to include it in the earlier collection *Chaodai congshu*. The following piece, by the poet Yu Huai (1616–1696), *An Inquiry on Footbinding* (*Nüren xiewa kao*, p. 513–514), is perhaps even more famous, included in 1697 in the collected *Tanji congshu* (translated by Lin Yutang, *The*

*Importance of Understanding*, World Publishing, New York 1960, p. 221–224). The following discussion on footbinding, *Zhanzu tan*, of the illustrious poet Yuan Mei (1716–1798), refuting different theses for the antiquity of the custom, argues in the same vein, though he admits that women were reluctant to go barefoot in China and that men liked small feet already in early times. Other writings of Yuan Mei make his taste on the matter clearer: “If a woman has a three-inch bowed foot but short neck and thick waist, how can she ever give a light appearance when walking, as if she were skimming over the waves?” “What is the good of making a woman’s feet so small because every generation is mad about this? I think that to maim your own daughter’s limbs to make them prettier is like burning the bones of your parents in order to seek good fortune. How pitiful!” (see Howard Levy, *Chinese Footbinding*, p. 69 & 199). An even sharper pronouncement is to be found in our *Collected Writings of Fragrant Elegance*, seventh installment (p. 1880), among the extracts from the great essayist Xie Zhaozhe (1567–1624)’s *Wenhai pisha* [*Sands Culled from the Literary Sea*] published in 1609, more than a century previously, proving that women did not mind going barefoot in ancient times. He concludes, after negating any trace of footbinding half a millennium before his time: “But aren’t feminine natural feet beautiful?” A bountiful harvest of footbinding-lore could be gathered, dispersed in the different collections, like, in the sixth one, the spicy ironical discourse on smelling small feet, *Xiaojiao wen* (1629–1630), by an obscure author, Guang Wangsheng. The same installment includes what looks like a newspaper report about women’s associations approving a rejected project of the legislative chamber on prohibition of marrying concubines (p. 1695–1696), a step, claimed the concerned first wives, *dafu*, of a scope comparable to the abolition of slavery.

### Fragrant Elegance of Times Past

The compiler lived in a time of changing values. His choice of materials was probably directed by some new trends of thought. It is no doubt significant that each of the later installments, from the twelfth one till nineteenth, are headed by the writings of the prominent westernizer Wang Tao (1828–1897), himself a pioneer in



the discovery of minor genres of intimate writings like Mao Xiang (1611–1693)'s *Reminiscences of the Plum-Shadow Hermitage*, *Yingmei'an yiyu*, copied in the third installment (p. 585–614), at that time a text known only to a limited circle of connoisseurs. Still little-known is the long letter written by Yuan Zhongdao (1570–1624) for a young man living with a prostitute to beg the pardon of his elder brother (p. 1623–1627). The same may not be said nowadays about the extracts of Li Yu (1611–1680)'s writings in the last and twentieth installment (p. 5571–5628), *Casual Expressions of Idle Feeling*, *Xianqing ouji*, published in 1671. Is it by chance that Wolfram Eberhard (1909–1996) chose to translate nearly the same text, though the *Collected Writings of Fragrant Elegance* fail to include the last and fifth part, about the art of living with a woman and enjoying marriage? On the other hand Eberhard skipped entirely Yu Huai (1616–1696)'s discourse on footbinding which Li Yu quoted extensively (p. 1609–1611), with a number of unimportant variants, compared to the same text on p. 513 of the same *Collectanea*. Li Yu called Yu Huai his friend and assumed a rather unusual personal tone, like a fashion director confiding his tastes about “the perfect lady.” The text here appears as a sort of treatise divided in four parts: (1) Opting for charm. (2) Embellishing the appearance. (3) Ordering the dresses. (4) Cultivating womens gifts for reading, writing, music, and dance. “Why shouldn't I buy one or two concubines, if I can afford them?” wrote Li Yu. The wife is compared to the fields of the landlord, their main asset; the concubines are his gardens, to be tended carefully. Even the best looking woman would still gain by embellishing herself, an art which starts with cleanliness, mouth-washing, and bathing. Physical appearance is but the basis for charm. Paramount is complexion: the fairer the better. Li Yu's explanation, in accordance with traditional Chinese medical ideas, is tied to the proportion of white male semen in combination with female blood at the time of conception. Second in importance are the eyes and the eyelashes, for, says Li Yu aptly, the face is the master of the whole body and eyes the master of the face. Finally come the hands, neglected by most people, though a good guide to the mind and the refinement of the girl. The desire for small feet brought on footbinding. It clashes with Li Yu's praise of naturalness. “What's the

good of feet so small that one can't walk? What difference with having suffered the penalty of hacked off feet?” “Somebody long ago told me that the Prime Minister Zhou of Yixing bought a beauty for a thousand pieces of gold. He named her Miss Carry. Her feet were so tiny that she could hardly move. She had to be carried; so her name. I replied: if such is the case, better buy for a few copper coins a beauty of baked mud. The Creator has endowed us with feet in order to let us walk!” For the final charm in women is their bearing, *taidu*. A girl who cannot walk without leaning on walls is a pitiable sight. “Charm is something which comes naturally to a person and directly grows out of her personality. It is not something which can be copied from others, for charm imitated is beauty spoiled.” Lin Yutang goes on in his translation from Li Yu: “I was once in Yangchow, trying to pick a concubine for a certain official. There were rows of women in beautiful dresses and of different types. At first they stood all with their heads bent, but when they were ordered to hold their heads up, one of them just raised her head and looked blandly at me, and another was terribly shy and would not hold her head up until she had been bidden to do so several times. There was one, however, who would not look up at first but did so after some persuasion, and then she first cast a quick glance as if she was looking and yet not looking at me before she held her head up, and again she cast another glance before she bent her head again. This I call charm.” (Lin Yutang, *The Importance of Understanding*, World Publishing, New York 1960, p.234). Li Yu, of course, concedes that there is charm acquired by training, but it is for performers on the stage, while natural charm is to be enjoyed at home.

### Fragrant Memories of Brothel Life

High-class brothels were places where scholars and civil servants met, where courtesans practiced dance, music, and poetry. Many writings keep the memory of those places of enjoyment, of the cultural pastimes rather than of any sexual activities. In earlier times brothels were registered and required to offer public services. Biographies of the most glamorous courtesans take the larger part of that kind of work. Later those houses' prestige waned somewhat and they were called “green bowers,” *qinglou*. There is in

the collection one of the earliest and quite detailed description of a gay quarter of the Chinese capital, Ch'ang-an, between 789 and 881, the Northern quarter, *Beili zhi*, by Sun Qi (translated into French by Robert des Rotours, *Courtisanes chinoises à la fin des T'ang*, Paris: PUF 1968, 196 p.) is to be found in the fifth installment, where there is some attempt of grouping as it is followed by the *Jiaofang ji* (Record of the Entertainment Bureau, written after 762), Xia Tingshi (ca. 1316–after 1368)'s recollections from green bowers, *Qinglou ji*, a valuable document for the history of Chinese theater too, for there were no clear boundaries between these different kinds of entertainments. However, Yu Huai (1616–1696)'s no less famous reminiscences from those districts in the former Ming capital of Nanking, *Banqiao zaji*, are inserted in the thirteenth installment (translated under the title *A Feast of Mist and Flowers*, Yokohama 1967, by Howard Levy).

Though van Gulik wrote that the collectanea was “published in the years 1910–1911 when censorship became lax,” it should be pointed out that it contains very little of an obscene or vulgar nature, true to its title of “Collected Writings of Fragrant Elegance.” Any scorn it may have suffered was for its nature as a testimony of the leisure of an outlawed social group.

### Biography

The compiler is using a pseudonym, Chong-tianzi, which is one used by Zhang T'ing-hua about whom nothing is known.

ANDRÉ LÉVY

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## COLLETON, JOHN (ROBERT WALTER MARKS)

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1907–1993

American novelist, philosopher, and mathematician

### The Novels

Colleton's first erotic novel, *The Trembling of a Leaf*, is a take-off on Somerset Maugham's 1921 novel of the same title, just as his fourth,

*Replenishing Jennifer*, sends up Maxwell Bodenheim's *Replenishing Jessica* (1925). Erudition studs Colleton's fiction with references to Maeterlinck, Shakespeare, Hemingway, Stendhal, D'Annunzio, James, and Flaubert, with allusions to European history and mathematical formulae, and with urbane cultural and political commentary. His style succeeds through paradox: on the one hand, introspection and learning add elegance to narrative; on the other, they veneer

a graphic sexuality whose impulses are demotic. *The Trembling of a Leaf*, told by a student besotted with his beautiful, blueblooded aunt Amy Dellmore, one-time “Charleston Woman of the Year,” introduces one of Colleton’s principal characters. Wealth, social station, and manners hide the outwardly demure Amy’s hyperactive libido. A semi-public whipping releases her sexuality, which manifests itself in incest and exhibitionism; hidden triggers of desire are a recurrent Colleton motif. In subsequent novels, most of them narrated by Beauregard “Bill” Benton, a Georgia novelist and editor, Amy becomes one apex of a “southern” triangle formed by Benton and Cloris, Lady Cholmondeley, nee McGuire, herself a native of Chapel Hill, North Carolina. This fictional device may well have sexualized an eleven-year virtual ménage à trois involving Marks, his wife Hilde, and the novelist Carson McCullers.

Most of the novels revolve around the nymphomaniacal Cloris, who enjoys a marriage of convenience with a titled British entrepreneur with connections to the Mafia narcotics trade. A secret pederast, Lord Cholmondeley worries enough about appearances—he is also secretary of the Knights of Malta—occasionally to dispatch thugs in pursuit of Benton and Cloris, a circumstance that justifies their constant travel. When not soaking sheets together, Cloris and Benton collaborate on erotic art films (e.g., one based on *Oedipus Rex*); she directs the explicit screenplays that he writes, with results that her admirers compare to Buñuel and Pasolini. In each novel, Benton and Cloris seduce women who star in their films; these are modelled on actresses that Marks interviewed as a journalist: Audrey Hepburn, Sophia Loren, Gypsy Rose Lee, Jayne Mansfield, Kim Novak, and Mae West. Benton and Cloris continuously invent their sexual *personae* in a “Pirandello Game” (*Between Cloris and Amy*, 40) of talk: voicing fantasy and tracing branching implications lead inevitably to physical experimentation. Cinematic or literary, voyeurism is key to eroticism: Colleton’s scenarios wed narcissism and lust through the dramatic agency of camera or observers. Benton will speculate on the visual angle best suited to represent lubricity, or on-lookers will critique an act of fellatio or sodomy, so that arousal can feed on arousal. “Sex is a reptile perpetually

engaged in the pursuit of its own tail,” says Benton (*The Pleasures of Cloris*, 49).

Benton deprecates his abilities as a writer, insisting that he lacks insight into character or motivation, at the same time that his fascination with erotic behavior underlines a conviction that the world is transparent to sex. Setting supplies verisimilitude. The appeal of a Colleton novel derives in part from Baedeker commentary on actual streets, restaurants, hotels, and monuments as characters pursue each other from South Carolina’s Low Country to Italy’s Amalfi Coast. More important, travel illustrates a Jamesian theme: the corruption of Americans as they learn from Continental aristocrats “a respect for the decadence of others” (*Up in Mamie’s Diary*, 28).

Colleton renders decadence inventively. Aimee, Countess of Liechtenstein, gives each of her lovers a watch whose dial marks her menstrual cycle. The scholarly Contessa Borromini lectures on papal history and Umbrian architecture and can decipher Cretan Linear B, but chooses fashions that emphasize her lack of pubic hair. A soothsayer “reads” breasts and clitorises through “sciences” she calls mammaromanticism and clitoramancy. Lovers sneak through secret passageways or hide behind tapestries, but the most aristocratic setting, say a palatial marble bathroom, will be subverted by a leaky toilet. Appearance is all: polite Japanese tourists pretend that the naked couple they discover on an altar in a Doric temple are pieces of classic statuary. *The Naked Countess of Lichtenstein* (1976) comically anticipates later feminist views when the fictional La Concorrenza, a radical group of Italian women, proposes to liberate feminists from patriarchy through orgiastic sex, a way of attacking established political parties, including the communists, who are too masculine in their conservatism. Women in Colleton novels are invariably intellectually curious, sexually autonomous, and confident of their sensual power. In allowing them to stage manage their own pleasures, Colleton aims at a wide audience. The effect, both titillating and sophisticated, was the reason that his erotic novels sold more than a million copies in the United States (Gene Waddell, Archivist of the College of Charleston, to Joseph W. Slade, February 26, 2002 and March 5, 2002).

### Biography

Born in Charleston, South Carolina, 1907. Marks flunked out of the College of Charleston and Yale University (1929), but after taking classes at the Sorbonne (1930) and Columbia University (1942), he received his B.A. (1951), M.A (1952), and Ph.D. (1953) from the New School for Social Research. A professional journalist, he wrote for *Esquire*, *Coronet*, *Popular Science*, and other magazines, often under pen names (Mark Ashley, John Charleston, Tradd Cooper, and Tycho Brahe), edited *Gentry* (1952–1954) and *Pocket* magazines (1954–1956), edited science texts for Bantam Books (1959–1967), and ghost-wrote Elsa Maxwell's syndicated society column (1960s). Marks popularized the work of Buckminster Fuller, wrote science and mathematics texts (under the name Bradford Smith), and published a novel on psychology (*The Horizontal Hour*, 1957). After teaching philosophy and cybernetics at the New School for Social Research in New York (1953–1970), he returned to Charleston, where he wrote erotic novels under the pseudonym John Colleton, the name of one of South Carolina's original "Lords Proprietor." Marks was married three times, to Sylvia (maiden name unknown), Hilde Russell, and Alice Barnette, but had no children of his own. He died of pneumonia in Charleston on August 8, 1993.

JOSEPH SLADE III

### Selected Works

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## CONFESSION AND GUILT

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Augustine of Hippo elaborated the fundamental principle for much of Christian history: There is sexual intercourse only between a man and a woman, married to one another, and only for the purpose for procreation. All sexual behaviors, not meeting those conditions, were

understood as immoral and sinful. A rigorous practice of confession provided a regulatory means for the development of Christian shame and guilt around sexuality.

Michel Foucault offers an intriguing hypothesis that Christian confession plays an important

## CONFESSION AND GUILT

development of the notion of subjectivity and the discourse of sexuality. He traces the practice of confession to Greco-Roman philosophical obligation to know oneself. It became the cultural background for the development of the monastic practice of an examination of conscience, whereby a monastic was required to turn his thoughts completely to God and to confess to a spiritual mentor each of his thoughts not focused on God. Foucault observes that the examination of conscience was developed by John Cassian's *De Institutiones Coenabiorum* and *Collectiones Patrum*. The monastic vigilantly ensured that he was chaste when no impure thoughts occurred. Foucault attaches great importance to the Fourth Lateran Council that made yearly confession obligatory in 1215. He sees confession as a rigorous examination of sexual thoughts and acts and as coercive technology of regulating behavior. The examination of sex through the lens of confessional speech led to the development of a western discourse on sexuality.

Private confession originated in sixth-century CE Irish monastic communities in the practice of spiritual direction whereby a monk would confess his faults to a superior or senior monk. The director would impose an appropriate penance upon the penitent monk. The practice of private confession was exported from Ireland to other European Christian regions or areas undergoing the spread of Christianity. The clerical confessor understood himself as a teacher; he used the opportunity of the confessional practice to correct and instruct penitents in the development of new inward disposition of remorse and directional change of life. The penitent was understood as a repenting sinner and was considered the lowest rank of Christian. The goal was to make Christians and newly converted Christian populations obey not only the Church but also its morality and laws. Newly converted European populations had a strong commitment to a more diversified and freer expression of sexuality than the Christians. Private confession became one of the principal means for censuring sexual behaviors outside the Christian norms of sexuality within marriage for only the purpose of procreation.

Confessional literature taught clergy interrogation techniques, passed on a developing theology of penance, and catalogued sins according to the severity of penance and confessional etiquette. It establishes the priest's authority and

imparts knowledge that supports the priest's authority.

Private confession provided a regulatory practice to ensure clerical social control of Christian morality and in particular its moral teachings on sexuality. The priest was to investigate the sins of the penitent through interrogation, judge the guilt and remorse of the person confessing, and impose a penance. Sins were enumerated, examined, catalogued, and judged. If people sinned or did not fulfill their penance, they were supposed to feel guilty. The heart of confessional practice relied on the penitent's internal feelings of guilt and fear of damnation.

Pierre Payer (1985) is critical of Foucault for placing too much emphasis on the Fourth Lateran Council, the later penitential literature, and the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Catholic moralists. He rejects the notion that practice of confession as form of social control of sexual expression. Payer points to the post-Lateran summas for confessors and manuals which abandon the bluntness of questions of earlier penitential literature; these manuals spend less time on sexual sins. One reason for such lax interrogation of sexual sins can be seen in Raymond de Penaforte's instructions to confessors to be very cautious with penitents and not to go into depth of special sins since they often fall into such sins after such pastoral interrogation. In other words, penitents might not have thought of such things, so do not give them any new erotic ideas. Another consideration Payer fails to consider is that during the thirteenth century, Christian moral teachings on sexuality are already refined and well embedded with various European countries and principalities.

Other medievalists such as Thomas Tentler (1977), Bryan Turner (1977), and A. J. Frantzen (1983) have understood along with Foucault the development of private confession as disciplinary practice or social system of guilt and expiation. Foucault's thesis can be found evidenced in the earlier penitential books, the emergence in post-Lateran summas for confessors, and moral theologies manuals. These are attempts to set up a rigorist sexual ethic, fundamentally outlined by Augustine's earlier position. Confessional literature instructs the priest in a disciplinary function of teaching Christians to feel guilt about sins and seek a cure for guilt from their sins.

Penitential literature became influential for moral theology that became dominant from the

Catholic Counter Reformation period into the twentieth century. The penitentials catalogue and rank sins according to the severity of penance assigned to the sin. The terminology for sexual sins is a problem. There is a lack of class nouns in Latin for illicit sexual sins, indicating an absence of abstraction for the varieties of sexual sins. The penitential books used verbal descriptions to articulate a particular sexual sin. A level of conceptualization and abstraction to produce a sexual vocabulary does not appear until the thirteenth-century *summas* for confessors. Sexual offenses constituted the largest single category of behaviors in the penitential books.

During the Catholic Counter Reformation, the *summas* were replaced in clerical education with manuals of moral theology. Alfonso Liguori (1696–1787), later declared a doctor of the Roman Catholic Church and founder of the Redemptorist order, wrote *Theologia Moralis* that examined rigorist and laxist interpretations of moral questions and a small guide for confessors, *Praxis Confessarii*. These became the basis of clerical education and preparation for Roman Catholic confessional practice well into the twentieth century. It became effective in the development of Catholic guilt around sexuality until Vatican II.

ROBERT E. GOSS

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## COOPER, DENNIS

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1953–

American poet, novelist, journalist, anthologist, magazine publisher, and art curator.

Dennis Cooper is among the most controversial of contemporary gay American writers. Cooper's creative corpus, totaling several collections of poetry, numerous essays and short stories, and six widely read and controversial novels, has been disturbing both gay and straight readers for some time with work that seems invested in celebrating anti-social and transgressive impulses, questioning "normality," disturbing conventional

notions of the relationship between sociality and sexuality, and confronting readers with sexual violence and erotic perversion. Edmund White, in "Out of the Closet, On to the Bookshelf," says that Cooper is "[a]s obsessive as Sade and as far from ordinary morality as George Bataille" as he "meditates ceaselessly on violence and perversion." His work seems "dedicated to drugs, kink, and a fragile sense of beauty fashioned out of the detritus of American suburbs"—or, "the very stuff of Jesse Helms's worst nightmares." (282).

But Cooper's work is not without a tradition. In an article/interview in *The Advocate*,

provocatively titled “Hannibal Lecture,” Cooper claims affinity for the works of the Marquis de Sade, Rimbaud, Gide, Genet, and Burroughs, almost all of whom explored variations of queer transgression, of the tension between an “outlaw existence” versus the “prudent administration of desire” that many novels with gay content often explore. Elizabeth Young, in *Shopping in Space: Essays on America’s Blank Generation Fiction*, says more specifically that “It is precisely at (the) point of sado-masochistic anal taboo that Dennis Cooper locates his work.” Still, Young maintains that his work is “clear and aesthetically beautiful, and at the same time, dense, threatening and impacted with meaning” (236). Moreover, Young argues that Cooper’s “fiction attempts to unravel a nightmarishly complex knot of predatory homosexual desire, murderous fantasy and perversion—shot through with shards of tenderness, vision and a fragmented, potent humanity” (66). His principle “muse type,” the character that figures prominently in almost all of his work, is “the younger, troubled unhappy boy who turned to him for care and nurturance” (69).

To date, Cooper’s principle literary contribution has consisted of a five-book cycle exploring themes of sexuality, violence, and murder, with a particular focus on the lives of his “muse type,” late adolescent boys with homo-erotic interests. George Miles, a disturbed youngster, boyhood friend, and apparent inspiration for the five-book cycles, sometimes appears as a character, George, throughout the books, which include the novels *Closer*, *Frisk*, *Try*, *Guide*, and *Period* (Reitz). In a review of the last book in the series, *Period*, one critic claims that Cooper’s novels “attempt to explain away his own childhood nightmares” (Shattuck B9).

The second novel, *Frisk*, has been perhaps the most controversial, particularly since it lures the reader into thinking that the narrator, provocatively called “Dennis,” murders young men as a form of erotic fulfillment. In a way, *Frisk* is a strange coming out narrative in which the narrator traces the development of his fascination, since puberty, of seeing “snuff” pictures—several of which he saw as a young gay teen in a porn shop, perhaps inciting his desires and obsession. The result is a portrait of the artist as a young pervert. Increasingly, fantasies of violence and murder abound, and Dennis relates these in often chilling passages:

It wasn’t that I didn’t fantasize murdering hustlers. It’s just that I tend to be too scared or shy the first few times I sleep with someone to do what I actually want. The worse that could, and did, happen was I’d get a little too rough. But the hustler would stop me, or I’d stop myself, before things became more than conventionally kinky, as far as he knew. (36)

Readers of Cooper’s work will recognize this as familiar thematic territory: the conflict between imagining one’s desires and the inability to realize them. According to Earl Jackson, Jr.’s essay, “Death Drives Across Pornotopia: Dennis Cooper on the Extremities of Being,” which offers a psychoanalytical reading of some of Cooper’s early novels and poems, the combination of eroticism and violence in Cooper’s work offers us “an investigation into the interior of the body, a movement of objectification and obsessive violation of the body’s contours, a peering inside the costume of the person to his real location” (143).

Indeed, part of Dennis’ drive as a character in *Frisk* is a desire to collapse completely the boundary between self and other—quite literally: he says, “I can actually imagine myself inside the skins I admire. I’m pretty sure if I tore some guy open I’d know him as well as anyone could, because I’d have what he consists of right there in my hands, mouth, wherever” (51). Certainly, such “knowing” of another person results in—actually, originates in—turning the object of affection into an actual object. But such passages, as brutal as they are, also beg for our identification, even erotic understanding. Who doesn’t bemoan the separation of self and other? Who hasn’t tried drastic (if not murderous) ways to overcome the distance between desire and its beloved? We may resist complete identification, but there is a strong romantic, even erotically playful sentiment at work here: “I want to know everything about you. But to really do that, I’d have to kill you, as bizarre as that sounds” (67). At the same time, to countenance Dennis, the narrator’s desires as “knowable,” if not commendable, is to begin collapsing the boundary between Dennis the author and the reader’s prurient interests. We are coming closer to understanding the hidden desires of the narrator as we continue reading the novel.

With such material, a question lingers: Is Cooper’s work erotic? Cooper argues, in a way, that it is and it isn’t. He maintains that *Frisk* “is about the difference between what is possible in

one's fantasy life, and what is possible in one's real life... It tries, in various ways, to seduce the readers to believe a series of murders are real, then announces itself as a fiction, hopefully leaving readers responsible for whatever pleasure they took in believing the murders were real. [...] Murder is only erotic in the imagination, if at all" (reprinted in *Salon*). In a way, then, the novel serves as an opportunity to meditate on taking responsibility for our desires, on coming face to face with the often hidden, taboo, and perverse desires lurking beneath the surface of many lives. In an interview, Cooper maintains that "I present the actual act of evil so it's visible and give it a bunch of facets so that you can actually look at it and experience it. You're seduced into dealing with it. [...] So with *Frisk*, whatever pleasure you got out of making a picture in your mind based on ... those people being murdered, you take responsibility for it" (Laurence).

But Cooper's aims are not ultimately puritanical, suggesting the eradication of troubling or anti-social desires. Young says that, "For all the extremes and grotesqueries of his content, Cooper is a tender, lyrical and very romantic writer." Young also argues that, while Cooper's work isn't necessarily "pornographic," he has many "affinities with the French erotic tradition represented by...de Sade, Lautreamont and Bataille" (Shopping, 257). That is, like de Sade and the others in that erotic tradition, Cooper is invested in understanding what "extremes and grotesqueries" tell us about ourselves. In particular, he wants his readers to acknowledge the breadth—and depth—of desire as it draws us to other bodies in complex ways. Other critics, such as Kevin McCarron, disagree and they only see Cooper's work as "detachedly recording the death throes of a degenerate and rapidly decaying culture" (58).

Cooper, though, sees his work—and himself—very differently: "I thought people were seeing me as someone who jacked off to snuff videos. But it hasn't affected the way I write. I want my work to be very pure. It comes from a very pure space" (Canning, 309). More specifically, he maintains that "Ethics has been the center of all the books from the beginning" (Canning, 322). How so? A close reading of his work reveals that Cooper's narratives and characters are not just interested in transgressing societal norms as much as they are concerned

with understanding the value of their transgressive interests and fantasies—and how such fantasies impact and shape their social interactions with others. Indeed, it is the intersection between fantasy and reality, the life of the mind and the life of the social being, that becomes the core concern in Cooper's work: our fantasies of others, as disturbing as they may be, are part of what comprises our interest in others, and they should be acknowledged for the work they do in cultivating social relations, even if they remain only "fantasies." His novels, as challenging and anti-social as they seem on the surface, call for a fuller understanding and appreciation of desire, particularly transgressive desires, in the composition of social relations.

### Biography

Dennis Cooper was born on January 10, 1953 in Pasadena, California. He attended Los Angeles county public schools until the 8th grade when he transferred to a private school from which he was expelled in the 11th grade. He attended Pasadena City College for two years, where he studied with poets Ronald Koertge and Jerene Hewitt and one year at Pitzer College in Claremont, California, where he studied with the poet Bert Meyers. In 1976, he founded *Little Caesar Magazine and Press*. From 1980 to 1983 he was Director of Programming for the Beyond Baroque Literary/Art Center in Venice, California. From 1983 to 1990, he moved between New York City and Amsterdam, Holland. He returned to Los Angeles in 1990.

JONATHAN ALEXANDER

*Note: The Fales Library and Special Collections of New York University has an extensive archive of Cooper's papers and manuscripts: <http://dlib.nyu.edu:8083/servlet/SaxonServlet?source=/cooper.xml&style=/saxon01f2.xml&part=body>.*

### Selected Works

*The Dream Police: Selected Poems 1969–1993* (Pub Group West, 1995; Grove Press, 1996; this volume collects the best of Cooper's poem from his previously published chapbooks and short volumes of poetry).

*Closer*. Grove: 1989.

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## CORNEILLE, PIERRE

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1606-1684  
French dramatist

### *L'Occasion perdue recouverte*

Copies of *L'Occasion perdue recouverte* [*Lost Love Recovered*], composed of forty stances, were distributed secretly in Paris and were long attributed to Pierre Corneille before this claim was committed to print as part of a posthumous collection of the sayings and miscellanea of François Charpentier (1620-1702), a writer who had known Corneille. This work, *Carpenteriana*, which appeared in 1724, relates that,

while the poem was published anonymously, Pierre Ségurier, Chancellor and Keeper of the Seal, believed it to be the work of Corneille, and summoned the playwright for an audience to establish the truth of the matter. Ségurier was responsible for the legality of all publications appearing in France, and as early as 1647 had notified Parisian printers that the king was determined to stamp out books printed without official permission. The dramatist seemingly accepted the blame for the work, and allegedly undertook his translation of the *Imitation of Christ* as a penance imposed by Father Paulin of the capital's Nazareth Convent for having been responsible for such a licentious work.

This cleric was the chancellor's own confessor. Corneille's candidacy for authorship is reinforced by the fact that versification is elegant, and gratuitous vulgarisms are absent. Moreover, the manner in which the poem is set out and unfolds, lends itself to dramatic performance. The poem might not have survived if it had not been published in 1658 as part of an anthology, *Nouveau cabinet des Muses*, and later in 1661 by Benech de Cante-nac. This court poet included it as part of his *Journal de Trévoux*, and he has also been proposed as the possible creator of the piece.

The poem contains bawdy and comic elements more commonly seen in contemporary comedy, such as the type of the cuckolded, jealous husband. Dorimant's honor is endangered by Cloris, his sexually voracious wife, who succumbs to the charms of Lisandre while her husband is absent. Cloris has fallen passionately in love with this young suitor and while, at first, she offers some resistance, finds herself so overwhelmed with passion that 'Lisandre pouvoit tout' (Lisandre could do anything'). She passes out soon afterwards, though she has clearly given consent before fainting. Lisandre's conquest is to prove short-lived, however, for he suddenly finds he is completely impotent at the moment of consummating their passion. He tries every available method to stimulate an erection, and hurriedly and furiously masturbates himself before Cloris comes round. When she does eventually regain her senses, she strokes his body, only to find no visible sign of reciprocation. As soon as she touches his penis, she moves her hand away, not, as the poet remarks, because of any distaste at the male member, but rather out of disgust at its flaccid state. At first, Cloris is understanding of his predicament, but this patience eventually wears thin and she dismisses her erstwhile lover, cruelly refusing to listen to his excuses. At this point, the couple overhears a noise downstairs, which turns out to be Dorimant who has returned announced, and the disappointed lover makes good his escape through the bedroom window. Lisandre spends a restless and sleepless night, anxious about his new sexual problem, and resolves to return to his mistress in order to resolve his condition one way or another. Lisandre returns to the house in the early hours of the morning, though in a somewhat dejected state, and enters the building when he observes Dorimant's departure. On reaching the bedchamber, he finds the object of his desire and

frustration sleeping naked on her bed. This unexpectedly stirs him and he rushes forward to wake her. He is in such an excited state that he ejaculates as soon as she awakens, and she is horrified to find herself covered in semen, and worse still, unsatisfied. The young man is still feeling in a sexual mood, and her anger turns to lust as he jumps on the bed to pleasure her.

The work directly refers to various sexual acts, and it is Cloris's expert masturbation of his partner that causes her to lose consciousness. Vulgar and popular expressions are rejected in favor of more poetic terminology for human genitalia: the male organ is coyly described as 'ce directeur de la nature' ['this leader of nature'], while the vagina is referred to as 'doux tyran de nostre raison' ['gentle tyrant of our reason'], as well as being euphemistically termed as 'un lieu qu'on ne nomme pas' ['a place that one does not mention by name']. More striking than the uncomplicated descriptions of sexual behavior are the constant allusions to lovemaking as being a natural and pleasurable act providing mutual satisfaction to both sexes. Both parties are equally eager to engage in intercourse, and the traditional depiction of a lascivious, unfaithful female, or alternatively, a predatory, forceful young male lover, are notably absent. Cloris may not be an altogether sympathetic creation, but she is an empowered woman in control of her sexuality. The poet describes her as being ashamed ['honteuse'] to find herself covered in ejaculatory fluid, but this sentiment is due to the fact that it has happened without her knowledge and has soiled the bed linen, rather than betraying any moral guilt. Lisandre does not impose himself on her, and she does not acquiesce to anything that she does not want to do. The poem presents her only apparent flaw as the fact that she has taken a lower-class lover. When she is awoken to find her lover has enjoyed an orgasm without her participation, she complains that men are free to have multiple sexual partners, while wives, particularly the younger spouses of older men, have to remain like captured birds imprisoned in cages. This critique of the double standards of society's attitudes towards adultery constitutes a forceful apologia for feminine emancipation within marriage, and the parity of the sexes. Lisandre's subversion primarily consists of her unambiguous possession of her body, rather than any transgression against codes of morality.

## CORTÁZAR, JULIO

### Biography

Pierre Corneille was born at Rouen on June 6, 1606 and is often cited as author of *L'Occasion perdue recouverte*, which was distributed privately in manuscript form, around 1650 and published as part of a poetry anthology in 1658.

PAUL SCOTT

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# CORTÁZAR, JULIO

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1914–1984

Argentinean novelist, short story writer, and essayist

Cortázar's works narrate a desire for an impossible plenitude beyond the binary oppositions and the hollow conventions which structure mundane bourgeois reality. His oeuvre, strongly influenced by the Surrealist movement, is committed to the blurring of boundaries between rationality and irrationality, to the ludic rupturing of the banal. This impetus to fracture the pedestrian continuum, however, often submits his characters to strategies of transgression which are oppositional, hence destined to the reiteration of binary structures and so to failure and self-obliteration. Within this perfidious and annihilative scheme, eroticism is often exploited as a vehicle for rebellion. From *Los reyes* [*The Kings*], his first published prose work, in which the incestuous passion binding Ariadne to the Minotaur vindicates the blending of beings beyond corporeal and spatio-temporal limitations as the non plus ultra of eroticism, Cortázar maintains a Bataillean discourse of the erotic as that which is inseparable from death and the notions of pure expenditure and non-regeneration. In other words, for Cortázar the erotic reneges productivity, the cornerstone of the social construct. As many of the stories in *Bestiario* [*Bestiary*], *Las armas secretas* [*Secret Weapons*]

and *Final del juego* [*The End of the Game and Other Stories*] show, in his writing sexual acts constitute encounters with the other affording brief interludes of continuity between incomplete, discontinuous beings; a sense of continuity otherwise associated with voluptuous dissolution in death. Furthermore, the manifest dissociation of sexual practice from reproduction in these stories indicates the urge to transgress the edicts of social convention: Cortázar guards the erotic dissolution of being from acquiring a socially productive dimension. Nevertheless, although eroticism intimates deliverance from the pitiable state of individual separateness, the ensuing desire to rearticulate and fix being as an ineffable form of connectedness beyond life and death only begets anguish given the impossibility of the endeavour. Frustration born of this eroticized opposition to conventional existence exacerbates the horror of discontinuity, magnifies dissatisfaction with the empty routine and ritual of pedestrian life, and encourages dissipation through death. The suicidal denouements of stories such as "Manuscrito hallado en un bolsillo" [Manuscript Found in a Pocket] and "Lugar llamado Kindberg" [A Place Named Kindberg] in *Octaedro* [*A Change of Light and Other Stories*] strongly corroborate this reading, as does the orgiastic devastation of "Las ménades" [The Maenad] in *Final del juego* where the delirium of an audience drives them

to ravish and devour musicians and lay waste to a theater, making explicit the dynamics of liberation and destruction at play in erotic abandon.

In Cortázar's most celebrated novel, *Rayuela* [*Hopscotch*], the Argentinean protagonist Oliveira—first in Paris, later in Buenos Aires—searches for a state of non-dualism, for a sense of authenticity or an origin untarnished by social machination. His adage, “en el principio fue la cópula” (“in the beginning was coition”) emphasizes the importance of sex in relation to this coveted origin. As the novel goes on to show, sex here is mostly oral, masturbatory, and abusive; it is not creative in the reproductive sense. In *Rayuela* sex is only productive of a text—hence the interchangeable terms “the Word” and “coitus”—a text whose aim, paradoxically, is to undermine productivity and therefore social order itself. Oliveira's literary enterprise is to utilize eroticism as a means of breaking with social hegemony and returning to a point of unfettered creativity, of reaching his “kibbutz del deseo” [“kibbutz of desire”]. In Paris, Oliveira, the aloof intellectual, finds his antithesis in La Maga, a woman who represents infatuation and all that is ephemeral in life. La Maga executes a role often ascribed to women in Cortázar's fiction: the accessory enabling an eroticized (male) rite of passage. Oliveira experiments the transformative and disruptive powers of the erotic by rearticulating and defiling La Maga as Pasiphaë (Chapter 5). In such passages carnality is commensurate with fluidity, with an imaginative abandon of the objective world; particular significance is conferred upon the non-generative act of oral sex. Later, when Oliveira descends to the banks of the Seine (Chapter 36) and enters the idle—hence anti-social—world of the clochards, it is oral sex with the abject Emmanuèle that shores up the subversive barrenness of this act. Oliveira violates the taboo on filth by accepting the mouth of the foul vagabond who rouses visions of a desecrated goddess splattered with drunken soldiers' urine and semen; Emmanuèle's dirt is associated with death and decomposition, she is, however, seductive, stressing the sensuality of decay and dissolution. On that occasion a policeman arrives to interdict the public display of transgressive eroticism. In other instances, such as those involving La Maga—or her resurrection through Talita in Buenos Aires

(Chapter 54)—where the melding of her unruliness and Oliveira's intellect could offer a plenitude of sorts, the latter's preoccupation with his ego and with dialectics prevents or at least postpones such a redemptive union.

A decade later in the novel *Libro de Manuel* [*A Manual for Manuel*] where revolutionaries kidnap an official to secure the release of Latin American prisoners, Cortázar establishes an intimate relationship between political insurrection and sexual revolution: the progress of the protagonist Andrés is contingent upon transgression via sodomy. He forces Francine to have anal sex in a hotel overlooking a cemetery, hence emphasizing the association between this non-procreative sexual act and death. Similarly, Lonstein, who washes corpses in a morgue, develops an idiolect in reaction to the repression inherent in language and society (symbolic order) and declaims the need to liberate masturbation from its subaltern position vis-à-vis intercourse; he openly declares himself an onanist. The immediacy of death in these sexual exercises in sedition reasserts Cortázar's call for a breakdown in the equation of existence to perpetuation of the social regime (productivity). This idea finds its ultimate expression in Cortázar's most labyrinthine work, *62: Modelo para armar* [*62: A Model Kit*]. The eroticized breaching of individual egos in this novel undertakes a vampiric dimension which further problematizes the life/death distinction. Its protean continuum of characters negotiates libidinal and existential chaos, seduced by the undecidable nihilism/plenitude which defies articulation yet motivates, and inevitably frustrates, Cortázar's writing.

### Biography

Cortázar was born of Argentinean parents in Brussels in 1914. He was taken to Banfield, Buenos Aires in 1918 where he was introduced to French and English literature. He later went on to teach and translate the work of Edgar Allan Poe, André Gide, and G.K. Chesterton among others. In 1951, partly because of dissatisfaction with the Peronist regime, he moved to Paris where he was to remain the rest of his life. There he produced most of his writing and worked as a translator for UNESCO. He became keenly interested in Latin American politics with the Cuban revolution of 1956–1959. His support of

## CORTÁZAR, JULIO

Castro's administration was chequered but enduring, and he also backed the Sandinistas in Nicaragua. He died in 1984.

KARL POSSO

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# COTTON, CHARLES

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1630–1687

English linguist and essayist

## Ερώττολις: *The Present State of Bettyland (1684)*

Agriculture and topography have been popular sources of sexual imagery from ancient times. According to Cotton, the world of antiquity was full of “great Husbandmen that kept their plows going day and night,” their poets supplying appropriate metaphors of ploughing and sowing. The later manuring figure was established in English by the 1590s (Donne, “Sapho to Philaenis”). Sustained topographical imagery runs back to the Song of Solomon. Bettyland offers the *reductio ad absurdum* of Spenser’s Garden of Adonis, with Lust trapped in a cave beneath the Mount of Venus; or his Bower of Bliss where the human topography of the garden gives special meaning to the fountain at its center. As allegory’s credibility waned as an expression of universal truth, so it was used for fun: anarchic sex replacing divine order. Cotton burlesques the philosophical and imaginary voyage as well as the travel narrative catering for commercial interest or prospective emigrants—or indeed the armchair traveler, obvious counterpart to the reader of sex books. This vicarious dimension emerges through landscape painting; pictures of Bettyland making apt bedroom décor so that those without land will sometimes take shadow for substance and deface a picture with their “instruments of Agriculture.”

Bettyland is divided into provinces, dominated by Rutland containing the capital Pego (p. 4). Others are “*Maldavia*, famous for the great City of *Lipsic*” (Mal or Moll is a common name for whores; while liberties taken with Leipzig evoke pox); “*Holland*, a mighty tract of land under the Command of Count *Horne*” (historically Horn associates with “*Guelderland*,” but that province has unsuitable sexual connotations); and “the wide Province of *Will-shire*” (authorized by Shakespeare’s “Wilt thou, whose

will is large and spacious”). Flora and fauna are described, flowers including “*Batchelors Buttons*” and “*Tickle me quickly*,” while the animals, apart from “Hare and Coney,” are limited to horned cattle. The most common birds are wag-tails; though, since the land is low-lying, decoy ducks abound, the most celebrated being Circe (p. 30). Of water creatures there are few maids but a multitude of crabs and carps (pp. 12–13, 30). The most suitable crops and the best tracts of land are considered, some men paying a thousand or two “a year for a little spot in that Country, not so big as the palm of your hand” (p. 7; the vulvaic “spot” being a favored seventeenth-century usage). Legal aspects of tenure release a flood of popular puns on entailing, reversion, and enclosure.

Much of this is imitated and elaborated in Stretser’s *New Description of Merryland* (1741), his Maryland quibble having been used 90 years before in *Mercurius Democritus* 5 (27 April 1652). Democritus’s “*Floating Ark of pleasure*, bound for *Merry-land* man’d with female Mariners,” risks attack “about *Maidenhead* by the licentious Pr—roons” (obscenely punning on picaoons). The raciness is closer to Cotton than Stretser, comparison with whom is revealing about shifting sexual mores as well as a growing scientific discourse. Equally important is an aesthetic shift, Stretser tied to unity and consistency, whereas Cotton reminds that earlier imaginative prose often lumped a variety of forms happily together. Cotton not only innovates the erotic travel book but, when turning to the inhabitants of Bettyland, adumbrates that mode of spy literature associated particularly with Ned Ward. Like the bawd Quartilla, hoarse with pox, the two spies, Eucolpius and Eumolpus, who tour the London underworld, have names deriving from Petronius’s *Satyricon*; the recovery in 1650 of a Petronius manuscript led to several editions in the 1660s, which left their mark on prose fiction. Visiting a brothel, the spies discover a table “furnished as if it had been for the supper of *Trimalcio* in *Petronius*”

(p. 102). But this merely distracts from the actual source, *Fifteen Real Comforts of Matrimony* (1683), p. 47, which identically portrays a “grave Father” with naked queans at supper, “while he as naked as they, crept under the Table,... snarling like a Dog” and snapping at their thighs while they threw him scraps. (But plagiarism is the norm in such books, and this in turn expands *Wandering Whore* 3 (1660) where several whores stand “stark naked round about a Table whilst [their client] lyes snarling underneath as if he would bite off their whibb-bobs.”) The episode may explain Bettyland’s province of Curland; though St Jerome’s *caninas nuptias*, meaning the act of fornication, had its seventeenth-century cant equivalent. Another brothel scene lifted from *Fifteen Comforts* departs from the original in two respects. Firstly, the voyeurism is three-tiered: old man ogling whore; spies at their “peeping Crannies”; and of course the reader. Secondly, Bettyland is kept in view by way of fresh imagery, a whore exposing herself “as they draw the Curtain up from before the Scenes of a Theater”: “she drew the Curtain gently up ... and showed the Prospect of a very fair Garden-plot of Maiden-hair, not green as in other Countries, but growing like a kind of black Fern” (pp. 98–99). The original plan is recalled, too, in the discussion of prevalent diseases. There is priapismus, a “Giant-like Distemper that lifts its head most stiffly against *Furor Uterinus*, as having a perfect Animosity against it” (p.154). “But the grand Senior Disease [with] as many Names and Titles, as the Great *Turk*,” is pox; and one victim is hilariously pictured consoling himself “with *Hall’s Meditations, Shakespeare, and Foxe’s Book of Martyrs*.” Cotton regrets that Venus’s wounded heroes are not hymned like those of Mars; though he, like Harington, was well enough read to know of books written “in honour of the Pox.” He was also sophisticated enough to know that the very

voyages of discovery which produced the books he has parodied were contributing to a shift in sensibility, a new empiricism, which in turn necessitated that shift in expressive modes which he himself encapsulates in moving from pseudo-allegorical to a more direct kind of fictionalizing.

### Biography

Charles Cotton, a Staffordshire wit grounded in the classical languages as well as French and Italian, published a translation of Montaigne’s *Essays* and a continuation of Walton’s *Compleat Angler* which first appeared in the fifth (1676) edition. He is remembered especially for the burlesque poem, *Scarronides: Or, Virgile Travestie* (1664, 1665). Ερώττολις published anonymously, is commonly ascribed to him; though Wing lists it under the title.

GORDON WILLIAMS

### Further Reading

On the reprint, appearing in *The Potent Ally* (Jan. 1741) under the title *The Description of Bettyland*, see David Foxon, *Libertine Literature in England 1660–1745* (1964), p. 17. Cotton’s reputation for scurrility rests otherwise on verse burlesques, including a *Lucianic Burlesque Upon Burlesque, or The Scoffer Scoft* (1675), and *A Voyage to Ireland* (1670s), used by J. S. Farmer and W.E. Henley in compiling *Slang and its Analogues* (1890–1904), but no longer traceable. But the two most important items are *Scarronides* and *The Valiant Knight: or the Legend of Sr. Peregrine* (1663), whose relationship to Cervantes seems to come via Beaumont’s *Knight of the Burning Pestle* since Peregrine’s main battle is with pox. See Alvin Irwin Dust (ed.), *Charles Cotton’s Works, 1663–1665: critical editions of The Valiant Knight and Scarronides* (New York/London: Garland, 1992). Roger Thompson, *Unfit For Modest Ears* (London: Macmillan, 1979) finds scant evidence in favor of Cotton’s authorship of Ερώττολις.

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# CRÉBILLON, CLAUDE PROSPER JOLYOT DE

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1707–1777  
French novelist

## *Tanzaï et Néadarné*

*Tanzaï et Néadarné* and *Ah, quel conte!* are largely broad social and political satires with a heavy coloration of oriental story and fairy tale: metamorphoses of people like a prince turned into a goose, fairies good and evil, ugly and fair, and so forth—all of whom, like the Greek gods, supernatural or not, are as sexually active as any human. This side of Crébillon gave him an early reputation as sole true heir of Hamilton's mantle as storyteller. Through the act of an unfriendly fairy, *Tanzaï* has his penis turned into an embarrassing, ludicrous chef's skimmer, and is forced to make love to a hideous witch before he can escape his dilemma. *Néadarné*, in turn, finds her vagina sealed up; she must surrender to the carresses of an ugly genie in order to be freed from the curse, and in the process feels shamed, shocked, and guilty over discovering the joys of sex. Happily for her, a charm restores her virginity before she has to confront her husband. Jean Sgard writes:

Crébillon's reputation is knowing how to say all the realities of sex while 'veiling' the obscenities. He does know how; but he also knows how to do the opposite, as here. In *Tanzaï*, the obscenity is avowed, it is enormous, Gallic, Rabelaisian; and all the realities of sexual life are displayed without false shame.

Obscenity, however, is a relative term and only in a very limited sense can it be applied to Crébillon, even the Crébillon of *Tanzaï*. In this case it is important all the same to distinguish between shaming and naming. The decency of language remains paramount in all his works; it is always proper, and highly stylized. There is a good deal about strategies of progression and possession—the way one little concession leads always to another, etc.—and Crébillon certainly

alludes with unmistakable clarity to sensuous pleasures, even raptures, as he does to impotency; but that is about as far as he goes with respect to the technique or physiology of love.

## *Les égarements du coeur et de l'esprit*

The worldly initiation of Meilcour at the age of seventeen is recounted by the protagonist himself, a form which allows for retrospective irony directed both at himself and at others in the story, particularly the women who propose to seduce him. The neophyte is necessarily incompetent: since nothing in his previous schooling prepares him for worldly ways, some formal orientation is required. A family friend, Madame de Lursay, determines that she should render him this service, which means familiarizing him with the routines of society, notably those of love. The possibility appeals to him as well.

But when it comes to communicating their mutual desires, Meilcour is so blocked by his respect for her—a term which she too insists on up to a point—that she has infinite difficulties overcoming it and inducing him to make some effort both to decode her own understated invitations and to assume some initiative of his own, without which her system will not function. Madame de Lursay understands Meilcour's awkwardness as well as he does, still she cannot fathom his failure to make some kind of overture, even after she has tried repeatedly to suggest to him that he construe certain ambiguities in more favorable ways.

His problem is always one of what to say, where "saying" becomes the metaphor for doing. Feigning contentment at his failure to appear one day, for instance, Madame de Lursay teases that had he come "we might have found ourselves all alone. What would we have found to say? Do you realize that a tête-à-tête is sometimes even more embarrassing than scandalous?" She knows, of course, that once he manages to utter



just some of the right sorts of things everything will work out, but he is so awed by her (thus fearing to offend her), and underconfident in himself (thus fearing failure), that he is unable to take advantage of the cues. "I have nothing more to say to you, and I even forbid you to guess what I am thinking," she once remarks. Since he fails to rise to such bait, the next time she tries reversing the terminology, and still bumps up against his dogged literalism: "I have nothing to say to you: guess what I am thinking, if you can, she said, looking me straight in the eyes. You forbade me to, I replied. Ah! she cried, I didn't think I had gone so far. But I will say no more." She cannot allow her language to be as brazen as her gaze; it is all he can do just to keep the "conversation" going. He later applies to himself the same metaphor: "A man with a hint of worldliness would have found any number of delicate things to say about what had just taken place, that help a woman out in such a situation; but I did not know any, and Madame de Lursay had to provide everything out of her own resources or resign herself never to speak to me." As he will concede afterward: "although basically I had triumphed only over obstacles I had put there myself, I nonetheless imagined that Madame de Lursay's resistance had been extreme."

Along the way, he falls head over heels for a marriageable girl, Hortense, and receives stern, cynical lessons on worldly conduct from Versac, who sees through everything, can identify every motive, even secret ones, and believes in the sincerity of no one. Versac is especially vicious toward Madame de Lursay, whom he describes as a consummate hypocrite and wholly indiscriminate in her sex life. Meanwhile, another mutual friend who is a bit older, Madame de Senanges, has the same idea as Lursay and tries to intervene on Meilcour's emotional calendar; Lursay's frustration is only heightened by her perfect awareness of what Senanges is up to. Much of the novel is composed of long dialogues, particularly between Meilcour and Versac on the one hand, and Meilcour and Madame de Lursay on the other.

As *Le sophia*, a sort of manual of specious arguments, will show, any conduct can be justified, even with the vocabulary of virtue and sentiment if skillfully manipulated. Meilcour has already made this discovery, as he dreams of his beloved Hortense while still in the arms of Madame de Lursay: had he been more advanced,

he says, "[i]n the very midst of the agitation into which Madame de Lursay had plunged me, I would have bemoaned the custom that does not allow us to resist a woman who takes a liking to us; I would have saved my heart from the disorder of my senses and, thanks to those delicate distinctions. . . I would have abandoned myself to all the charms of the occasion, without risking an infidelity."

Meilcour indicates at the outset that he is to become a rake in the mould of Versac before finally being redeemed by a worthy woman; but the novel was never completed.

### *Le sophia*

This novel does without the fairies of the earlier "oriental" tales, but not without the transmogrification: the narrator, Amanzéi, is condemned to inhabit sofas (though he is allowed to move from one to another) until the day when two virgins will use him as the venue for their first sexual experience. Whence variations on a theme: Amanzéi reports on one episode after another where the protagonists' language persuade him he is about to be freed, only to discover that the most seemingly virtuous and pious are in fact not so inexperienced as they make it seem. Indeed, he learns that people talk themselves, and others, into sexual acts using a variety of pretexts, not excluding virtue and piety themselves: witness the couple (Almaïde and Moclès) who think it would be good for their understanding of chastity to experience what the temptation is that people must resist.

The novel spins out a repertory of kinds of women, and of ways of giving in. One woman seeks only pleasure and is little concerned by appearances; another accepts money but still insists on being mollified by words of sentiment. Despite the intrinsic interest of the scenes he necessarily witnesses (and which eventually come to bore him), Amanzéi really wants to be set free, and thus seeks out in preference the homes of timid or pious women, since it doesn't do him any good if they aren't virgins. But he discovers that nothing is more problematic than to detect that in advance. The most mordant satire concerns two pious souls just mentioned, who compensate as best they can for the privations of virtue by long conversations about vice; but this takes them far, so greatly do supposedly honest intentions tend irresistibly towards

desire. Even virtue can serve as pretext, and this couple ends up just as do the others; but their ostensible lack of experience disappoints Amanzéi, for he finds himself still under the spell, meaning that at least one of them has lied. Then there is the very proper and virtuous Phénime, exasperated by the “respect” a young man persists in showing her (like Lursay and Meilcour in *Les égarements*): another false alarm; this woman was just as lascivious as any other.

### *Les heureux orphelins*

The most unusual and original of Crébillon's novels from the standpoint of structure is *Les heureux orphelins*. It begins, like the English novel he was initially imitating, with a third-person narrative, the story of Lucie who, pursued by the unwanted desires of her adopted father Rutland, flees to London, works briefly in a milliner's shop, and ends up in Bristol as a sort of *dame de compagnie* of Madame de Suffolck, who is about to leave for Europe. In part two, the Madame de Suffolck later tells her the why of her trip and the story becomes an autobiographical narrative of her seduction and abandonment by a callous young nobleman, Lord Durham, who is schooled in the ways of France. She has realized that he too has arrived in Bristol, and Lucie learns that he is the same person as Chester, who more recently harassed her at the milliner's and would even have abducted her had she not fled. But he has been discovered and discredited by the seizure of his correspondence, which Queen Anne has turned over to Madame de Suffolck.

Half-way through, there is still nothing particularly libertine and certainly not very erotic about this novel, except for Madame de Suffolck's lyricism of passion. Then, however, everything changes. Parts three and four are constituted by the series of letters which Count Chester was writing to his French mentor, the Duc de \*\*\*, in which he relates his campaign to convert English high society to French morals, and more particularly the spectacular virtuosity of his simultaneous triple seduction of the admirable and passionate Madame de Suffolck, the Presbyterian prude Madame de Rindsey, and the coquettish but resistant Madame de Pembroock. Chester is the consummate libertine: a pupil of Versac's, one might say. When his friend Buttington challenges his intention to

seduce Madame de Rindsey by saying, “Do you flatter yourself you will ever find the expression of love in those large, pale, inert eyes?” Chester's answer is this: “That is her business; it is not her affections I need. Only vanity makes us insist on love; the reasonable man asks only for pleasures. Therefore I will forego her love, and answer you no less boldly that she will not leave me the worse off for it.” At the end, Chester has not finished his story because, after his victory over Madame de Rindsey, he has barely taken up again the thread of his attack on Madame de Suffolck. We already know from her, of course, how that affair ended up; the novel's formal incompleteness is the result of the very seizure of correspondence that has made parts three and four possible.

### *La nuit et le moment*

An essential element of Crébillon's two well-known dialogues, the basic premises of which are extremely straightforward, is the occasional narrative intervention, analogous to stage directions, which tell us at crucial points what the characters are doing alongside their (sometimes misleading) words.

The story of *La nuit et le moment* is as simple as can be: while in a country lodge with other friends, Clitandre wants to share some banter with Cidalise, in the latter's room, and sits at the foot of her bed. Soon, complaining of the cold, he gets in bed beside her so they can chat more comfortably. In short, only inches now separate them, but that is where the business of language comes in—for while the goal is in easy sight, the matter of proper consent must not be waived, and Cidalise is a decent woman, who will certainly not give in until the proper ritual has been accomplished.

In Crébillon there is a rather precise choreography, which this dialogue excellently illustrates, for improvising an amorous relationship on short notice, in other words, between two persons who up to that point never have professed any attraction to each other. It follows more or less fixed stages. As custom will have it, the male makes the opening advances, expressing his intentions, at first obliquely, by grammatical substitution: he might for example bring up some former lover of hers and say: in his stead, I would not have proven faithful, as he soon did. Progressively, he works his way around to an

unambiguous declaration of love, preferably asserting that his sentiment is anything but new: I always wanted you, but since you did not seem to notice me, I lacked courage to speak up. As decency requires that the lady “resist,” the remaining scenario consists of progressive concessions on her part. She avers that she hardly disliked him, on the contrary; in fact, any avoidance can be chalked up to prudence, that is, fear of proving only too susceptible. She does not deny being *sensitive*, and assures him of her friendship. By degrees friendship molts into love, and she will now say that she confesses her weakness but has no intention of going farther than that, which was already too far, at least on this occasion. Then, how weak indeed love does make a person!

### *Le hasard du coin du feu*

The second of these dialogues presents a situation that is similar yet quite different in the premises of its form of fencing: the challenge this time is to get the couple to consummate their desires despite the total refusal of one of them to cooperate in the game, a stance which only exposes the ultimately pure sensuality of their behavior. The couple is manifestly set up: the Marquise, who is the Duc de Clerval’s recognized mistress, all but tells him that she is leaving him alone with Célie so he can enjoy a little fun on the side, which she is committed in advance to forgive. And the Duc and Clélie certainly desire each other, a fact the Duc will refuse to varnish over with decorative but untrue words. Célie tries her best to get the Duc to utter some standard formula (even after the fact, for want of success beforehand), but the outcome proves she must be content with satisfying her senses and admitting as much. She won’t even be able to enjoy the prestige of having had such a distinguished lover, since the Duc is publicly paired with another woman whom he has no desire to renounce.

Allusions to their previous affairs announce how this one will end: he says of one: “Ah, Madame, indecency on the one hand, and nature on the other, work things out so well and so promptly, that you both find yourselves of the same mind, although most often neither of you can say just how it came about.” If the Duc is “indecent,” it is a frank and proud indecency: he respects words enough not to abuse them; he

rejects hypocrisy (which is doubtless why the Marquise trusts him). He accepts the reality of the flesh and easily forgives its transgressions: “If we consider coolly how many things conspire against a woman’s virtue, we would be more surprised at her ability to defend herself for a while, than we are generally scandalized at the rapidity with which she sometimes appears to concede defeat.”

In the dialogues, as often elsewhere in Crébillon’s work, we see couples groping not so much for clarity with regard to their own feelings or desires, but for acceptable formulas to cover with decency what they already know they would very much like to do.

### The Languages of Love

From the start, Crébillon was always noted for his elegant but sometimes convoluted style and for his way of characterizing a certain type of society. As D’Alembert said, “in novels full of wit, and dictated by a deep understanding of all the shameful recesses of the human heart, he has traced with the most delicate and honest pen the refinements, nuances, and the very charms of our vices.”

Though the emphasis is on rakes and coquettes, it should not be overlooked that there is much tenderness in a story like *Tanzai and Néadarné*, and genuine love expressed in the cases of the eponymous Marquise de M\*\*\* and Duchesse de \*\*\*; witness the Marquise’s cry: “If only our lives could begin anew, in some corner of the world, sufficient to ourselves, free of all cares, unknown to all, to be spent only in the pleasures of an eager, tender passion!” The first half of *Les Heureux Orphelins* too is a novel of love, with first Rutland’s irrepressible passion for Lucie, later followed by Madame de Suffolck’s memories of exultation: “No, nothing can depict the delight of those pleasures that confound the senses, and which the senses do not share. Ah, how true it is that for tender sensitive hearts, there is an ecstasy quite beyond anything they can make us feel!” Suffolck is a sort of reverse Princesse de Clèves, one who made the opposite decision and gave herself with abandon to her lover. And though Chester is a callous libertine, it is nonetheless important to take account of the strange beginning of his seventh letter in part four, in which he expresses at some length an astonishing degree

of nostalgia for the days when he still knew the charms of naive fascination with a woman:

When I recall, my dear Duke, what my first love affair meant to me when I was just entering society, what importance a woman had in my eyes, the delightful delirium into which I was plunged by the first tryst I obtained, and I compare that agreeable disorder with the cruel tranquillity in which I live today, I cannot help denouncing habit and experience, both of which, one by reflection and the other by practice, can only spoil our pleasures. What, indeed, do they put in the place of the lovely chimeras they take away, and what do we gain in seeing or imagining objects as they are? A lassitude which deprives them of their true merit in our eyes, or a diffidence that can never be anything but torment for us, since the constant fear of being deceived does not give us the means of escaping that fate.

Precious credulity, to which I owed so much happiness, are you then forever lost to me?

Indeed to the jaded attitude of the consummate libertine, Versac, Chester, or Alcibiades there is never as such any attractiveness attached.

Between traditional passion (*amour-passion*) and capricious desire (*amour-goût*) the essential difference lies in the conception of the object of love, unique and irreplaceable in the first instance and functional and quite subject to substitution in the second. In few of Crébillon's novels do we encounter the notion that what the characters represent for each other is something absolute. Though love isn't necessarily disparaged, Crébillon sets about stripping sentiment of its prestige and proving that it is at bottom physiological. The oriental tales and novels differ in form but have much the same subject. The story of the liaison of Mazulhim and Zulica, which with its peripeteia takes up a good portion of *Le sophia*, constantly plays on the ironic opposition between a publicly recognized liaison and a passing but irresistible amusement. The whole point of the game Crébillon forever portrays is that the language of love is so tainted with desire that, although it is constantly in use, it can never be taken as spiritually as it sounds: "Love had, in truth, rather little to do with it; but it took us a good while to notice it was wanting" (*La nuit et le moment*). If passions there be, they might at any time be overridden by the senses.

The "moment" of *La nuit et le moment*, also evoked in other works of Crébillon, is when one finds oneself more vulnerable than one would

have thought to the attraction of someone new, enough so to cheat on one's regular partner. The unexpected, whimsical or fleeting desire can give rise to subsequent shame, not because virtue has succumbed but because good judgment has. It is a matter of substitution: "One cannot be responsible for the moment," says the worldly-wise fairy Moustache to Néadarné; "sometimes nature acts alone, and you find yourself precisely in the situation of a dream which offers to your senses the things it wants to, and not the ones you would like." The only way a woman can be faithful to her lover, she goes on to say, is by complete avoidance of any situation in which infidelity is even possible: for were you to reach such a tempting pass, "nature would blow upon sentiment, and would not fail to put it out. It is true that when it flames up again, you are very surprised, but the thing is no less done" (*Tanzai et Néadarné*). Nevertheless, in many cases the notion of unforeseen vulnerability is often just another pretext, as the narrator of the same tale asserts:

It is rare for a woman of the world to find herself in a situation perilous to her without having wished it; her virtue is never done violence by the circumstances, and although more than one has said that when she made a certain assignation with her admirer during which she succumbed, she would not have done so had she not expected to keep her honor intact, one should always believe that she had no doubt about what would happen; and the proof of this is, that a man who has been given one of these innocent assignations has only to fail to take advantage of it, to provoke the almost irredeemable ire of the virtuous beauty who closed herself in with him.

Alcibiades remarks in *Lettres athéniennes*, "Despite the frequent examples we have, I have never been able to understand how it is that the boldness that often a woman neither desires nor expects from a man, can decide her in favor of a sentiment he does not inspire in her, or, to speak more accurately, serve momentarily as its substitute." Both of these quotations suggest that the woman's anticipation of the outcome may be only partly conscious; the point is that the language cannot resolve obscurity with respect to intentions, though the outcome always points to what at some level she really wanted.

There is a whole string of men, beginning with the hedonistic Sylph, and including not just Versac, Chester, and Alcibiades but also Mazulhim and Nassès in *Le sophia* and perhaps Clerval in

*Le hasard du coin du feu*, whose principal occupation is to create such “moments.” Their key rule is to inspire love when they can but not fall in love themselves, in order to remain in control of all situations, which they manipulate in function of their own immediate goals, all of which generally tend toward establishing their own prestige in society at the cost of the women they have “conquered” and often undone. As Chester declares, the libertine is the lucid practitioner of a social science the model of which is purely mechanical:

If all men could know as we do, my dear Duke, to what extent a genuine passion subjugates and abases them! There are so many things to which it subjects them but which, when they think like us, are under their own control, that there is not one who would not prefer to the always rather doubtful happiness of reigning in a heart through sentiment, the singular and flattering pleasure of making a soul behave as one wishes, determining it by one’s own orders, making it experience the most contrary movements in succession; and from the haven of one’s indifference, make it move like a machine, whose springs one directs, and which one commands at will to be still or active!

All the advantages are on the side of the manipulator; the women can do little more than undergo a process they can little understand. As the Sylph says to Madame R\*\*\*:

The sensuous woman gives in to the pleasure of the senses; the delicate woman, to the sweetness of feeling her heart is taken; the curious woman, to the desire for instruction; the indolent woman would find it too much trouble to refuse; the vain woman would suffer too great a loss if her charms went unnoticed, she wants to read in the fervor of her lover’s desires the impression she can make on men; the miserly woman gives in to the base love of gifts; the ambitious woman, to illustrious conquests, and the coquette to the habit of giving in. (*Le Sylphe*)

It is an aspect of Alcibiades’ masculine braggadocio, as it is of Chester’s, to assert that he can methodically conquer any woman who thinks she can resist him.

Crébillon insists on the fact that the language spoken, difficult in a sense to analyze precisely because there is nothing specialized about it, functions as a special code. Everybody knows how to speak elegantly, but by just listening one would infer nothing reliable about conduct or character. Therefore, to shed light on the true

meaning of words, there must be a double register which juxtaposes language and action. This is achieved either by the older perspective a first-person narrator now distanced from the person he or she was as protagonist, or by another voice observing but not participating in the advances. The actions have to be specified by such a narrator because, as Amanzéi says of Fatmé and a “Brahman”: “They began a most tender conversation, but one in which love spoke a very strange language, in appearance one little suited for it. Were it not for their actions, I doubt I would ever have understood what they were saying.” Not a whiff of sentiment here: Crébillon hardly denies it exists, but he observes that one cannot ascertain much about sentiment in a society where the language for negotiating love or momentary pleasure is strictly identical. Despite an element of nostalgia for unvarnished and natural truths, Crébillon’s observations force him to an essentially cynical conclusion, which is that the apparent variety of the forms of love is merely that of its pretexts. However chaste the diction, everyone ends up in bed (or on an ottoman).

All of these fictions are premised on a certain social stratum where financial independence is a given and no one, especially the young, has any real occupation or vocation. “What can you do?” asks Clitandre:

You are in society, you are bored, you see women who also are hardly enjoying themselves; you are young; vanity combines with idleness. If having a woman is not always a pleasure, at least it is always a sort of occupation. . . . I have sometimes been idle; I have found women who were perhaps not yet sure of the power of their charms, and so it is that, as you say, I have had some of them.

Meilcour too finds himself plunged as he enters adulthood into a society where the game of love is the only real business, and he describes it in its most representative aspect, which is its sexual activity.

More generally, much of Crébillon’s dialogue is a satire on the conversational habits of elite society in general (it was sometimes said that Crébillon did not even invent them, but merely took notes on what he heard around him): “The arrangement, or rather the abuse of words, substitutes for thought,” affirms Versac, who goes on to prescribe the rule to remember: “make

your expressions refined and your ideas infantile; pronounce absurdities, maintain them, and start all over: such is the tone of the finest society.” Given that Crébillon is constantly castigating hypocrisy, many of his characters, engaging though they may be by force of wit, are thoroughly unattractive and moreover are hardly convincing if they claim to be happy with themselves. The most original and least likable of all is probably Versac, the cold cynic who instructs Meilcour in the ways of unscrupulous self-advertisement and the pitiless exploitation of others, especially women.

Paradoxically, in most respects there is no substantial distinction between male and female characters; almost no one of either sex is genuinely seduced; in this world the subtle progressions of the true seducer are usually invoked only in jest. One can say of few of his female protagonists that they do not know what is happening to them, or have been caught with their guard down. Instead they are implicitly asking themselves: what are the minimal conditions for avoiding the shame, perhaps the scandal, of the utmost sexual abandon? Decorum is what is principally at issue; but even it is more or less a way of cheating with oneself, as the narrator of *Tanzaï* puts it:

On her own, a woman can avoid tarrying before images that might offend her modesty, but if a man she loves shows up, what is virtue to her then? If she still resists, it is not to save it; her loss would be too great. But one must give in with honor, and accompany one’s weakness with grandeur: in a word, fall decently, and be able to excuse herself when she reflects on her disorder. Few women agree with this truth, but that does not keep it from being very much so.

Clitandre, relating his affair with Araminte, with whom he is in a situation parallel to his present one with Cidalise) touches on all these points:

We began to take some rather familiar liberties, and I was on the verge of having the ultimate obligation to her, when she was seized by a tender concern. She remembered I had not yet told her I loved her, and protested that unless I assured her she possessed my heart, however powerfully she felt drawn toward me, and even whatever evidence she had already given me of her susceptibility, she would unquestionably overcome it. I was quite aware that had she loved me, she would have had little reason to be pleased

with what I felt for her; but propriety, and my state at the time, only allowed me to deceive her, and I replied that I could not fathom how, with the indications I was then giving her of my feelings, she could persist in doubting them. Up till then she had appeared to yield to her tenderness only reservedly, but the certainty of being loved banished her scruples, and she became unbelievably tender, intense, and eager. (*La Nuit et le moment*)

His irony bears on the fact that although he disdained to invoke the word *love*, he made it possible for her to *infer* it, and she settled for that marginal concession. The differences are those prescribed by social custom and said to derive from nature, but in other respects the real category lines fall less between the sexes than between the urbane and the naive.

### Biography

Claude Crébillon was born and educated in Paris, the son of Prosper Crébillon, a member of the Académie Française who was considered by many the greatest French tragedian since Racine. For much of his life he lived somewhat in the shadow of his father’s fame, although their relations were not as hostile or even as strained as tradition has often suggested. Because of his father’s status, he early enjoyed free entry at the Comédie Française, and about the same time (1726) formed a lifetime camaraderie with another aspiring writer, Charles Collé. Both wrote occasional pieces including parodies for the Théâtre Italien, and later collaborated on numerous plays and libretti. An amusing, lightly erotic tale entitled *Le Sylphe* in 1730 was already a sign of Crébillon’s talent, which is fully declared in a romantic vein with *Lettres de la marquise de M\*\*\* au comte de R\*\*\** in 1732, and in a satiric vein with *Tanzaï et Néadarné, histoire japonais* in 1734.

While *Tanzaï* is a broad-ranging fantasy, in the pseudo-orientalist mode, of many things about French society, particularly its amorous mores, the target most immediately perceived was dispute over the papal bull *Unigenitus* (1713) which was still raging. One could not with impunity so skillfully heap derision on the Jesuits, not to mention the king and pope, and Crébillon was locked up in the Château de Vincennes for a few days to teach him a lesson.

In 1735, he published the first volume of *Les égarements du c'ur et de l'esprit* [*Aberrations of the Heart and Mind*], which was to be his most enduring success, even though he never completed it. Parts two and three were published in 1738, and his admirers asked him for years when the rest would be forthcoming; he claimed in 1743 that he had written three further sequels but never had time to polish them. Meanwhile, he was composing another racy, oriental tale called *Le Sopha*, which he finally published in 1742, only to be sent into exile (from April to July he had to stay at least thirty leagues, or 120 km, from Paris). He would not publish another novel for twelve years, unless he was indeed the author (likely but not proven) of *Les amours de Zéokinizul, roi des Kofirans*, which appeared in 1746. Another spoof on contemporary France (Zéokinizul is an anagram for Louis XV, Kofirans for the Français), this book bore the name *Krinebol*, itself an obvious anagram of Crébillon.

Sometime in 1744 he began a liaison with Henriette Marie Stafford, whose father had been secretary to Queen Mary of Modena, wife of King James II of Great Britain. Sister and aunt respectively of the second and third earls of Stafford, Henriette was born at the court in exile at Saint Germain en Laye in 1711, as was her godmother, Princess Louise Marie. Despite her standing, however (legal documents always preface her name with the honorific title *très haute et très puissante dame*), she had inherited little money and did not control it directly. Thus, soon after they married in April 1758, they entered a long period of financial constraint and even penury. Their only child, a son born in 1746, died in 1750, and later that year, unable to bear the cost of living in Paris, they moved to Sens. Crébillon continued to visit the capital frequently in search of literary opportunities, and for a while directed a journal called *La Bigarure*.

Finally, in 1753, a pension from the Duc d'Orléans along with an apartment in his Palais Royal enabled them to return to Paris, and the following year they had an apartment lent to them in Saint Germain. Meanwhile, a friend had sent to Henriette Eliza Haywood's *The Fortunate Foundlings*, of which Crébillon or perhaps the two of them together began a translation. It soon departed from the original, though Crébillon kept the title *Les heureux orphelins*, which he published in 1754. The critical reception was

so harsh that he immediately abandoned it for *Ah, quel conte!*, another complex political and social satire, which was not received any better; both of these works were to be forgotten for over two centuries by literary history.

Such was not the case with his two famous dialogues, *La nuit et le moment* and *Le hasard du coin du feu* [*Fireside Fortunes*], which had been composed years earlier (between 1737 and 1745) but were published only in 1756 and 1763, respectively.

After Henriette died in 1755, Crébillon went through a lengthy process of sorting out his debts and assets, and moved back to Paris, where in 1758 he finally obtained a post for which he had long petitioned, that of royal censor. He led the life of a distinguished man of letters, writing two final novels, *Lettres de la duchesse de \*\*\* au duc de \*\*\** (1768) and *Lettres athéniennes* (1771). An edition of his collected works was published in 1772 and three others after his death, in 1777 and 1779. There were to be no more such editions for over two centuries, until the *Classiques Garnier* edition listed below.

PHILIP STEWART

### Selected Works

*Œuvres complètes*, dir. Jean Sgard, Paris: *Classiques Garnier*, 4 vols., 1999–2002. There are many French editions of *Les Égarements du coeur et de l'esprit*, and several of the other titles are available in editions by Desjonquères (Paris).

*Le sylphe, ou songe de Madame de R\*\*\**, 1730.

*Lettres de la marquise de M\*\*\* au comte de R\*\*\**, 1732; translated in 1735 by Mr. Humpheys as *Letters from the Marchioness de M\*\*\* to the Count de \*\*\**.

*Tanzai et Neadarné, histoire japonaise*, 1734; translated anonymously in 1735 as *The Skimmer*; or *The History of Tanzai et Neadarne*.

*Les égarements du coeur et de l'esprit, 1735–1738*; translated in 1751 Michael Clancy as *The Wanderings of the Heart and Mind* and in 1963 by Barbara Bray as *The Wayward Head and Heart* (London: Oxford University Press). It is included in *The Libertine Reader* edited by Michel Feher (NY: Zone, 1997).

*Le sopha, conte moral*, 1742; translated the same year as *The Sopha: a moral tale* and in 1927 by Martin Kamin as *The Divan* (NY, privately printed). Also included in *The Libertine Reader* (see previous entry).

*Les heureux Orphelins*, 1754.

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## CREVEL, RENÉ

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1900–1935

French novelist and essayist

### *Les pieds dans le plat*

Crevel had considerable difficulty finding a publisher for his last completed novel. Firstly, there was the problem of a masturbation scene set in Notre-Dame during the funeral of French President Paul Doumer (referred to anonymously as "the President of the Republic" in the definitive text). Secondly, some of Crevel's characters were thinly-veiled caricatures of well-known personalities: the Prince of Journalists was transparently based on Léon Bailby, proprietor of the Parisian daily *Le Jour*, and the female poet Synovie recalled the aristocratic author Anna de Noailles. The novel was finally published by Éditions du Sagittaire in 1933 with a frontispiece by Giacometti. It was not published again until 1974 when J.-J. Pauvert brought out an edition prefaced by Ezra Pound (Pound's original article dates from 1939).

This unconventional novel owes as much to the author's talents as a caustic pamphleteer as

to his fictional imagination. The first six chapters introduce the thirteen characters who have gathered for lunch at the Provençal villa of Lady Primerose, the Marchioness of Sussex. The majority of these characters are members of the upper class whose activities influence the direction of European politics. Crevel's satire is directed particularly against Count Coudenhove-Kalergi's Paneuropean movement. Only two characters are spared Crevel's authorial scorn: the young American, Kate, whose child-like freshness recalls the heroine of Crevel's 1927 novel *Babylone* and the singer Krim, partly modelled on Mopsa Sternheim, Crevel's former lover and daughter of the German expressionist writer, Carl Sternheim. In the seventh (and longest) chapter, Crevel reveals himself as the luncheon's Fourteenth Guest and the final vestiges of novelistic plot and characterization give way to vehement denunciations of capitalism, colonialism, Catholicism, and sexual repression in a manner akin to Crevel's post-1930 non-fictional texts. The final eighth chapter summarizes what the future holds for each of the characters. However, the dismissive chapter heading ("Etc.,



etc.”), allusions to Hitler’s rise, and a concluding reference to “the next war” indicate that Crevel is far more concerned with contemporary socio-political issues than with the conventions of fiction.

Although the novel contains numerous references to sexual activity, Crevel is not in the least interested in offering titillation to his readers. He avoids direct descriptions of acts and body parts, preferring euphemism and periphrasis—rhetorical strategies that allow him to indulge his love of word play. More significantly, the novel’s sexual material provides Crevel with a vehicle for exposing the myth of bourgeois respectability. Rich villa-owners (male and female) ogle the scantily clad adolescent builders who work on their properties. Crevel clearly delights in having the Prince of Journalists masturbate young Lord Sussex in a cathedral during the funeral service for the assassinated French President. The author’s sacrilegious side also emerges in his presentation of Monsignor de Belle-Lurette de Troumoussu, the Bishop of Dakar who delights in the opportunities afforded by his office to indulge his twin passions: black men and sartorial extravagance. Two of Crevel’s aristocratic female characters, Lady Primerose and the Duchess of Monte Putina, are former prostitutes. The third aristocratic woman, Archduchess Augusta, a Habsburg by marriage, derives sexual pleasure from sitting on a piano-stool cover depicting the profile of General Stéphanic, a Czech nationalist whose heroism she greatly admires. The furtive secrecy of bourgeois sexual behavior is contrasted with the straightforwardly robust desire of underprivileged groups: workers, blacks, and gypsies. In one incident, a gypsy life-saver becomes stimulated while giving artificial respiration to a drowned virgin. Outraged, Archduchess Augusta strikes him in the crotch with the handle of her parasol—an ivory handle carved in the likeness of Emperor Franz-Joseph’s head. The ivory head breaks into pieces against the gypsy’s groin. The symbolic significance of the event is clear.

Often, the sexual practices mentioned in the novel are accompanied by a violence that complements the rage that animates the text’s more polemical passages. The grandmother of the Prince of Journalists is sodomized by a stranger in the woods and later dies while attempting to swallow a large, black, obviously phallic candle

(this family tragedy is presented as a symbol of France’s defeat by Prussia in 1870). The Duchess of Monte Putina masochistically offers her breasts to the hot curling tongues of her hairdresser who proceeds to rape her after she has fainted. As a child, her son, Rub Dub Dub, also enjoys masochistic exercises on a climbing frame as the only form of release from a strictly regimented upbringing. After his mother has tricked him into a painful circumcision, he develops a fetish for menstrual blood. A pornographic film is described in which Augusta sodomizes herself with a three-dimensional representation of Italy before, literally, exploding. Finally, an eminent psychiatrist who subsequently commits suicide mutilates the body of his wife Synovie, a Catholic poetess, by cutting off her breasts to make cheese domes. Such violence is almost cartoon-like in its excess.

Sade was an important influence on Crevel in his later work and *Les pieds dans le plat* contains a lengthy quotation from *La philosophie dans le boudoir*. However, it is significant that the quotation should come from the Chevalier’s attack on religion rather than from a sexually explicit part of the book. Ultimately, Crevel’s work is more about revolution in the broad sense than about sexual revolution in particular.

### Biography

Born in Paris in 1900. His first novel, *Détours*, was published in 1924. He wrote novels, essays, articles, and poems until his suicide in 1935. Throughout his career he struggled against tuberculosis. He was part of the Surrealist group around André Breton.

PAUL COOKE

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## CRISP, QUENTIN

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1908–1998  
 English writer

### *The Naked Civil Servant*

Quentin Crisp wanted to call his autobiography *My Reign in Hell: a Reference to Lucifer’s Refusal to Serve in Heaven (i.e., Respectable Society)*. This title was rejected by his publishers in favor of *The Naked Civil Servant*, a reference to Crisp’s years as an artist’s model when he saw himself as ultimately employed by the Minister of Education.

*The Naked Civil Servant* only made Crisp a household-name when Thames Television turned it into an award-winning television film in 1976, with John Hurt as Crisp’s ‘representative on earth’ (*How to Become a Virgin*, p. 71). The autobiography recounts Crisp’s life into his mid-fifties and tells of living in relative obscurity as an effeminate homosexual in London, and of being tried, unsuccessfully for importuning. His later life as a celebrity is told in its sequel *How to Become a Virgin* and in his New York diaries *Resident Alien*.

Central to his autobiography is Crisp’s belief that homosexuality could be seen as a disabling disfigurement which set him apart from the rest of humanity. Yet at the age of twenty-three, Crisp took the brave decision to make homosexuality a public issue by coming out, complete

with make-up, long fingernails and hennaed hair, flamboyant clothes and high-heeled shoes. By his public display of effeminacy, Crisp aimed at confronting British prejudices and at demonstrating that ‘effeminacy existed in people who were in all other respects just like home.’ It was a crusade for integration that made Crisp the focus of anything from ‘startled contempt to outraged hatred’—he was beaten unconscious for his appearance- and which isolated him from discreet homosexuals who wished to pass for straight in heterosexual society.

Crisp’s autobiography, whilst giving a graphic account of the world of the homosexual, is written in a style of entertaining, witty aphorism combined with mordant humor. *The Naked Civil Servant* engages us with the world of his fellow male prostitutes during the inter-war years who frequented the Black Cat café in Soho and who made cups of tea last all night and tried each other’s lipsticks. He also described games of cat and mouse with the police; being charged with soliciting and threatened with the laws of private indecency. Neighbors complained of what they could see through Crisp’s open windows including, Crisp claims, ‘a dismal affair’ with a highly placed government official. Crisp guides the reader around queer clubs, dimly lit public toilets, and war-time London when the black-out turned the Capital into a homosexual playground for brief, romantic sexual encounters. Crisp describes being kissed by a man who

emerged from the darkness and as suddenly melted back into it.

Crisp's accounts of his sexual experiences are archly anti-erotic as indeed are his descriptions of himself. He likened his own naked body to 'a plucked chicken that died of myxomatosis' and regarded squalor as his natural setting. The single room he occupied in Chelsea for forty years, made Sally Potter, the director of *Orlando*, weep with sadness at its filth, poverty, and dust (Paul Bailey, *The Stately Homo*). He viewed sex as 'the last refuge of the miserable' and preferred celibacy. From his first sexual experience with an Indian boy at school, through a succession of punters, chance encounters, long-term and live-in lovers like 'Barn Door' and 'the Czech,' Crisp 'did not expect any pleasure and there was none.' Recalling his affair with the seventy-year old Czech on day-release from a mental home, he remembered his lover reeking of cod-liver oil and bringing presents that included 'a suitcase full of fallen apples heavy with maggots that spent the afternoon crawling over the bed-cover.' Although erotic fulfillment eluded him in real life, Crisp harbored in youth 'erotic dreams the literature read to me in my childhood had coloured so romantically.' He dreamed of becoming the perfumed slave to some great man who was totally preoccupied by him alone. In reality, when he did become a slave, it was to Barn Door whose idea of lovemaking involved Neolithic lurches and with whom he took turns to sleep among the dust on the floor.

The sexual experiences he described were rarely the romantic ideal he sought but often brutal and above all loveless. A heterosexual partner told him that truly satisfactory sexual intercourse preserved the illusion of rape. This did not lead to erotic fantasy for Crisp, only monotony and 'the degrading effects of discomfort and exhaustion.' Whilst lovelessness might stem from Crisp's 'deep-seated indifference to the fate of others,' he believed that homosexual intercourse automatically robbed sex of its intrinsic function as a means of communication. 'Between two men [love],' argued Crisp, 'consists of each using the utmost force of his personality to gain access to the sexual organs of the other.' Thus, from his youth Crisp regarded sex as a weapon to subjugate and destroy the personalities of others. Ironically, the scrupulously polite Crisp felt that a lifetime of habitual acquiescence

honed him into 'a stockpile of rage' with 'a lust for tyranny.'

On one of the few occasions in which Crisp refers to the erotic, he argues that good homosexual sex is best achieved through masturbation, believing sexual intercourse a poor substitute for auto-eroticism. Eroticism for Crisp therefore, is the ultimate act of the egotist. Elsewhere eroticism is reduced to the commonplace, to bodily function. Commenting that human beings will respond to any erotic stimulus and that the anus is as capable of sexual excitement as the lips, Crisp relates this observation to a childhood memory of enjoying anal stimulus so much that he would rather have accidents than forgo the pleasure of retaining faeces until it was too late. As Paul Robinson confirms in *The Stately Homo*, any 'sense of erotic obsession.... is completely absent from the pages of *The Naked Civil Servant*.'

The American soldiers' occupation of wartime London when 'their bodies bulged through every straining khaki fibre towards our feverish hands' was pleasurable but the nearest Crisp came to a truly erotic experience was in Portsmouth. The evening was charged with erotic expectation and play as he flirted with a group of sailors. Whilst the night ended without sexual encounter, this was the only time Crisp 'ever sat in a crowd of people whose attention [he] really desired without once feeling that [he] was in danger.' This seemingly insignificant moment of erotic fulfillment with 'real men' lodged in Crisp's memory and is all the more poignant for its absence from the rest of his life.

### Biography

Born Dennis Pratt in Sutton, Surrey on Christmas Day 1908. He attended boarding school in Derbyshire and afterwards London University but left without gaining a diploma in journalism. A flamboyant figure and effeminate homosexual, Crisp spent a lifetime fighting gay persecution. Moving to London in his early twenties, he worked briefly as a male prostitute, and in an assortment of jobs in art departments and as a tap dance teacher. He was also a nude artist's model for thirty-five years. He wrote numerous poems, plays, libretti, and stories but only books on window dressing and the Ministry of Labour were published before the first volume of his

autobiography *The Naked Civil Servant* (1968) thrust him into the limelight. He undertook world tours with his show *An Evening with Quentin Crisp*, appeared in several films including *Orlando* when he played Queen Elizabeth I, and published further memoirs, diaries, and works on lifestyle. He also wrote film reviews for *Christopher Street* and *The New York Native*. He became a resident alien in the United States of America in 1981 and died in Manchester on 21st November 1999 on the eve of his one-man show.

BARBARA WHITE

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## CROS, CHARLES

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1842–1888

French poet and inventor

### *L'album zutique*

Numerous members of the Parisian bohemian movement contributed to *L'album zutique*: Cabaner, Antoine Cros, Charles Cros, Henri Cros, André Gill, J. Keck, Henri Mercier, Arthur Rimbaud, Léon Valade, and Paul Verlaine. Calling themselves the “zutistes,” these artists met periodically at the Hôtel des Étrangers in late 1871 and early 1872 to socialize, experiment with alcohol (notably absinthe) and drugs, and to create satiric poems and illustrations mocking various styles and cultural figures of the day. The *Album zutique* contains original (and unpublished until 1936) works by Arthur Rimbaud, Paul Verlaine, and Charles Cros, and it is also a powerful and entertaining reminder of the biting satire which played a large role in the bohemian art and culture of the belle époque.

In 1936, the book collectors Auguste and Georges Blaizot advertised the *Album zutique* in a catalogue of rare works to be sold on March 12 of that year. Until this point the manuscript had

passed from collector to collector and had been held back from sale, probably due to the explicitly sexual content of its poems and illustrations. Publicists were also most likely reluctant to challenge existing copyrights of works by the already famous Rimbaud and Verlaine. References to the *Album zutique* did find their way into several studies however: André Fontaine in *Verlaine homme de lettres* (Delagrave, 1937), Yves-Gérard Le Dantec in the *Pléiade edition of Verlaine* (Gallimard, 1939), and Jules Mouquet in the *Pléiade edition of Rimbaud* (Gallimard, 1946). In 1961, Henri Matarasso and Pierre Petitfils wrote the study, “Rimbaud, Verlaine, Germain Nouveau et L'album zutique” in the *Mercure de France*. Finally, in 1964, Pascal Pia edited and wrote an introduction to a public edition of the *Album zutique*, which contains detailed notes on the works, as well as copies of the original manuscript, including illustrations. Although several of the poems from the *Album zutique* have been translated into English (in the complete works of *Rimbaud*, for example), no complete English translation of the Album has been published.

The *Album zutique* contains just over 120 poems dealing primarily with the themes of

sexuality, politics, alcohol, drugs, and bohemian culture in general. The tone of the poems is decidedly sardonic, yet playful. The main objects of the various poets' railleries are the Parnassian poets renowned in their day, most particularly Auguste Creissels and François Coppée. Many of the poems are parodies or pastiches of existing poems twisted to contain more explicit material and decidedly more blunt descriptions of sexual acts. The ultimate goal of such mockery is to poke fun at anyone foolish enough to take his or her work (or self) too seriously. The poets of the *Album zutique* are particularly successful in achieving this goal in large part because they welcome the chance to make themselves the object of their own jokes. Valade's close friend Albert Mérat is the object of numerous jokes, for example. In irreverent bohemian fashion, the zutistes forge each other's signatures and the signatures of famous poets, often making it difficult to determine the authorship of a given poem. They also imitate styles and attribute various idiosyncrasies to one another. Cabaner, for example, is often described as having particularly eccentric sexual tastes. The *Album zutique* is full of charming and sexually explicit caricatures and sketches which have often been attributed to Rimbaud, but which are in all probability the work of numerous artists. It is indeed highly likely that the graphic nature of these drawings delayed publication of the *Album zutique* for quite some time.

The most famous poem in the *Album zutique* is the "Sonnet au trou du cul" ["Sonnet of the Asshole"]. A version of this poem was printed for the first time in 1903, in a private publication entitled *Hombres*. Its risqué subject matter aside, this sonnet is particularly famous because it is the only poem known to have been jointly composed by Rimbaud and Verlaine. It is an exuberant and hilarious parody inspired by the Parnassian poet Albert Mérat. Mérat had published a book of sonnets entitled *L'idole*, in which he dedicated poems to specific body parts of his mistress. There were however, several important parts he neglected to praise—an omission quickly rectified by Verlaine and Rimbaud. In addition to the "trou du cul," the zutistes would later compose a similar and equally explicit sonnet in honor of a mistress' tongue. Although the zutistes did not imitate Mérat's imagery or style, they did much to undercut his (or any) idealized vision of physical love. By insisting on the

traditionally taboo (anal sex) and at times humorous (flatulence) side of human physicality in a carefully crafted sonnet, Rimbaud and Verlaine deal a swift blow to idealism, both in love and in general.

In another striking poem written in Verlaine's hand, Baudelaire's famous sonnet "La mort des amants" ["The Death of the Lovers"] is rewritten as "La mort des cochons" ["The Death of the Pigs"]. "La mort des cochons" is a particularly obscene reworking of the original: Baudelaire's "soir fait de rose et de bleu mystique" ["night made of pink and mystical blue"] becomes "[u]n soir plein de foutre et de cosmétique" ["an evening full of fuck and cosmetics"]. This sonnet provides a concise example of the strategy to which the zutistes generally subjected the more traditional poets they parodied. Verlaine replaces the most highly romanticized references to romantic love with the most blunt and basely materialist descriptions of sexual organs and acts. In the final verse of "La mort des cochons" for example, Verlaine replaces Baudelaire's "[l]es miroirs ternis et les flammes mortes" ["the tarnished mirrors and dead flames"] with "[l]es spermés éteints et les règles mortes" ["the faded sperm and dead rules"]. While mimicking the structure and formal tone of the original piece, Verlaine adds a radical sexuality and a rebellious political stance. Such is the classic operation of parody, and as such it displays a deeper purpose than making the reader (or the poet) laugh. For all their bawdiness and blatant mimicry, the parodic poems of the *Album zutique* call for a genuine shattering of tradition and a re-evaluation of artistic, cultural, and sexual restriction.

Rimbaud's poem "Les remembrances du vieillard idiot" ["The Remembrances of the Idiotic Old Man"] represents another strain of poem prevalent in the *Album*. Contrary to its title, this poem deals with the subject of adolescent sexual urges and the confusion and social restriction which may accompany them. Rimbaud describes numerous family situations which instigate a sexual awakening. His mother, younger sister and father are each strongly eroticized, and a sense of guilt—not generally associated with Rimbaud—accompanies each incestuous reference. In the final stanza, the poet questions God, asking why sexuality must necessarily be coloured by misery and shame. Such blatant and shocking vulnerability reflects the more

sombre and truly revolutionary side of the zutistes.

The *Album zutique* is a powerful example of the use of erotic themes and language by the bohemian poets to attack and undermine the formality of cultural and literary tradition. The parodies and pastiches, one-line witticisms, and frank discussions of sexuality are clearly very funny, but are also legitimate and forceful attacks on artistic and sexual repression, idealised physical love, and arrogance in all its forms.

### Biography

Charles Cros was born on October 1, 1842 in Fabrezan, Southern France. He completed his baccalaureat in 1859, and studied medicine briefly. The infamous Nina de Villard was his mistress from 1867 to 1875, and in 1878 he married Mary Hjardemaal, with whom he had two sons: Guy-Charles (1879–1956), and René (1880–1898). Cros published several books of poetry: *L'artiste* (1869), *Coffret de Santal* (1873), and *Dixains réalistes* (1876). He collaborated with Théophile Gautier on Tombeau, was the editor of the *Revue du monde* (circa 1874–1876), and wrote monologues with the actor Coquelin. In 1879, he collaborated on several journals,

notably *L'Hydropath* and *Le Molière*, and his re-edited *Coffret de Santal* earned him the prix Juglar. He continued to publish articles and monologues until his death in Paris on April 9, 1888. He was also an inventor whose experiments with the automatic telegraph and color photography are considered highly influential. Cros contributed to the *Album zutique* at the end of 1871, with his bohemian friends and colleagues.

PATRICIA BERNEY

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## CUISIN, P.

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1777–c.1845

French short-story writer and essayist

A number of Cuisin's works are due for reevaluation. *Clémentine, orpheline et androgyne, ou les Caprices de la nature et de la fortune* (1820), for example, is an early fictional study of a young woman attempting to come to terms with her own physical and mental bisexuality; *Les Ombres sanglantes* (1820) and *Les fantômes nocturnes; ou les terreurs coupables* (1821) announce the rise of the independent tradition of French horror writing that Charles Nodier labelled the "école frénétique" [frenetic school]; other works

represent anecdotal descriptions of historical events or changes of political regime (e.g., *Les crimes secrets de Napoléon Buonoparte*, 1815). Cuisin's main area of interest, however, was concerned with prostitution and accounts of sexual conquest, though a number of these works have a satirical quality which precludes the simple label *erotica* or *pornography* being applied.

### *La galanterie sous la sauvegarde des lois*

In the light of the shifting political sands of the period it is hardly surprising that many of

Cuisin's works, especially those dealing with prostitution or amorous adventures, should have fallen foul of the censor in the mid-1820s. In addition to *Clémentine, orpheline et androgyne*, the following were all banned at some point: *Les nymphes du Palais-Royal* (1815); *L'Amour au grand trot* (1820); *Les duels, suicides et amours du bois de boulogne* (1820); *La vie d'un garçon dans les hôtels garnis de la capitale* (1820); and *Les femmes entretenues dévoilées* (1821).

Typical of these works, and indeed of much of Cuisin's literary production, is *La galanterie sous la sauvegarde des lois* (1815), which might be described as a sequel to *Les nymphes du Palais-Royal* of the same year, in which the author is taken on a conducted tour of "one of the best conducted and most brilliant harems [i.e., brothels] of the Palais-Royal, perhaps the whole of Europe" by a Madame who is presumably anxious to procure some free publicity. The extent to which sexual mores and republican politics were fused in the literary imagination of the immediate post-Restoration is clearly revealed by this curious work. Among the nine "muses" who inhabit this "temple of Voluptuousness" are girls such as Rosalie, Josephine, Clarisse, and Adèle. However, it is not so much the lascivious descriptions of the girls themselves that is the main focus of attention as the increasingly peculiar nature of the apartments they occupy and the sexual services they provide.

Thus, Rosalie is portrayed in slightly anodyne fashion as entertaining a Swedish prince while awaiting the arrival of his British equivalent while Josephine, whom we are informed lost both her parents during the Emigration, would seem to be in a state of arrested childhood. With Clarisse, however, the sense of the bizarre begins to mount as she is shown rehearsing the part of Phèdre from Racine's 1777 play of the same title about an incestuous passion. This sense of the unusual and recherché reaches its apogee with the description of Adèle and her musical bed:

"Do not be deceived," whispered Madame L\*\*\*, "the fascinating figure you see here in perfect harmony with Adèle [...] is supported by a rich voluptuary, the Marquis de Dersey, who is besotted with music [...]. This impetuous virtuoso is aroused only by vibrations and musical concerts; he can feel no pleasure except through the agency and organs of such instruments."

[And I remarked that] the very bed of the apartment was in the shape of a clavecin [and that] should one lie down on this singular musical couch and "make the slightest movement, then one would immediately experience, in strict time with the activity on the bed but by means of a device that was hidden out of sight, the sweetest harmony imaginable [...]"

"How original!" I thought. "What voluptuous bizzarerie! How could one possibly put into words here all the peculiarities of the human heart!" (pp. 81–82; my translation.)

In other words, not only is the Marquis de Dersey impotent with women but his only sexual pleasure is obtained by means of employing a proxy whose amorous exertions are transformed by some kind of artificial apparatus into music. This element of mechanical fantasy recalls, of course, the Enlightenment fascination with science and mathematics. Likewise, Clarisse's lover can only achieve sexual arousal by watching an actress in rehearsal, an activity which is compared with an old libertine's pleasure at being flagellated.

Given that commentators such as Chantal Thomas and Lynn Hunt have suggested that the political pornography of the *ancien régime* generally expressed a mounting anxiety about women invading the public sphere and sexual indifferentiation, often pictorially represented by an impotent Louis XVI watching on as Marie-Antoinette enjoys sexual congress with his own brother, it is difficult not to suggest that Cuisin's depiction of the luxurious brothel described in *La galanterie sous la sauvegarde des lois* belongs to the same tradition of "homosocial" Republican virtue. Such a view would seem to receive confirmation from the portraits of two later Muses, one of whom is described as a "savantasse" (e.g., a "female savant") and the other as a "bibliothèque-vivante" (e.g., a "walking library").

At the time that Cuisin was writing, the old wooden galleries of the Palais-Royal enjoyed a dubious reputation as a center for prostitution and gambling (not to mention, incidentally, the book trade). During the reign of Louis-Philippe, the area was extensively renovated such that, like the Republican discourse which permeates his work, Cuisin's descriptions of the area would have seemed anachronistic only a generation or so later. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that there have been very few reprints of his works,

## CYRANO DE BERGERAC (SAVINIEN DE CYRANO)

though there was an 1836 edition of *La galanterie sous la sauvegarde des lois* under a changed title. One or two other works were reissued by J.-J. Gay in the early 1880s though these, like all Cuisin's writing, have become scarce and collectible. None of his work would seem to have been translated into English.

### Biography

Cuisin was a prolific minor novelist who flourished principally during the decade immediately after the Restoration of the French monarchy in 1814 and whose work sought to exploit, implicitly or explicitly, the intellectual confusion of the period whether with regard to medical science (especially with respect to sexual orientation), political history, or personal morality. Little is known about the author's life apart from infor-

mation briefly noted in standard French nineteenth-century bibliographies: among other occupations, he claimed to have been variously a professional soldier, a man of letters, and the curator of a well-known anatomy cabinet.

TERRY HALE

### Editions

*La galanterie sous la sauvegarde des lois*, Paris: Chez tous les marchands de nouveautés: 1815; as *Les Fastes, ruses et intrigues de la galanterie, Ou Tableaux de l'amour et du plaisir*, Paris: Terry, éditeur: 1836.

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# CYRANO DE BERGERAC (SAVINIEN DE CYRANO)

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1619–1655

French novelist and dramatist

### *L'Autre Monde*

Savinien Cyrano de Bergerac's *L'Autre monde* [*The Other World*] is an unfinished burlesque novel, held by some to anticipate the modern genre of science fiction. In its two parts, the novel's hero finds ingenious ways to transport himself to the moon and the sun, respectively, and his various travels and encounters provide the author with scope to tackle a wide range of intellectual themes, from philosophy and religion to science and knowledge. Cyrano himself left his curious novel unpublished during his lifetime, no doubt aware of the controversial nature of the boldly irreverent attitudes it expresses. It was published only after his death, the first part in an expurgated edition of 1657

and the second in 1662. Only in the early twentieth century was the complete text of the novel published.

Although not explicitly an erotic work in itself, Cyrano's novel focuses on questions of sexuality in a manner atypical of most seventeenth-century French literature, and in many respects looks forward to the libertine, satirical, and philosophical fictions of the following century. Sex is a key philosophical concern for Cyrano because its role in procreation means that it is intimately bound up with ethical questions about life and existence more generally. Indeed, discussions of sex in the novel often raise the spectre of life's opposite, death, although the relationship between the two is complex and often unclear. In its procreative capacities, sex is held on both moon and sun as life-affirming. Bronze penises are sported by lunar aristocrats just as their earthly counterparts



## CYRANO DE BERGERAC (SAVINIEN DE CYRANO)

carry swords, and one of the moon-dwellers is appalled that in earthly society such symbols of generation are ignominious while those of destruction are honorable. Christianity is portrayed as unnatural in its emphasis on chastity, a worthless virtue whose honor is dismissed. If God had intended us to be chaste, explains one of the moon-dwellers, He would have made us self-propagating, like mushrooms. The “Kingdom of Lovers” on the sun also holds procreation as its goal. After a year’s probation in the kingdom’s noviciate of love, teenage boys are assessed on their sexual prowess and accorded between ten and forty young wives, depending on their capacities. Fecundity remains the focus: a husband may not sleep with a wife who is already pregnant, while sterile men, relegated to the status of servants, are condemned to mingle carnally only with equally barren women. (In allowing such acts, Cyrano thus shows himself to be more tolerant of sterile people’s right to sexual pleasure than Denis Diderot would be in his Supplement to Bougainville’s “*Voyage*” the following century). Characters twice argue that it is morally worse to abstain from sex and thus not to reproduce than it is to kill a child who has at least had the pleasure of living for some time. Sexual abstinence is figured as a double murder, since it prevents individuals from ever having existed as well as from continuing to exist in the present. Despite this focus on procreation, however, Cyrano is also keen to stress that giving rise to new life is often the last thing on one’s mind when one is in the throes of sexual pleasure. Traditions that advocate respect for one’s parents are, therefore, fundamentally misplaced, since one’s own birth is little more than a side-effect of their unthinking licentiousness.

Alongside this emphasis on procreation, however, there are also numerous elements of homoeroticism in the novel, not least in the portrayal of occasional beautiful young boys who fascinate the hero. Perhaps surprisingly, though, even the novel’s evocations of same-sex desire are often underpinned by a fascination with heterosexuality and procreation. Perhaps most striking is the ritual whereby the lunar philosophers choose to die. Tenderly embracing and kissing the friend whom he loves the most, the philosopher stabs himself in the heart; the beloved then presses his mouth against his until the philosopher dies, at which point the beloved drinks his fill of his blood and lets the others

present do the same. The friends spend the following three or four days in a cannibalistic orgy with a young woman, dining solely on their friend’s corpse and hoping that he will be reborn from their embraces. In the second part of the novel, the dying embrace of the Greek heroes and lovers Orestes and Pylades gives rise to a pair of saplings whose fruit has aphrodisiac properties. Because of the heroes’ love, anyone who eats an apple from one of these plants develops a sudden passion for anyone who has eaten the fruit of the other, a conceit which allows Cyrano to explain a series of transgressive passions, including incest, narcissism, bestiality, and sexual activity with plants. In this episode, love between men thus becomes the prototype of all true passion; even women who eat the fruit develop a vigorous love which betrays the virility of its source. On the other hand, the passion stoked up between any two men who eat the fruit is cast as “reciprocal friendship” (p. 176)—surprisingly coy terms after the more explicit description of Orestes and Pylades as “lovers.” The work’s combined fascination with homosexuality and concomitant anxieties about sterility are, however, treated in a quite different tone in another episode, where the moon-dwellers mistake the hero for a female and pair him up with another man, comically hoping that they will breed. Such juxtapositions of the comic and the serious, the Epicurean and the ethical, the grotesque and the utopian, are in many ways typical of the novel’s unsettling and provocative stance towards all manner of issues.

### Biography

Born Savinien de Cyrano in 1619 in Paris. Died in 1655 in Sannois, Paris.

A soldier and man of letters, he wrote a variety of works in different genres, including plays, satirical pamphlets, a fragment of a scientific treatise, and letters. He moved in various free-thinking circles, and was a friend of Gassendi, Tristan l’Hermite, Scarron, and Molière.

JOSEPH HARRIS

### Editions

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See also **Diderot, Denis; Libertinism; Science Fiction; 17th century French Literature**

## CZECH

Although Casanova wrote his famous *Memoirs* during his stay at the Czech castle Duchcov and Prague was the city where Leopold von Sacher-Masoch studied. Erotic literature in the Czech language is quite rare, apart from a few periods of short-lived fertility. There are two reasons for this: First, Czech language books for common readership started to be published only since the beginning of the nineteenth century. Before the birth of the Czechoslovak Republic in 1918, Czech lands were part of German-speaking culture. Second, in the years 1938–1989, the Czech Republic was governed by Nazi and communist totalitarian regimes who banned publication of erotic books in general.

Prominent publisher and collector of erotic literature, Karel Jaroslav Otrátil (1866–1945), sees two more reasons for this state. In his important study *Erotické ex libris [Erotic ex libris]* (1928) he wrote: “The cause should be sought in the character of Czech nation which, by nature, is closer to the northern nations regarding its relation to sexuality. It never enjoyed the excesses typical for southern and western nations.” Also, the lack of Czech higher aristocracy and relative freedom in the private sphere of citizens did not provoke Renaissance writers to write moralistic and political pamphlets which often used to contain erotic elements.

One of the rare exceptions is the work of Hynek z Pobebrad (1452–1492), son of Czech king Jiri and an important politician and poet

of his time. Pobebrad was one of the few writers who composed his texts in the Czech language (rather than in Latin). Among the manuscripts which he wrote at the end of his life we can find the first Czech translations of several stories from Boccaccio’s *Dekameron* (put into the Czech milieu) as well as some original poems. One of the poems is called *Majovy sen* [“A Dream in May”]. It tells about an erotic dream of the narrator in which he persuades his lady to make love with him. He almost succeeds but in the crucial moment the dream ends. Hynek also added one original story to the translations of Boccaccio in which he warns husbands not to ignore the needs of their wives. These texts remained in manuscript form until 1823 and 1840 when parts of them were published, but the erotic scenes were softened by the censors. Vaclav Flajshans, a 19th-century literary critic, called this text “the most obscene work of Czech literature.” The complete edition of Hynek’s manuscript appeared only in 1978 under the title *Spisovani slavneho frejire [Writings of a Famous Lady’s Man]*.

In the following centuries the erotic motifs proliferated mostly in folk songs and poems. Some of them were collected in the anthology *Erotika ceskeho obrozeni 1780–1850 [Erotica of Czech National Revival]*, ed. by Jiri Hruby (1928). Several of the included erotic and obscene poems were collected by Bozena Nemcova, the most important Czech writer of the early

nineteenth century. Nemcova, a chaste woman, wrote the worst parts of poems in the Russian alphabet.

Strong erotic elements can be found in the diaries of Karel Hynek Macha (1810–1836), founder of modern Czech poetry. Parts of his diaries were written in a secret alphabet. However, it was soon deciphered by the literary historians of the late nineteenth century. They discovered that the poet made brief, but detailed notes about his sexual adventures with his female lovers, including the place and the type of the position. The content of the secret diaries was well known among students of literature, but remained taboo for publishers until the 1990's when they were finally printed.

According to Obrátil, the first genuine erotic Czech book was an anonymously published collection of poetry *Sonata erotica* (1913). It was only in the 1920s when erotic books, both original and translated started to appear with some regularity. Any bibliography of erotic books in the Czech language has not been compiled yet, but it is estimated that some 500 erotic and pornographic books have been published there between 1920 and 1939. There were also several early attempts to establish an erotic magazine. They were either very innocent like the magazine *Amor* (at least 16 issues, since 1892) or they did not survive its premiere issue like *Rozmarna erotika* [*Frisolous Erotica*, 1913].

The borderline between erotic and pornographic books was unclear but there are some differences. Erotic novels were usually published without hiding the name of the author and publisher, often in some of the many specialized editions. Pornographic novels were often anonymous, they contained erotic illustrations, often more explicit than the literal content, and they were not distributed in the bookstores. The authors and publishers feared being accused of “moral corruption” so the books had been sent to subscribers only and published in limited series. Each of them contained a warning such as: “Issued in the limited number of 100 numbered prints intended for the close circle of friends. Each owner of this book agrees to store the book separately so that it will not fall into the hands of women, children, and mentally handicapped persons.”

Advocates of erotic literature often stressed the difference between erotica and pornography. K.J. Obrátil in the mentioned book *Erotické ex*

*libris* writes of pornography: “Its language is crude and dumb, it lacks humor, it is low and raw, without any esthetic quality. Its intellectual content is empty of any idea.”

Obrátil, who was a teacher by profession and a publisher of textbooks for schoolchildren, was—together with Frantisek Trefny (?-?), Viktor Roubal (?-?), Stanislav Kostka Neumann (1875–1947)—the most important publisher and editor of erotic books.

Since the early years of the twentieth century specialized editions devoted to erotica flowered. They were, for example: *Zapovězené ovoce* [*Forbidden Fruits*], 1906–1908, 81 volumes, mostly by Czech authors; *Intimní knihovna* [*Intimate Library*], 1908–1911, 11 volumes, some anonymous; *Edice erotická* (*Erotic Edition*, undated, 34 volumes including works by Giacomo Casanova, Catule Mendes, Guy de Maupassant), *Venusiny povídky* [*Venus Stories*], 1922–1924, 63 volumes of various quality, including Restif de la Bretonne, Octave Mirbeau, or Czech writer Stanislav Cerchovsky; *Zahrada Priapova* (1927–1929, [*Priap's Garden*], 4 volumes including *de la Bretonne or de Laclous' Dangerous Liaisons*, intended as a novelistic supplement to the non-fiction study *Dejiny lasky*, [*The History of Love*], *Knížky pro potěšení* [*Books For Your Pleasure*], 1928–1930, 22 volumes, including *Honore de Balzac, de Sade or Alfred de Musset*; *Horizont* 1932–1936, 21 mildly erotic or adventure volumes, including several books by Pitigrilli.

Most of these book lines contained rather subtle variants of erotic fiction or, many times, social and adventure stories with moral overtones. Maybe the most prolific publisher and writer of these books was Frantisek Trefny, who also owned a shop with erotic and hygienic goods. He wrote medical brochures as well as some 40 erotic novels. The longest of them was *Tajný klub maskovaných žen* [*The Secret Club of Masked Women*] (1933). In this adventure story men are kidnapped by a secret society of women, who turn the captives into their sexual slaves.

The single most famous Czech erotic text is a long poem *Rytíř Smil* [*Knight called Shag*]. The author of the poem is unknown, the suspicion that it has been written by the great poet Jaroslav Vrchlický has not been proven. It is even possible that the poem originated in some other country. The first known Czech edition comes from 1925. Since then, it has been republished many times. It also circulated in manuscript

form when publishing erotic fiction was still forbidden and it almost became a part of modern Czech folklore. This vulgar, pornographic text tells a story about a knight who was a virgin until he was seduced by one of the castle's maids. In the meantime, her former lover mistook the maid in the dark for her grandmother.

Erotic content was not an exclusive theme of popular literature. Strong erotic elements were contained, for example, in the writings of Czech decadents. Most typical of them was Jiri Karasek ze Lvovic (1871–1951) whose poems from 1890's or his trilogy *Romany tri magu* [*Novels of Three Magicians*] contain homoerotic elements and caused some controversy when they were published. Eccentric writer and philosopher Ladislav Klima (1878–1928) also put some bizarre erotic elements into his stories. His dealing with necrophilic themes also intended to provoke a strong reaction among the petty-bourgeois audience.

Czech erotica reached its short Golden Age in the early 1930's in connection with the Czech surrealist movement. Surrealists, in their search for taboo and hidden aspects of the human psyche, were fascinated by sexuality. It is often used as a theme of surrealist paintings and collages, most notably by Jindrich Styrsky (1899–1942) and Toyen (pseudonym of Marie Cerminova, 1902–1980). Sex was often presented with irony and in connection with its antithesis—death.

Jindrich Styrsky edited the famous magazine *Eroticka revue* [*Erotic Revue*] (1930–1933). In the first year of its existence four issues were published in the course of the years 1930–1931. In the following years the magazine changed into an anthology and lasted two volumes only. *Eroticka revue* contained—like the older erotic magazines—a mixture of texts by Czech (mostly poems) and foreign authors decorated with pictures and drawings. However it differed from them in two ways: the erotic content was far more explicit, rather pornographic than just erotic, and the quality of both texts and pictures was very high. The translations were made mostly from French. Notable text is, for example, a poem “Balada o sisce” [A Ballad on the Cone] (1933) by Sirius Vokno. Under this pseudonym two important Czech playwrights Jiri Voskovec (1905–1981) and Jan Werich (1905–1980) were recognized. Its childish obscenity contrasted with other, more lyric poems in the volume. In addition to the stories and poems

*Eroticka revue* also contained such texts as “folk erotic dictionary” or a list of brothels in Paris. The magazine had a very limited print run, allegedly circa 200 copies of each issue. In 2001, the revue was published again in its first mass market edition.

Styrsky's activity did not end with *Eroticka revue*. At the same time he launched a limited erotic book line called Edition 69. In these volumes he maintained the highest quality of both content and form. In the promotion leaflet Styrsky wrote: “Edition 69 will include works of the highest literary values and graphic albums of perpetual artistic importance.” He stressed that this edition will differ from pure, anonymous pornography: “Quality was my guide when I selected the titles. The names of poets, novelists, artists, and translators exclude any suspicion that I intend to distribute low and cheap pornography and anonymous private prints.” Only six volumes were published in this series between 1931 and 1933. Three of them were written by Czech authors, the other three titles were books by the Marquis de Sade, P. Aretino, and a collection of Russian erotic folk tales.

The series was started by the novella *Sexualni nocturno—Pribeh demaskovane iluze* [*A Sexual Nocturno: A Story of Unmasked Illusion*] (1931) written by well known surrealist poet and activist Vitezslav Nezval. The text is clearly autobiographic and rather than being explicitly erotic it is an absolutely sincere personal account typical of surrealist writings. *Sexualni nocturno* consists of several interlinked evocations of the writer's early years in the town Trebic. It describes two formative experiences of the narrator/Nezval (the text is first-person narrative). First was a rather unpleasant memory in which the narrator writes an erotic message to his girl schoolfriend and is caught and punished by his landlord. The landlord is clearly a symbol of the petty-bourgeois mentality of small-town society. The core of the narrative describes in hypnotic details the narrator's first visit to a brothel and sex with a prostitute. This experience was so intense that for the narrator it is life-altering. Irrationality of the spontaneous sexual act led him to intellectual appreciation of unusual compositions and combinations, trying to “transfer the known into the unknown.” Sexual initiation led him to the discovery of a special kind of vision which will later correspond with surrealism.

It is no surprise that for a would-be writer a large part of eroticism had a semantic nature. “Forbidden” words were being used by young Nezval as mantras—he repeated them over and over in his mind. The following paragraph from *Sexualni nocturno* is perhaps the most quoted piece of text in Czech erotic literature:

“The word fuck is diamond-like, hard, transparent, classic. As if it would fall off a precious alexandrine, like a jewel. It has a magic power, because it is forbidden. It is one of the cabbalist signs of erotic fluidum and I love it. I never say it loud in front of dirty women.”

The third volume of the edition was a collection of verses *Thyrsos* (1932) written by acknowledged communist poet Frantisek Halas (1901–1949). The author is attracted by the innocent sexuality of youth to such an extent that some consider his poems to be on the border of pedophilic interest. They deal with such themes like lovemaking between brother and sister, young virgins discovering sexuality, or small children mimicking their parents in their sexual games. No other edition of this collection was allowed by the poet’s family.

Nevertheless the collection was issued again without permission in the year 2000. The author’s estate protested, forcing the publisher to recall the whole print run and destroy it.

The sixth, and last, volume of *Edition 69* was *Emilie prichazi ke mne ve snu* [*Emily Comes To Me In My Dreams*] (1933), a short lyrical text by Styrsky himself. In this sequence of memories, images and associations the writer remembers his imaginary girlfriend Emilie (who is, perhaps, Styrsky’s own sister Marie). The text is heavy in symbols of age and loss as if written by an old man. In fact, Styrsky was 34 at the time of publication. The realization that memories and dreams may grow old and die is expressed by the deeply sad and nostalgic tone of the text. The text was accompanied by ten photo-collages by the author (12 in a few limited-edition prints). They depict couples making love in unusual contexts (like on the background of a starry sky) and contribute to the sardonic tone of the volume. The book was accompanied by an afterword of young psychoanalyst Bohuslav Brouk. The afterword, in contrast to the text itself, is written enthusiastically, with almost revolutionary feeling. Brouk describes “pornophiles”

almost in the terms of today’s theoretics of popular culture. For him, the depiction of the beautiful human body is “the last argument” and “a weapon” of poor, oppressed, and socially marginalized people. Pornography, according to Brouk, is a democratic, revolutionary tool which dissolves boundaries between social classes. Emilie was republished in 2001, after being published in Germany in 1994 in translation.

Both *Eroticka revue* and *Edice 69* ended in the same year when a film, *Extase* [*Ecstasy*], by Gustav Machaty was been released. This Czech movie is perhaps the first film in the history of cinema which shows a naked woman’s body.

In the course of World War II, and then during the strong communist regime of the 1950s, nothing even close to erotica could be published. After the first cultural warming in the 1960s, there was a wave of new writers who included erotic elements in their works. Their intention was to show human life in all its aspects, in contradiction to one-dimensional characters of socialist realism. Set in the time of the Nazi occupation of Czechoslovakia, Bohumil Hrabal’s (1914–1997) short novel *Ostre sledovane vlaky* [*Closely Watched Train*] (1965) tells a story of a young man trying to find a woman who will end his virginity. Several examples of explicit scenes and language can be found in other Hrabal novels, like *Obsluhoval jsem anglickeho krále* [*I Was a Servant to the English King*], (exile edition 1980, regular Czech edition 1989). The melancholic and existential aspects of love are the motifs of Milan Kundera’s (1929) short stories collected in *Smesne lasky* [*Laughable Loves*], (3 vols 1963–1968). Vladimir Paral (1932) portrayed the empty and mechanical life under the communist regime. In his works the sex degenerated into a simple fulfillment of need. Some of his late stories from the 1990s are more openly erotic.

Pure erotica was relatively rare in Czech poetry but it appeared in the works of such opposite writers as Jana Krejcarova (1928–1981), daughter of Franz Kafka’s friend Milena Jesenska, an influential figure of the Czech literary and political underground, and communist poet Karel Sys (1946), later an editor of the erotic magazine *Sextant*. Little known were Krejcarova’s poems Clarissa published as *samisdat* in 1951 and later as *Clarissa a jine texty* [*Clarissa and other Writings*] (1990). Many

texts of Krejcarova show her passion to use explicit words for sexual activities and body parts, maybe under the influence of “total realism,” a style coined by her lover, philosopher and writer Egon Bondy. The second edition also includes her letter to Bondy from c. 1962, which is maybe the most intimate and erotic piece of correspondence in Czech literature. Erotica took an important role also in the works of surrealist poet Karel Hynek (1925–1953) and, much later, underground poet J.H. Krchovsky (pen name of Jiri Hasek, 1960).

Because erotica was prohibited by the communist regime, it was sometimes used as a tool for literary expression by writers opposed to the regime. Jiri Grusa (1938), now a president of the International PEN Club, was accused of writing pornography by the communist state in the years 1969–1970. Under the pseudonym Samuel Lewis he serialized *Listy z Kalpadocie* [*Letters from Kalpadocia*] in the magazine *Sesity pro literaturu a diskusi* in 1969. Using the framework of a utopian novel, he depicted a dystopian society with a decadent obsession with sex and death. For all of these activities, Kalpadocians use their own language different from ours. Grusa shows that manipulation of language can be used for the manipulation of the masses and that the use of “foreign” words can hide inhuman atrocities. The text was later published in *samisdat* as *Mimner aneb Hra o smrdocha* [*Mimner, or, the Stinker Game*, 1973]. A different version was published in German in 1986; the official Czech edition is from 1991.

The fall of the communist regime in 1989 has been followed by a boom of all prohibited literary forms, including erotica. The first pornographic magazines appeared immediately, as well as numerous translations of erotic and pornographic novels. However, original Czech writings could not compete with translations. The newly opened area has been filled mostly by amateur writers fascinated by the possibility of writing about such topics. In the early 1990s some magazines like *Sextant* tried to raise erotica to an artistic and literary level but these attempts have proven to be commercially unsuccessful. Simple pornographic stories have been anonymously published in numerous booklets. The most prolific was the magazine *Cats* with its *Mini Cats* booklet line and bi-weekly magazine *NEI-Report* whose publisher issued many erotic

and pornographic chapbooks. Some of them were bizarre crossovers like the anonymous *Diktatura sexu* (*Sex Dictatorship*, 1993) mixing elements of pornography, science fiction, and political satire.

Always considered as a dubious paraliterary genre, erotica has received minimal critical examination. As mentioned, the only Czech book dealing with erotic literature—and art—is still K.J. Obratil's *Eroticke ex libris* [*Erotic ex libris*] (1924). The book is an examination of erotic motifs on various ex libris drawings, a concise history of erotic literature in individual countries and also a passionate defence of erotic art in general. Obratil quotes Czech communist politician and poet Stanislav Kostka Neumann: “Erotic works illustrate not only morality, but the entire cultural history of mankind.” Now, Obratil is known mostly for his magnificent collection of folk scatological and erotic humor and songs. His magnum opus is *Kryptadia* (limited print run 1938–1939, mass market edition 1999), three volumes of more than 1500 pages in sum. They represent one of the biggest collections of obscene and sexually explicit songs, poems, jokes, wall writings, and customs ever compiled. The songs are complete with music scores and a place where the song has been collected.

During the 1920s there was a broad discussion on the dangers of the lower levels of paraliterature like pornography and dime detective novels. Psychologists, school teachers, librarians, and politicians mostly agreed that this kind of literature is damaging the “nation's health” and, especially, its children. In 1927, there was a symposium organized by Masaryk's Institute of Public Education. Transcripts of the speeches were issued as the pamphlet *O pornografii a braku v literaturu* [*On Pornography and Trivialliteratur*] (1927). The conclusion of the meeting was that the best way to fight corrupt forms of literature is to promote the good ones. Much more careful and tolerant in his conclusions was the librarian Bohuslav Koutnik who, probably in reaction to the abovementioned transcript, published his own pamphlet *K psychologii literatury pornograficke a brakove* [*Towards the Psychology of Pornography and Trivialliteratur*] (1928). First he dealt with the slippery definition of pornography. Koutnik saw how subjective the moral measures are, so he came out with a definition: “pornography is

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what it intends to be—pornography.” He tried to calm down the sometimes hysterical “war with the pornography”: “The harmfulness of it is generally overestimated and it is quite low in comparison to non-literary and non-artistic influences. Any negative defence by prohibition has small chance to be successful.” More recent publication is *Male dejiny pornografie* [Short

*History of Pornography*] (2001, ed. by Vaclav Span), an anthology of fragments from both foreign and Czech erotic and pornographic literature, selected mostly from old books and magazines like *Erotická revue*. The book lacks proper bio-bibliographic data and is far from being a critical edition useful for the study of this field.

IVAN ADAMOVIC

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## DACRE, CHARLOTTE

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c. 1772–1825  
English novelist and poet

Though all of Charlotte Dacre's Gothic novels would seem to have enjoyed reasonably good sales in their day (Byron even thought her a worthwhile target for mockery in his *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers* of 1809), her reputation today is largely based on a single work: *Zofloya; or, The Moor*. Though the work makes no real contribution to the development of the genre (the conventions of the Gothic novel were more or less fixed by 1800), the eroticism of the novel, especially in its portrayal of a heroine who is largely motivated by sexual desire, is undoubtedly more overt and sustained than in the majority of British productions. Indeed, it might even be argued that the novel seeks to subvert the established code of appropriate feminine behavior with its emphasis on piety, domesticity, and submissiveness.

*Zofloya* recounts the adventurous life of the young Victoria de Loredani in late fifteenth-century Italy. Born into a wealthy Venetian family, she is effectively orphaned when her mother, Laurina, allows herself to be seduced by the

plausible but unscrupulous Count Ardolph, a high-ranking German. As a result of this liaison, Victoria's father is killed in a duel; Leonardo, her younger brother, flees the parental home vowing revenge; and Victoria is packed off to a gloomy castle—Il Bosco, near Treviso—where she is ill-treated by an elderly aunt, though it is unclear whether the latter is motivated by religious scruples or an innate sadistic streak.

The main interest of the novel, however, concerns Victoria's conduct after her escape from Il Bosco. Thus far, the reader has tended to sympathize with her as the unwitting victim of circumstances beyond her control. As the novel progresses, she increasingly takes control of events, moving from victim to aggressor in her own right. Returning to Venice, she becomes the mistress of the Conte Berenza, a "philosophical, delicate, and refined voluptuary" (70). Meanwhile, Victoria's brother also reappears, now in the guise of lover to Berenza's cast-off mistress, Megalena. Though the tone is erotically charged throughout (dealing with the careful grooming of a virgin by an older roué and the fascination of an adolescent boy for an older mistress), the language remains coy as to particulars:



The bland seductress Megalena possessed over [Leonardo] an unlimited power; she had caused a new world to open on his view; even yet he was not awakened from the dream of pleasure with which she had bewitched his soul; feelings and ideas, unknown before, swelled in his bosom, and his heart was rapidly becoming immersed in an infatuating sea of voluptuousness. (109)

As is often the case in Gothic fiction, the historical setting only serves to confuse matters. The attitudes and beliefs of Berenza clearly belong to the French Enlightenment of the eighteenth century while the language of the novel generally, which is couched in the terms of Romantic excess, could only be that of the period in which the work was written—this sense of Romantic excess increases as the novel progresses. Victoria, by now married to Berenza, tires quickly enough of him, transferring her affections to his brother, Henriquez. Her mind is also becoming increasingly unhinged. One night, the figure of a Moor, noble and majestic, clad in white robes and a turban bedecked with emeralds and pearls appears to her in a dream. This mysterious and awesome figure, who lends his name to the title of the novel, begins to materialize whenever she wishes, even providing her with a phial of poison. After first testing the poison on an old woman, Victoria embarks on a spree of murders, killing first her husband and then Henriquez's fiancée (who is thrown from a cliff). A further potion supplied by Zofloya allows her to bewitch Henriquez into spending a night of passion with her, though he commits suicide the following morning. Captured by brigands in the Apennines, Victoria watches her brother, the leader of the outlaws, hack Count Ardolph (who has also fallen into his clutches) to death before taking his own life. Victoria then concludes her pact with the devil, in which guise Zofloya now appears.

The fascination with revenge motifs probably ultimately derives from earlier Italian works such as Bandello's *Novelliere* (1554–1573) while the interest in poisons is perhaps inspired by various legends concerning the Borgias and French trial reports relating to the *Affaire des Poisons* (1672). But the principal model for *Zofloya* is M. G. Lewis's *The Monk* (1796), which likewise involves a pact with the devil. Indeed, the soubriquet Rosa Matilda presumably derives from one of the characters in Lewis's novel. In many respects, Victoria subsumes both the role of the virtuous sister and the corrupt sister, suggesting a familiarity with Sade's *Juliette ou les Prospérités du vice*

(1797). Though Victoria's criminal behavior is variously attributed to her mother's bad example and the heroine's own unbridled sexuality (or "the unrestrained passions of [her] soul," as Zofloya puts it (229), a modern feminist reading of the novel would conclude that the (female) reader's initial sympathy for the heroine is intended to lead to a complicity with her later aristocratic pursuit of physical gratification. At the very least, Dacre's representation of female sexuality marks a considerable advance on earlier fiction in the Gothic tradition.

### Biography

Charlotte Dacre was probably born in 1772. Her father, a Jewish banker and a familiar figure in fashionable circles, called himself John (or Jonathan) King though his actual name was Jacob Rey. In 1779, he married Jane Rochfort Butler, daughter of the first Earl of Belvedere and widow of the second Earl of Lanesborough. Charlotte and her sister Sophia began writing in the late 1790s, publishing a collection of poems together, *Trifles of Helicon*, in 1798. Both sisters also enjoyed short careers as novelists in the early 1800s. As Rosa Matilda, Charlotte Dacre published four Gothic novels: *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer* (1805); *Zofloya; or, The Moor: A Romance of the Fifteenth Century* (1806); *The Libertine* (1807); and *The Passions* (1811). Around 1804, Dacre began a liaison with Nicholas Byrne, the married editor of *The Morning Post*, whom she eventually married in 1815. The birth of two sons and a daughter between 1806 and 1809 perhaps implies that the author turned to authorship from financial necessity. She died in 1825, apparently following a long illness; her husband, who died in 1833, was stabbed by a masked man.

TERRY HALE

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# DAIMLER, HARRIET (IRIS OWENS)

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1933–  
American novelist

## The Novels

After writing *Darling*, Owens teamed with Marilyn Meeske on *The Pleasure Thieves*, an erotic reworking of a failed screenplay for a jewel thief caper movie written earlier by Meeske and Terry Southern. The plot of *The Pleasure Thieves* turns upon a merkin, a pubic wig designed to replace hair lost to diphtheria by the character Carol Stoddard; in the funniest scene, Stoddard masturbates with an arm from a plastic mannequin. For inspiration for her next novel, “Daimler” turned to Sade’s *Philosophie dans le boudoir*. Owens’s own favorite of her works, *The Organization*, self-referentially mimics Sade’s dialogic structure so that characters modeled coyly on his can debate the nature of sado-masochism, and amuse themselves sexually in the name of the existentialism popular in Paris in the 1950s.

Daimler’s reputation, however, derives from *Darling*, *Innocence*, and *The Woman Thing*. Taken together as a meditation on female sexuality at mid-twentieth century, they foreground women whose desire is linked with rage at gender inequity. *Darling* is a story of the symbolic death and resurrection of a painter. Gloria Hofstra, a 24-year-old virgin from Kansas City, is raped in her New York apartment house stairwell by a “dead-eyed” man with a knife. Excited by torment, she searches for rough lovers in the bars of Greenwich Village. She has intercourse at a marijuana party with Maurice, Jules, and Conrad; persuades two gay friends, Jack and Harry, to penetrate her simultaneously; and performs oral sex on a stranger in a cinema. Another stranger beats and sodomizes her, but his cruelty is thoughtless, not the single-minded, icy violence that will free her from the husk of a crushed self and liberate her as an artist. Gloria contrasts herself with Laura, long-suffering mistress of Christopher, a philandering sculptor. While Laura is merely a

victim, Gloria aspires to power, not domestic submission. Her recovery begins on Fire Island, where a teacher takes her forcefully but respectfully. At a beach orgy, she enjoys sex with another woman, finding in her lover’s body healing reflections of her own. Returning to the city, she discovers her rapist, a trumpeter in a jazz club. Although the man does not remember her, and seems indifferent, she incites him to rape her again. Convinced that his “sperm will be [her] Eucharist” (1967, p. 72), she stabs him to death as she reaches orgasm. Restored to singularity by vengeance, she readies a story of self-defense for the police.

The gothic power struggles of *Innocence*, set in a vaguely American mansion, evolve from sickness, incest, and voyeurism as characters attempt to convert weakness to dominance. The narrator of the first half (“The Girl”) is the ambiguously-gendered Adrian Ferdinand, a thirteen-year-old whose parents indulge her tyrannies because she suffers from flawed arteries. Corrupted by weakness, Adrian seduces her nurse, Rose, daily humiliates her, and forces her into an affair with Adrian’s father, with whom the daughter identifies in her lust for control. The narrator of the second half (“The Boy”) is André, Adrian’s cousin, who spies on Adrian’s manipulations; they are alter egos, both determined to dominate. Driven by resentment at having been disinherited as Adrian is by hatred of her “genetic” legacy, André trumps Adrian’s sadism by sexually appropriating the nurse. When Adrian dies of her illness, however, André comes under the sway of Rose, who coolly parlays subservience into power.

While *Innocence* is a parable of claustrophobic sadomasochism, *The Woman Thing*, set in post-war Paris, explores the mind of an American expatriate writer beset with desire, anger, and confusion. The protagonist, Martha Heck, is locked in a destructive affair with MacDonald (based probably on Alexander Trocchi), a writer and heroin addict. Veteran of several abortions, convinced that marriage is a prison, Heck

## DAIMLER, HARRIET (IRIS OWENS)

nonetheless wants to love and be loved, though MacDonald derides her belief that sex is a sacrament. Poverty and ethnic conflict—she is Brooklyn Jewish, he a Scot—scar a relationship more scabrous than erotic. Arguments over aesthetics, intercourse that resembles combat, and petty humiliations give meaning to their sex. MacDonald's cheapness and ugliness heighten her orgasms, while he calls her "an infection" (1967, p. 61), a metaphor she embraces, wanting to be the cause of his "disease and decay" (95). Conversations at the Deux Magots Cafe attack Americans as naive, inexperienced, and puritanical, characteristics personified by wealthy James Dykes, an American painter who copies the work of others. Partly because Dykes promises money, food, and a bath, and partly to make MacDonald jealous, Heck models for him. Dykes's lack of originality, he says, is a manifestation of the boredom that is his "strength" (1967, p. 87). When Dykes tells Heck that boredom has made him impotent, she fellates him, whereupon the deceiver promptly ejaculates. Because MacDonald seems indifferent, Heck seeks solace at Notre Dame, where an Austrian named "Adolf" first excites her by calling her a temptress, then dismisses her as a mere "healthy young American" (1967, p. 160). Deciding that "there are no interesting people in Paris" (1967, p. 158), Heck, a Daisy Miller at heart, dreams aimlessly of Spain or Greece. Girodias often cautioned Owens against making her "dirty books" too serious, but the combination of graphic, bruising sex, strong, unsentimental women characters, and perverse but robust intelligence endows them with considerable merit.

### Biography

Born in Brooklyn in 1933 and educated, married, and divorced in New York, Iris Owens went to Paris because that "was where one began one's travels in the post-war period" (Iris Owens, conversation with Joseph W. Slade, 12 March 2003). There she met Christopher Logue, Patrick Bowles, Austryn Wainhouse, John Stevenson ("Marcus Van Heller"), and Alexander Trocchi, who supported their avant-garde magazine, *Merlin*, by writing "dirty books" for Maurice Girodias's Olympia Press. Into this circle of expatriates, said Terry Southern, Owens

brought "rapier wit and devastating logic" ("Flashing on Gid," p. 174). When a trip to Spain exhausted her finances, Girodias commissioned her to write several erotic novels, choosing "Harriet Daimler" as the pseudonym for her first, *Darling* (1956). Since returning to the United States, Owens has published two well-received mainstream novels, but nothing since 1984.

JOSEPH W. SLAOE

### Selected Works

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# DAMOURS, LOUIS

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French author  
c. 1720–1788

## *Les lettres de Ninon de Lenclos au marquis de Sévigné (1751)*

Celebrated courtesan, friend of intellectuals such as Saint-Evremond, Molière, La Rochefoucauld, and Scarron, and one of the most flamboyant women of the seventeenth century, Ninon de Lenclos (c. 1620–1705) had been dead forty-five years when, in 1751, Damours published a collection of fifty letters purporting to be by her. The *Lettres*—an anatomy of love—were addressed to Charles, Marquis de Sévigné (1648–1713), son of the illustrious marquise (1626–1696). Ninon’s connection with the Sévigné family went back to 1650 when she enjoyed a brief amorous liaison with Henri (1623–1651), Charles’s father. Twenty years later, the 50-year-old Ninon seduced Henri’s 23-year-old son, tempting him from his mistress, la Champmeslé (1641–1698). Ninon’s short and turbulent fling with Charles (March–April 1771) would have gone undocumented were it not for Charles’s close relationship with his letter-writing mother. And though that affair bears no relationship to Damours’ *Lettres*, its dénouement is worth remembering. Exasperated and exhausted trying to serve two mistresses, torn between the two, and ultimately rejected by Ninon, Charles suffered a nervous breakdown replete with guilt-induced erotic hallucinations. His mother reported:

17 April 1671

He told me last night that during Holy Week, he had gone in for such excess that he had developed a loathing for all that formerly used to make his heart leap; he was afraid to even think about it...and claimed he could see basketsful of breasts, and what-not! Breasts, thighs, kisses, basketsful of all manner of things, and in such abundance that his fancy was consumed with them all and still is.

Annoyed by such histrionics, Ninon lost patience with the young Marquis and after a

month she gave him his marching orders—but not before putting it about that he had a soul like pap, a body resembling wet paper and the heart “d’une citrouille fricassée dans de la neige” (a pumpkin fried in snow).

Damours’ *Letters* do not at all reflect the tone of the above-quoted anecdotes. Rather, in line with the canons of courtly love, this one-sided correspondence has the young man turn to an older, experienced woman for advice on how best to woo his beloved (an unnamed, widowed Countess). The older woman (the fictional Ninon) coyly acquiesces. She then proceeds to dispense advice in the course of her letters, conceived as responses to the young Marquis’s queries and assumptions. Ninon’s wit, her familiarity with aristocratic society, with the inner workings of the human heart, and the codes and conventions of *galanterie* make her a compelling confidante (though an insufferable name-dropper). The *Lettres* draw on well-known seventeenth-century antecedents, and describe the subtle progression of the Marquis’s affection, from initial flirtation to the promise of an enduring union; every emotional response (and strategy) is recorded and analyzed: feigned indifference, suspicious rivalry, amorous restlessness, *marivaudage*, and so forth. At one point, Ninon even acts as a go-between, arousing both the jealousy of the Countess and the mistrust of the Marquis. Ninon’s tone fluctuates between well-bred irony and hectoring exasperation, as she attempts to explain to the Marquis his own feelings and behavior; at the same time they offer a penetrating analysis of the female psyche. Throughout, her advice is constant. Love is physical: the need for love instinctive; it is an appetite dictated in part by vanity and it must be fed. The trick is to control the instinct, and not be controlled by it; hence, Ninon’s repeated warnings against deifying the object of desire. In the aristocratic circles described, love-making was like a game of intrigue, a game spoiled by gossip, bad manners, brooding, and scenes. The important thing is to satisfy one’s desire without undue or

## DANDURAND, ANNE, AND CLAIRE DÉ

unnecessary suffering. To make a favorable impression, the best strategy is to put on a jovial, disengaged countenance. Old-fashioned ideals of honor and principle are antithetical to love—as is jealousy. In short, love should be a diversion, not a passion, for love-passion is unpredictable, dangerous, and short lived.

Informed by an epicurean sensibility, Damours' *credo* exemplifies a reaction against *préciosité*, and perhaps even against the *larmoyant* sentimental genre then in vogue. Notwithstanding, his ideas can be seen as part of a continuum in French literature which epitomizes love-as-*galanterie*, and whose expression extends from the *Romance of the Rose* to Proust and beyond. Hence, the traditional metaphors: love is to the heart what wind is to the ocean: it allows pleasant journeys but threatens destructive tempests; the lover is like a prospective client eying cloth in a boutique: he should never betray how much he wants the cloth; and most commonly, the lover's role is like that of a general attacking a fortified town: the best strategy is to find the wall's weakest point.

### BIOGRAPHY

French lawyer, King's Counsel, Damours was born in Le Lude, a small town in northwest France. After the requisite studies, he was called to the bar and conducted a successful Parisian practice. Author of a number of highly specialized treatises on jurisprudence, economics, and

politics, he also wrote two epistolary works under a female *nom de plume*. In 1751, Damours published the *Lettres de Ninon de Lenclos au marquis de Sévigné*. The deception was so well executed, and the letters so well received, that even after he confessed to having written them, an enthusiastic public was reluctant to believe that they were not the authentic work of Ninon de Lenclos, but entirely fictional. The same literary device is evident in Damours' *Lettres de Miladi \*\*\* sur l'influence que les femmes pourroient avoir sur l'éducation des hommes* (1784), the difference being that the *Miladi* in question is not an historical personage.

E.M. LANGILLE

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# DANDURAND, ANNE, AND CLAIRE DÉ

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1953-  
French-Canadian writers

Twin sisters whose creative projects have always been complementary, Anne Dandurand and Claire Dé published their first book, *La louve*

*garou*, in tandem in 1982. The she-werewolf of the title suggests the book's main motifs: (heterosexual) erotica and the feminine fantastic. Each story is signed by only one sister, though recurring themes and situations suggest that they read and reacted to each other's pieces during

the writing process. Characters and motifs include ogres, witches, love potions, voyeurism, orgies, and fetishism. While some stories are humorous (in one of Dé's pieces, a vampire undergoes orthodontic treatments and makes it in Hollywood as a movie alien), most deal, through fantastic themes, with the life-and-death power of passion. Two lovers are shot at the moment of orgasm by the title she-werewolf observing them from outside (the female serial killer and detective motifs will recur in both women's writing), and their bodies merge for eternity; a woman who imagines her lover is unfaithful sets fire to them both, and they are once again bound together forever, in equal parts of agony and pleasure; a cannibal and an ogress devour one another and fall happily asleep. Though often fatal, love is the greatest good; images of violent death and merging suggest both a wild and lyrical, though ironic, romanticism (in one story, a poplar tree grows out of the heart of a jilted woman) and a fascination with aggressive impulses. Although the two sisters subsequently published separately, teasing references to each other's work continue to appear: in Dandurand's "Les étrennes," a teenager kills her rock star lover and cannot wait to tell her sister, Claire, about the deed; the young narrator of Dé's "L'amour éternel" says she is not a groupie like her sister Anne, then proceeds to murder her own lover.

In Dé's writing, desire is lyrically celebrated, but always as a prelude to loss: *Love as Natural Disaster* is the title of one of her short story collections. Many stories, as well as the novels *Soundless Loves* and *The Sparrow Has Cut the Day in Half* (written in haiku form) feature women who long for sex with their now-indifferent husbands and remember more ardent days. Love is literally these women's oxygen: when deprived of physical tenderness, they suffer devastating asthma attacks, and their choking sorrow is mirrored stylistically by syntactical gaps and fragmented sentences. Sometimes, though, the roles are reversed and an abandoned man kills himself out of sorrow; love is a power game always lost by the one who loves more. But there are happy moments spent preparing for sex, dreaming of sex, enjoying a new lover, or simply remembering past bliss.

Dandurand's writing ranges from the poetic to the crude. Some stories feature feminist storm troopers out for revenge on callous men; for

example, masturbating (and sometimes robbing) them on the subway. The short piece "Histoire de Q," published in 1985 in the now-defunct feminist magazine *La vie en rose*, created a storm of controversy. This parody of Pauline Réage's 1954 *Story of O* (the letter Q, in French, sounds like "cul," or ass; "histoire de cul" means a dirty joke) features a woman who, to take revenge on a lukewarm lover, has him kidnapped by a band of women and held in an isolated manor where he is violated and tortured. He enjoys the pain and discovers he cares for his lover after all; in the end, she appears and devours him. The story can be read as a feminist critique of traditional eroticism through role reversal, as a playful exploration of female aggression, or (Dandurand's explanation of how the story was written) as fantasized revenge on a real-life lover. The story shocked some editors and readers, who felt women's erotica should not be violent, vulgar, or confrontational.

This reaction underestimates the role of fantasy in Dandurand's writing as well as the variety of her approaches to sexuality. The short story collection *Voilà c'est moi: c'est rien j'angoisse*, which includes "Story of Q," also features tales of tender lovemaking in which passion is seen as the only antidote to violence, war, and death (a recurring theme). In "As Moist as Montreal," the narrator describes sex with a stranger in a dark alley, then, in the final paragraph, says she made it all up to keep things interesting between herself and her current lover. In a number of her books, including *Voilà c'est moi...* and the novel *Cracks*, Dandurand plays with the idea of an "imaginary diary," blurring the boundaries between reality and fiction and creating a safe space to explore and perhaps act on fantasies. In *The Waiting Room*, the narrator (who may be a succubus) imagines sex scenes involving herself, patients, and the doctor in various combinations. Though much of Dandurand's writing—often poetic, metaphorical, and lexically rich—joyfully celebrates sexual desire, her female characters suffer, like Dé's, at the hands of lukewarm or unfaithful men, though they are more likely to take violent revenge. For consolation, they return to their "imaginary diaries" to retell the story, to forget, to exorcise, or to change its ending. Men, though ardently desired, ultimately disappoint; writing never does.

## DANDURAND, ANNE, AND CLAIRE DÉ

Despite its insistent Gothic trappings and longing for happy endings, Dandurand's and Dé's writing is resolutely contemporary, pairing active, intense, sometimes aggressive women who "love too much" and less-committed men. Often, the women are long-suffering victims (though even the wife in *Soundless Loves* ties up her husband, whips him, and excites him sexually before leaving him in a hotel room—but this may be a simple fantasy); they can be remorseless killers too. Critics have praised their boldness, their willingness to explore the dark side of sexuality, and their playful questioning of gender stereotypes. Both writers, working at the margins, take as their material violence, sadism, and emotional masochism as well as the delights of shared desire, offering extreme situations, a realistic portrait of human feelings and brief but intense erotic scenes.

### Biography

Twin sisters born in 1953 in Montreal (Dé is the letter D, for Dandurand, made into a surname). They have been publishing together and separately since 1982. In 1987–1988, they co-wrote a TV series. Dandurand has been an actress, a union organizer, and a journalist; Dé has been involved in theater design and literary translation, and has written for the radio. Several of their books have been translated into English.

LORI SAINT-MARTIN

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# DEFOE, DANIEL

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British novelist and journalist  
1660–1731

## *Moll Flanders*

Defoe's suggestively titled *Conjugal Lewdness: A Treatise Concerning the Use and Misuse of the Marriage-Bed* deals little with eroticism *per se*, except to condemn it outright as an end in itself. And, in spite of the inclusion on the frontispiece of *Moll Flanders* that his heroine was "Twelve Year a Whore" ("whore" meaning simply a woman who has sex outside of marriage) and "five times a Wife (whereof once to her own Brother)," Defoe's modern critics see the drive for economic survival as leaving little energy in his characters for sexual feeling. Moll's emotional life was formed at the very start when her mother was transported for felony. At three years old, the magistrates of Colchester place her in the care of a poor woman. When she is about fourteen years old, she is taken in by a wealthy family and seduced by the elder son. He offers her gold, but there is no doubt that she feels an overwhelming passion for him; after he discards her, she says "the agonies of my Mind [...] threw me into a high Feaver..." She is kept in bed by her illness for five weeks and afterwards is emotionally deadened towards men, who *then* become mostly objects of calculation to her. Yet sexual desire does not disappear. One married gentleman offers to sleep with her without any intercourse, but about this arrangement she was not "so wholly pleas'd ... as he thought I was," and, though she moralizes about it afterwards, is glad he finally has intercourse with her. But her strong passion is only reawakened later on by "Jemy," whom she calls her Lancashire husband. They must part, but her feelings for the child she has by him show her to be in no way heartless or cold. When she loses her looks she turns thief, but, after she has been arrested and is in danger of being hanged, she is stirred to make efforts for her survival only because she catches a glimpse of him in the same prison. She

succeeds in saving him and herself, and, transported to Virginia, grows rich with him and "died a penitent." Whatever moral Defoe intends, or pretends, in giving this account of Moll's life, the novel may well seem to be recommending strong sexual love as the really positive force in life.

## *Roxana*

Though twentieth-century academic efforts have sought moral structure in *Roxana, The Fortunate Mistress*, readers may persist in regarding the novel as a series of adventures in the life of a courtesan. "At about Fifteen Years of Age, my father...married me to an Eminent Brewer," Roxana says, but he abandons her with five children and no money. She disengages herself from the children and begins a picaresque life with her servant, Amy, who feels a "violent Affection" for Roxana and sleeps in the same bed with her. Amy helps Roxana understand that, for a woman, unless she has money, life will be determined by the lust she arouses in men. Thus her kindly landlord, who later on is discovered to be a wealthy jeweller, soon reveals that he wants to make her his mistress, and succeeds. In spite of her moralistic protestations, Roxana enjoys her subsequent life as his mistress. And in spite of how she moralizes in the telling of it, presumably even her making Amy have sex with him doesn't qualify as any "interruption" in their happiness. Indeed, she enjoyed stripping off Amy's clothes and throwing her into bed with him. After they go to France together, however, her jeweller-lover is murdered in a robbery. Almost immediately she is aided by a Continental Prince. "Princes did not court like other Men," he says, tells her what he wants, what he can give her, and allows her one chance to accept or refuse. During this relationship, she learns that "Great Men...value not squandering away immense Wealth" because "they raise the Value of the Object which they pretended to pitch upon, by their Fancy." She gives him a child, and "it was something wonderful to me, to see this Person so exceedingly delighted at the



Birth of this Child, and so pleas'd with it..." Her whole relationship with him lasts eight years, and, though he had a wife and "two or three Women, which he kept privately, he had not in all that Time meddled with any of them." Presumably male fidelity is the consequence of powerful sexual desire for a particular woman, but this happiness can be interrupted by the fits of guilt to which men are prone. In this case, it is brought on by the near death of the Prince's wife, and he gives up Roxana. She must now convey her fortune safely back to England. Lust again comes to her aid with the Dutch merchant, who, though married, commits himself so thoroughly to her cause that he will lose a fortune and be driven out of Paris. When the merchant appears in Rotterdam, he tells her his wife is dead and begins to court her openly. "I could not but smile however," she says, because she has known the Prince and through his directness the real motives of men. He finally has intercourse with her and wants to marry her afterwards, but Roxana refuses—in order to keep control of her money and, pregnant, returns to England. It is in London that the famous episode of her dance in the Turkish dress occurs—a dance that excites the King. She amasses a great deal of money, but is beginning now to lose her looks. She takes up with a Lord, who in his advanced age has "capricious Humours," but he finally sickens her and she gets rid of him. At fifty-odd years of age, she sums up her adventures in these words:

I may venture to say, that no Woman ever liv'd a Life like me, of six and twenty Years of Wickedness, without the least Signals of Remorse [...] I had so long habituated myself to a Life of Vice, that really it appear'd to be no Vice to me ...

Now she thinks of the five children she had to leave years before. She does what she can for them and re-encounters her Dutch merchant. In his sharing of their wealth together she sees proof of mutual trust. But Susan, her crazed daughter, reappears, craving her mother, who cannot own her as her daughter without destroying her relationship with her husband, and Amy, thinking to please Roxana, murders Susan. The novel

concludes by declaring that "the Blast of Heaven seem'd to follow the Injury done the poor Girl, by us both," but, as in *Moll Flanders*, the moralistic pretensions of the novelist seem betrayed by his power to portray human experience.

### Biography

Born in 1660 in London, son of a tradesman. Attended school of Rev. James Fisher and then Rev. Charles Morton's Dissenting Academy. In 1683, a London hosiery merchant. Married in 1683. 1685 took part in Monmouth's rebellion. Trade and travel the next seven years; in 1688 joined the march of William of Orange on London. Bankruptcy in 1692. 1697: *Essay on Projects*. 1697–1701: political agent for William III. 1703: made to stand in pillory for *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*. 1703–1714: secret agent for government. 1719: *Robinson Crusoe*. 1722: *Moll Flanders*, *Colonel Jack*, 1724: *Roxana*, 1727: *Conjugal Lewdness*. Died in London, April 1731.

GERALD J. BUTLER

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## DEFORGES, RÉGINE

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1935–

French writer and publisher

While Deforges's own writing, located in the popular rather than the intellectual zone of the cultural spectrum, has not been accorded the serious critical attention increasingly given to other women writers of erotic fiction, she has nonetheless played an important role in various aspects of French cultural life in the second half of the twentieth century. She has been active in publishing, the cinema, and in writing. She played a significant part in the battles against literary censorship during the 1960s and 1970s in her capacity as publisher of erotic literature. She has written novels, both historical and loosely autobiographical, and erotic short stories as well as interviews and children's literature. As a writer she has made her own contribution to the growing body of erotic works written by women in French in the latter part of the century, helping to dispel the notion that erotic writing is predominantly male-authored. One of the books she read on a trip to Senegal in the late 1950s was Pauline Réage's novel *Story of O*. This work and its author were to have a particular influence on Deforges's developing career. Pauvert, who had originally published *Story of O*, and who had helped keep secret the identity of its author, arranged for Deforges to meet Réage for a series of interviews which were published as *O m'a dit: entretiens avec Pauline Réage* in 1975. The encounter with Réage was a very positive one for Deforges, who found that she had much in common with her interviewee, and their discussion proved vital in encouraging Deforges to begin writing herself.

Her earliest works were fictionalized autobiography, not erotic works in themselves, in the sense of works where erotic encounters drive forward the narrative. They were, however, works where sensuality and female pleasure play a significant role in character development. *Le Cahier volé* (1978) [*The Stolen Notebook*] is the work where these themes are most in the forefront.

The novel recounts the author's close physical relationship with a school friend, a relationship which in real life had led to her exclusion from school. There is a textual ambivalence about Deforges's presentation of lesbian sexuality which reflects a similar ambivalence in real life, for while her erotic encounters with the fictional Mélie are lovingly and sensually detailed, they are also explicitly identified by the narrator as a preparation for a more authentic male–female encounter.

Deforges has produced a range of other novels, mainly historical narratives, which foreground sensual female characters, but which are not erotic narratives. *La bicyclette bleue* [*The Blue Bicycle*] series is a case in point, tracing the central female character Léa Delmas, and her turbulent relationship with lover François Tavernier, through various key moments of France's recent historical past. Léa's exuberant sensuality finds expression not just in her enjoyment of sex, but also in her appreciation of food, nature, and the land.

While Deforges's novels invariably find a place for the celebration of female sensuality, it is in her short stories that she has concentrated exclusively on the exploration of female erotic experience. These works include three collections of short stories: *Contes pervers* [*Perverse Tales*] (1980), *Lola et quelques autres* [*Lola and Friends*] (1983), *Rencontres ferroviaires* [*Railway Encounters*] (1999) and *L'Orage, roman* [*The Storm, A Novel*] (1996), a work which, given its brevity, has more in common with Deforges's short stories than with her other novels, all of which are of substantial length.

*Contes pervers* and *L'Orage* contain the more transgressive subject matter, while *Lola et quelques autres* and *Rencontres ferroviaires* are more self-conscious, organized around themes and places. Unlike Deforges's other works, however, the focus of all four is female erotic experience. *Lola et quelques autres* contains a sequence of 13 stories, each of which takes its title from the name of its central character, in each case a

woman whose name begins with the letter L. Each central character is identified with a particular area of Paris, described in the author's preface as 'la ville-femelle par excellence.' The stories recount sexual encounters in various parts of the city, in churches, outdoors, in libraries, featuring women old and young exploring and redefining the limits of their sexual experience, whether through multiple partners, encounters with strangers, female domination, or even the recognition that those deemed by polite society to be beyond the sexual pale, such as transvestites and older women, also have their right to erotic experience. *Rencontres ferroviaires* has a thematic link in that the stories are inspired by trains, stations, and railway journeys. Each of the six stories has in its title the name of a Paris mainline railway station. These stories are more self-conscious, with the author intervening to recount her own memories of trains, stations, even quoting at length from a story told elsewhere to provide a context for another set of erotic encounters, for the most part between unidentified strangers. The periodic use of the first person pronoun suggests, as does more explicitly some of the text, that the author has made use either of real events or of her own fantasies in the writing of the stories.

*Contes pervers*, as its title suggests, makes greater use of transgressive material, notably in its depiction of female characters who experience sexual pleasure in situations of submission, abjection, and violence, though in the penultimate story of the collection, the violence is experienced as an unwelcome form of aggression for its victims, a woman and her transvestite lover. *L'Orage, roman* recounts the grief of a young woman recently widowed, and who subjects herself to a sadomasochistic episode with the local village idiot, his father, brother, and dog, in order to fulfil a fantasy suggested by her dead spouse, a fantasy she had rejected when he was alive. The pain and abjection she suffers are depicted as a measure of her love for her husband, an offering to him, and in narrative terms act as the prelude to her suicide which will enable her to rejoin him in death.

Deforges poses some awkward questions, particularly for the female reader, by her tendency to cast women in submissive roles, by her depictions of sexual violence directed against women and her ambivalent attitude to lesbianism. There is little sense of a challenge to

patriarchal values in her work. On the other hand, there is a more generous and liberating side to her erotic writing in its exploration of the variety and empowering nature of female erotic experience.

### Biography

Born in Montmorillon, in the Poitou region of France on 15 August 1935. Excluded from school at the age of 15, after a complaint about her close relationship with another girl, her formal education was terminated early. Soon after, the family followed the father to Africa, where he was working in Guinea. Here, in the absence of a local *lycée* where she could continue her disrupted education, Deforges began work. She returned to France the following year and married her first husband Pierre Spengler in 1953, a marriage which was to last until 1964. She had a son by him, a daughter by Jean-Jacques Pauvert, and another daughter by her second husband Pierre Wiazemsky. In 1958, her long association with the world of publishing began when she started work in a bookshop. Through her work she met and began a long relationship with Jean-Jacques Pauvert the publisher. In 1965, they opened a bookshop together in which she had responsibility for the erotic books section. In 1968, she opened her own publishing house, L'Or du temps, which specialized in the publication of erotic literature. Deforges paid a high price for her interest in erotic literature, suffering regular legal actions brought against her as editor. Eventually, L'Or du temps went into liquidation in 1972. She began writing in the mid-1970s and continues to do so today. She is a member of the jury of the Prix Fémina.

ANGELA KIMYONGÜR

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## DEKOBRA, MAURICE

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1885–1973

French popular novelist, travel writer, journalist

The name of Maurice Dekobra (1885–1973), derived from the 'deux cobras' that an African clairvoyant had used to read the Frenchman's destiny, was synonymous during his lifetime with globetrotting polyglot, ladies' man, and bestselling author. The most famous and successful of France's populist writers between the World Wars, Dekobra left an œuvre of around one hundred works. These consist mostly of novels, but also film scripts, plays, short stories, essays, and poetry, as well as translations (e.g., Defoe, Jack London), prefaces, anthologies, three autobiographies (including one in English) and countless newspaper articles. The pervasive mood of Dekobra's creative writing is erotic. His poetry—*Luxures* (1924) and pseudonymous erotica identified by Jean-Jacques Pauvert—mimics Symbolist decadence in its drug-addled suicidal spleen and seedy sexual underworld. His screenplays include adaptations of his own novels, as well as *The Siren of the Tropics*, written for Josephine Baker, the African-American cabaret celebrity and exotic sexual icon. It is in Dekobra's prose, however, that his erotic talent is fully developed, in a neo-Romantic style of

exclamation marks, ellipses, literary ruminations, and extended punning imagery taken from popular science, philosophy, and history, as well as geometry:

'Woman is an obtuse angle that often changes its bisector.' (...) How many well-brought-up young women have we surprised in the complicitous penumbra of discreet boudoirs, who, for lack of a bisector, were studying the virtues of the isosceles triangle? (*Tu seras courtisane*, p. 26)

Dekobra's eroticism has two principal expressions. Bawdiness is usually reserved for humorous tales, such as *La Vénus à roulettes* (1925), played out by local laborers, prostitutes, petty thieves, and the odd foreigner in Paris bars and bedrooms. A more problematic version is found in his international works, especially the series of five exotic romances subtitled 'cosmopolitan novels' (1924–1928), which specialize in evasionism and a kind of primer of the planet's people and politics. *La Madone des sleepings* (1925), France's first bestseller and the epitome of Dekobra's œuvre, made him a contender for most-read French novelist worldwide. It also introduced his most notorious characters: Lady Diana Wynham, a beautiful wealthy widow, resolutely sexually active; and Irina Mouravieff, a sadistic Bolshevik fanatic.

### Professional Acumen

As might be expected from a first-rate journalist, Dekobra was extremely skilled at exploiting contemporary phenomena, including the dramatic increase in female readership—at whom the publicity for his novels was exclusively aimed. A creator of memorable heroines, he was considered an expert on women, both as a gender and in their national differences. This was much utilized in his travel writings—where it supplied erotic thrills clandestinely, as pseudo-sociology and -ethnography—and in such works as *Le Geste de Phryné*, a collection of short stories divided into romances Scandinavian, Argentinean, Egyptian, etc. Dekobra also took advantage of fashionable settings: the bohemian gatherings of Montmartre, the frivolous and louche proto-Jet Set that was evolving from Europe's crumbling aristocracies and included international artists, scientists, diplomats, and American *nouveaux riches*. It is these men and women of the world who people his major novels, which allows him to recycle the literary tradition of *erotica per exotica*—mobile white man meets foreign woman in exotic location, sexual frisson ensues—in the context of contemporary socio-political upheavals. French literary exoticism, in sharp decline by the 1910s, was being revived by both the post-war publishing boom and the public's renewed fixation with all things foreign: mass tourism was establishing itself; reportage, particularly about the empire, was at its height; and cultural diversity at home was increasing because of the migrations of soldiers and refugees during and after the First World War. Dekobra responded with characters from and plots set in America, Europe, the Middle and Far East, and Africa, drawing on his own solo travels for documentation.

### The Patriotism of Sex

There is, however, tension in Dekobra's exotic eroticism. The foreign heroine, while nominally independent both financially and emotionally, requires the (normally French) hero's help with various existential crises. This gives rise to sustained chemistry, but while Dekobra's heroines have largely jettisoned moral conventions, social considerations still intervene: the sudden restraints imposed by revolutions or economic downturns, his heroes' deliberate anachronistic

chivalry. The resulting non-consummation causes frustration. It also permits regular cliff-hangers and discharges of libertine conversation.

Dekobra's raciness also depends on a backdrop of political violence and his version of psychoanalysis, a novelty in 1920s' France. His Parisian laborer workers treat sex as enjoyable but unremarkable, the members of his Smart Set as an emblem of the libertarian freedoms they blithely enjoy. Dekobra's Bolshevik characters, on the other hand, showcase their atavistic aggression by using sex as a commodity for barter and instrument of domination: lethal Irina Mouravieff is a pretty dominatrix, the 'Marquise de Sade of Red Russia'. Psychoanalysis is similarly associated with sexual control rather than therapy, resulting in a "bewitchment" akin to hypnotism or magnetism. In *Flammes de velours*, the sinister Dr Schomberg trains women in being *femmes fatales* at his hypnotic command. More light-heartedly, Lady Diana's analysis with Professor Siegfried Taurig consists of dream interpretation, sexual-history rehash, and an X-ray machine for 'the spectral analysis of your reactions during orgasm'. This orgasmometer reveals the patient's unconscious and allows Dekobra to treat sex in his habitually titillating manner, conceptually explicit and yet physically coy: the climax is brought about by a simple kiss.

That the two grand theories of communism and psychoanalysis are represented as perverse pansexualisms in their joylessness, functionalism, and stark gender disequilibrium has two implications. Dekobra polices the borders of the French psyche against the invasion of foreign carnal cultures and, by juxtaposition, promotes the French sexual tradition as the uncomplicated unpoliticized norm: male chivalry and "healthy" female willingness (especially from the widows, actresses, and 'spasm merchants' who constitute most of his minor characters). Many heroines, by contrast, are denied real happiness because of their emasculating sexual potency and "neurotic" promiscuity. Thrilling, but ultimately deniable, desires of total female emancipation and sexual self-control are thus safely acted out, and moralistically rejected, on behalf of Dekobra's women readers—from whom he received over 75,000 items of fan mail.

Under the banner of an urban(e) and patriotic erotic appeal, Dekobra skillfully combined exotic "perversions," traditional gender politics,

current-affairs sensationalism, and demographic targeting to make his mark.

### Biography

Born Ernest Maurice Tessier in Paris, 26 May 1885. Educated at Collège Rollin, Paris, 1895–1902. Moved to Germany 1902: factory work, French lessons, occasional Berlin correspondent for small French newspapers (arts criticism, society pages). From 1905 freelance London correspondent. Military service in Orléans, 1906–1908. From 1908 increasingly successful Paris journalist under new legal name of Maurice Dekobra, specializing in foreign reportage. Interpreter for Indian, British, and American Armies in First World War. As fulltime writer, traveled almost continuously in Europe, Africa, Middle East, 1921–1928; on Indian subcontinent, 1929; in United States and Far East, 1930–1934. Resided in New York and Hollywood, 1939–1946. Died of cardiac arrest in Paris, 2 June 1973.

TOM GENRICH

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## DELANY, SAMUEL R.

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1942–

American Novelist and Critic

Samuel R. Delany is a protean talent with a wide readership. Impatient with the traditional tropes of the science-fiction genre, his S-F novels are

highly stylized, self-reflexive romances, stories that often seem constructed from fragments of colored glass. He has been equally impatient with the conventions of erotic writing. He finished *The Tides of Lust* in 1968, but it wasn't until its republication as *Equinox* in 1994 that

critics and readers could see the true intentions of the work. There is an urgency to *Equinox* not found in Delany's speculative fiction. In it he has devils to exorcise, and means to persuade as of his intellectual seriousness. All the characters in *Equinox* seem but different aspects of one character, the author: the African-American Captain, on whose boat, *The Scorpion*, travel two children, Kirsten and Gunner, brought to India by the Captain for sexual service; an artist, Proctor; Catherine, a countess, mysterious, fatal; and Robby, a drifter who becomes the catalyst for the climactic scene of the novel.

The story is not complicated, although Delany's language is. It is the episodic narrative of a sexual voyage given added significance by Delany's technique of casting flashbacks in the form of reminiscences supposedly written by his characters. Incest, rape, masturbation, urolagnia, sodomy, necrophilia—every variety of sexual appetite is delineated with a corrosive savagery seldom seen in erotic writing. The role of the artist is a major theme. Delany is aware that he is the poet making myth out of his fantasies, but the sum of this artifice is a powerful novel in which sexual categories are rendered meaningless.

*Hogg* is a tour de force, a sacred monster. It stands almost alone in contemporary erotic writing, on a top shelf between Sade and Bataille, well out of the reach of even the most tolerant reader of sexual material. Written in 1969, finished days before the Stonewall riots, revised during the period when he was writing *Dahlgren*, *Hogg* resisted publication until 1995. It is the most politically incorrect, no holds barred, no sacred cow left unslaughtered, deliberately evil narrative most readers will ever encounter. Narrated by a mute eleven-year-old boy, it is a non-stop farrago of the forbidden, the cloacal, the assaultive, and transgressive. Utterly without redeeming social value, most would say, it is without question a literary masterpiece, a triumph of style over the violence of its content; so much so that it becomes what some critics have called "anti-pornography."

The first half of *Hogg* places us in Hell, a cellar with four rapists: the title character is a memorable beast, a sadistic misogynist, lord of this underworld articulate enough to voice some basic truths about racism, sexism, and violence. Hogg is Destruction embodied, just as the nameless boy narrator is Submission.

The situation only gets worse, as child molestation, murders, and rapes follow. The author, a black homosexual, expresses in Hogg a raging, transgressive hostility toward modern liberal shibboleths while at the same time analyzing sexism and racism with the ferocity of a brilliant child burning ants with a magnifying glass. *Hogg* is for the few and the select. (A year before her untimely death, the novelist Kathy Acker was most looking forward to reading *Hogg*).

First published in 1994, *The Mad Man* was reissued in 2002 in a heavily revised version. It is once again deliberately provocative in its celebration of promiscuous gay sex in the age of AIDS. Delany's protagonist is a graduate student named John Marr who is doing his thesis on Timothy Hasler, a philosopher murdered at a gay sex club years before. Marr becomes Hasler's biographer, and moves into his old building. As he uncovers Hasler's life, Marr becomes involved erotically with homeless men in his neighborhood. Two parallel story lines rife with sexual excess converge in a sprawling novel that is both mystery and love story. While the sexuality depicted in *The Mad Man* is as over the top as that in *Hogg*, here Delany's vision is more positive but equally as radical: he stands up for pleasure. Despite all the risky, raunchy sex he has, John Marr does not get AIDS.

Set in the time of the Emperor Hadrian, *Phallos* (2004) is a homoerotic novella which asks the question: How should gay men go about integrating pleasure with the ordinary vicissitudes of life? It is a tale within a tale, erudite and witty.

Delany's Speculative Fiction series *Return to Neveryon*, has the distinction of being the first novel from a major US publisher to deal with AIDS in the gay and straight communities.

In his erotic writing, Delany boldly asserts the primacy of pleasure. He demonstrates the possibilities for subversion in the genre.

## Biography

Born Samuel Ray Delany in New York City, 1942. Educated at The Dalton School and the Bronx High School of Science. Attended City College of New York, 1960, 1962–1963. Ace Books published his first novel of speculative fiction, *The Jewels of Aptom*, in 1962. His first erotic novel, *The Tides of Lust*, was published by

*Lancer* in 1973. He is a prolific novelist and critic, and a major figure in the world of speculative fiction. He has held many distinguished academic posts, including appointments at SUNY Buffalo, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and Temple University. His best known S-F work is *Dahlgren*, 1975. His most important erotic novel arguably is, *Hogg*, 1995.

Many volumes of criticism have been devoted to his work.

MICHAEL PERKINS

#### Selected Works

*Equinox*. 1994.

*Hogg*. 1995.

*Phallos*. 2004.

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## DELEUZE, GILLES AND FÉLIX GUATTARI

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Deleuze, Gilles 1925–1995

Guattari, Félix 1930–1992

French philosopher and French analyst/social theorist

Deleuze and Guattari are not concerned with specific meanings or representations in literature; instead, they seek to engage with a text's potential for invention and transformation, what they refer to as its forces of "becoming" (*What is Philosophy?*). Literature for Deleuze and Guattari is vital when it plays with indirect discourse and infinitives, that is, subjectless or collective modes of speech which reveal the incorporeal lines of difference which enable such speech to take place and allow for the conception and ongoing transformation of different "minor" worlds (as opposed to the representation of fixed—"majoritarian"—identities or notions of the world). Theirs is an interest in literature as an assemblage of styles producing affects and precepts, intensities in language—impersonal rhythms and tones—which disclose and repeat the untimely power of difference to transform, disrupt, and create, to become other.

In much of their collaborative writing, Deleuze and Guattari focus on the issue of desire as the energy driving production and becoming. They are drawn to the philosophical potentialities of literary negotiations with the dynamics of desire, and so, as is often the case, to the erotic

dimension of literary becomings. A very brief account of their construct of desire is necessary here.

For Deleuze and Guattari, the State constitutes a territoriality whose laws block the free flows of desire produced by bodies and the connections between them—the fragmented aggregates they term "desiring-machines"—the source of the libidinal energy behind all production. The State territoriality functions by assimilating deterritorialized desire-flows—desire as originally produced by said desiring-machines—into axiomatic codes which function in its service. Ironically, the State—the capitalist state in particular—liberates flows of desiring-production in the course of its expansion, but only with a view to the eventual re-inscription—reterritorialization—of such flows. For example, as "permissible" sexualities diversify, psychoanalytic codes multiply to reterritorialize all desiring-production around the Oedipal model in order to bind the reproductive family unit, ensuring State perpetuation. However, the reterritorialization process can never be entirely effective and this means that there is some room for deviation, for lines of change to unfold. For Deleuze and Guattari, great art, and in particular great literature, deterritorializes flows of desire—liberates life—into a state of becoming. So-called "Deleuzian" literature, therefore, deconstructs established boundaries



by repeatedly scrambling—rendering inassimilable—the notion of a “majoritarian” meaning or text, thereby causing an “overflow or rupture [of] the sign’s conditions of identity, and [...] books within ‘the book’ to flow and to disintegrate, entering into multiple configurations” (*Anti-Oedipus*, 243).

Kafka is celebrated by Deleuze and Guattari for translating everything—bureaucracy, politics, military forces—into assemblages of desire which flow between construction and dismantling. The figuration and collapse of planes of transcendence—law, reason, truth, being—into this immanence of desire makes Kafka’s work erotic. Thus in *The Trial*: “where one believed there was the law, there is in fact desire and desire alone. Justice is desire and not law. [...] The whole of *The Trial* is overrun by a polyvocality of desire that gives it its erotic force” (*Kafka*, 49). The text—its transactions through fragments and segments—is the process of desire itself: “K realizes that he should not let himself be represented [...] that no one should come between him and his desire. He will find justice only by moving, by going from room to room, by following his desire” (*Kafka*, 50). According to Deleuze and Guattari, the dynamics of territorialization and deterritorialization of desire within its field of immanence in Kafka may also be seen to impel narratives such as Woolf’s *The Waves*, where they enable “all kinds of becomings between ages, sexes, elements” (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 252), and Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*, where in relation to the beloved, they open up different worlds of affects and intensities, freeing multiple lines of becoming-other. Desire in these works proliferates endlessly, executing a transformational repetition of the creative process which constructs its plane of immanence. This delicate balance between repetition and transformation makes of such literary works erotic heterocosms not unlike those forged by the literature of courtly love or engineered by Sacher-Masoch in his narratives of suspended suffering and postponed gratification.

In the 1967 essay ‘Coldness and Cruelty,’ which prefaced the republication of Sacher-Masoch’s novel *Venus in Furs* (1870) in the volume *Masochism*, Deleuze claims that ‘sodomasochism’ is an ill-considered composite of two ‘perversions’—given that a masochist’s pleasure would cancel out the sadistic ecstasy of victimization. Deleuze maintains that each of these ‘perversions’ must

be examined individually in relation to the formal literary values of Sade’s and Sacher-Masoch’s writing, respectively. Sadean works direct and proselytize; their accelerating descriptions constitute an over-investment in the law (the father or superego) whose demonstrative function seeks to create a delirious world of violence and excess. Sade uses rational exposition to go beyond reason itself, and this results in excess stimulation which may be described as erotic (‘Coldness and Cruelty’, 37). Sacher-Masoch, in contrast, posits the pre-Oedipal mother and the possibility of rebirth as ideals: the masochist desires plenitude and a return to uterine oblivion (non-existence), a paradox which leads to the disavowal of reality and a postponement of pleasure. The masochist proceeds by drawing up contracts which enslave the (maternal) punisher and undermine the (paternal) law: castigation becomes the guarantee of pleasure, and the on-going anticipation of punishment and satisfaction suspends reality. The masochist thus fabricates a ‘frozen’ world of fantasy, an erotic heterocosm. Sacher-Masoch produces one such world of fixated fantasy through narratives which only progress via the restricted movement of differences generated by repetition, leaving the reader with “a strange and oppressive atmosphere, like a sickly perfume” (‘Coldness and Cruelty’, 34). Such erotic literary heterocosms are seen by Deleuze and Guattari as ‘perverse’ doubles of our mundane world which disrupt reality to enable “all of those becomings that are not produced only *in art*, and all of those active escapes that do not consist in fleeing *into art*” (*A Thousand Plateaus*, 187). In other words, these erotic heterocosms are vital because they propagate the desire to transform and innovate.

### Biography

Deleuze is one of the most controversial philosophers of post-war France. His first works are revolutionary studies of major figures in the history of philosophy. He then went on to assemble his views on the philosophy of difference in two key volumes, *Difference and Repetition* (1968) and *The Logic of Sense* (1969). During this period Deleuze also wrote ‘Coldness and Cruelty’ (1967), an extended essay on the sexualizing effects of the play between difference and repetition in the writing of Leopold von Sacher-Masoch. Here Deleuze argues for the dissociation of masochism from sadism, which he

maintains are structurally and philosophically incompatible. Following this, he began collaborating with Guattari, an analyst in the experimental La Borde clinic. Together they launched an infamous attack on Freud and Marx in the two-part study *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*—comprised of *Anti-Oedipus* (1972) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980). Their works aim to undo received notions of the subject, and explore the machinations of desire as a force which both produces and devastates social structure. Discussion in these tomes is often conducted in relation to literature, which they deem vital in the philosophical matter of inventing concepts.

KARL POSSO

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## DELICADO, FRANCISCO

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c. 1480–c. 1535  
Spanish writer

### *Retrato de La Lozana Andaluza*

*La Lozana Andaluza* (1528), a proto-novel in dialogue, is the principal work for which Francisco Delicado, an obscure Spanish vicar, is known. The picaresque tale of a lusty Spanish prostitute who traverses the stewpots of Rome is certainly of great historical and linguistic value. But the work is mostly known for its obscenity, which has been variously interpreted as a device

for censuring the libertinism of early sixteenth-century Rome, or as a carnivalesque and bawdy end in itself.

As far as the work's author is concerned, one of the few biographical bits of information we have is that Delicado himself suffered from venereal disease for twenty-three years before writing his novel (and wrote two medical treatises on it in 1525, "On Consoling the Infirm" and "On the Use of the West Indies' Wood"). The disease was probably incurred from his own trafficking with courtesans. Was *Lozana* perhaps intended to be a sort of literary revenge and cautionary tale? The author presents himself

in the text as a sort of meta-character, one who interjects his own opinion presumably to justify Lozana's conduct. Are his seemingly apologetic comments actually sarcastic? The biographical evidence is contradictory. Delicado lived much of his adult life in Rome, possibly because he was driven out of Spain as a Jew after the Expulsion Edict of 1492. Thus, despite his venereal complaint, perhaps he felt genuine sympathy for his orphaned and sexually marginalized character because he himself knew exile.

*La Lozana Andaluza* is the story of a beautiful young Spaniard who is a "New Christian" (i.e., a Jewish convert). She inhabits a number of Mediterranean cities as the mistress of a variety of men after the death of her parents. Her birth name is Aldonza, but she changes it to "Lozana," which means *fresh* or *blooming*, also translated in English renderings as "lusty" or "exuberant." Her wanderings take her to Rome, where a Neapolitan boy named Rampín shows her the Eternal City's wonders. Lozana sets herself up as a courtesan shortly thereafter, with Rampín as her pimp and manservant. Predictably, she has sexual encounters with a number of men, whom she deceives and fleeces in various clever ways. When the author makes his "cameo" appearances as a character, she debates with him and gives him amorous advice. He ends up reluctantly concurring with her that in order to survive in this world one must resort to deception (although he takes her to task for doing so). Her picaresque and bawdy adventures continue as her lover Rampín spends a brief stint in jail and falls into a privy. Lozana gradually recognizes the necessarily precarious nature of life as a whore, and resorts to selling cosmetics, possibly because she, the most astute and pragmatic of women, has nevertheless found herself to be tricked and seduced by two swindlers. After turning a fine profit in the beauty business, she decides that she has seen the world and discovered, like Apuleius, that "all is vanity." At the story's end, she retires to the island of Lípari with her ill-gotten gains.

The character of the "Lozana" is a difficult one to interpret. As Bruno Damiani notes, she is both trickster and philosopher. Is she a "female rogue" or gamine? A lover, a whore, or a convert (given that Delicado's family was probably of Jewish origin, "convert" has a double meaning)? A syphilis-ridden wench who epitomizes the rotteness and moral corruption of Rome, and/or

of the age of the Hapsburg monarch Charles V? A scheming, *Corbacho*-style witch seeking to lure and entrap men, or the prototype of the self-willed, enterprising heroine? The message the reader derives from this book of "sketches" is largely based on one's visceral reaction to the protagonist, upon which hinges perceptions of authorial irony and intent.

If one reads the antiheroine as a razor-tongued, amoral, greedy *puta* who is supposed to repel and caution, then it is easy to agree with Gómez de la Serna that "the moral base of this book is principally to exhibit prostitutes stripped of their symbolic clothing, adding to [this laying bare], all the material and moral dangers that lie in wait for all who have dealings with them" (translation mine). However, if one interprets the protagonist only as a sort of Rabelaisian free spirit, excused from any sense of morality, corruption, or guilt, one can tip the balance too far the other way and decide with Wardropper that "Lozana is what she is because nature has generously endowed her [with charm and beauty], and because there are no scruples of any type that blunt the impulses of this child of Nature" (translation mine). In short, should the modern reader celebrate or condemn Lozana for her uninhibited sexual libertinism and philosophy of free love?

Although some nineteenth-century critics claimed that Delicado was unlearned, the novel is replete with classical references. Delicado compares Lozana to Demosthenes when praising her silver tongue. The Dedication makes reference to the Roman historical chronicler Juvenal, whose satirical sketches of classical Roman life served as a model for Delicado. Other classical influences on the author were Persius, Cicero, Apuleius, Seneca, and Aristotle (see Damiani). Significant too for Delicado were the Bible, medieval Spanish literature, and contemporary folklore, with which he was clearly familiar (the tale includes over 150 axioms of a homespun flavor which would have done Sancho Panza proud). *Lozana's* dialogue, structure, and subject matter also echo those of the great Spanish novel known to us as *La Celestina*—which presents a realistic portrait (a generation before *Lozana's* publication) of what Lozana might have been like in old age had she not abandoned her whorish ways.

Part diary, part travelogue, part didactic and moralizing essay, *La Lozana Andaluza* is now

renowned as much for its brilliant language, sensual humor, folk aphorisms, and vivid place-descriptions as for its notorious “vulgarity.” Whether it is truly a satire on the perils of immoral sexuality, or a celebration of an eloquent and skilful survivor, is up to the reader. That it is an artistic and realistic “memorandum” of the realities of Renaissance Rome, and a vitally important precursor to the picaresque novel genre, is indisputable.

### Biography

Little is known about Francisco Delicado. He was born in Cordoba, Spain around 1480. His favorable portrait of Jews has led to speculation that he was himself a convert from Judaism. He lived most of his life in Rome, possibly having been expelled from Spain in 1492 along with other Jews and Muslims. After the sack of Rome, he went to Venice where he wrote *Retrato de La Lozana Andaluza*. He is known to have suffered from syphilis and possibly died from its effects around 1535.

C.A. PRETTIMAN

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## DELTEIL, JOSEPH

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1894–1978

French novelist and poet

### *Choléra*

This Joseph Delteil novel is marked by traditional structure, but its style is perfectly surrealist: this split gives rise to the work’s charm and interest.

The plot is conventional though it inverts the traditional pattern: a man is the object of female desire. The narrator (the one who says ‘I’ and whose autobiography opens the story) meets three innocent girls, and in turn becomes each one’s lover. When they discover his trickery, the three friends decide to join a convent (“*none of us will have him!*”). Each of them writes to him however, in secret, the hope of possessing him. But each reunion is marked by a tragedy leading

to the death of the beloved woman, and at the end of the novel, the rueful narrator can only affirm his misfortune: "Everything is over, er, er. Over."

The tale wouldn't be at all captivating if it weren't told in such a curious fashion. The young girls have foreign names (Choléra, Corne, and Alice), and troubling ways ("three pubescent virgin girls' games, chaste and limitless games, where six legs and thirty fingers relentlessly seek the truth"). The narrator claims to be the orphan son of a "great duke" and a "moujik," abandoned on the banks of the Marne, in Charentonneau. The Pampelune convent the three girls join is a product of pure imagination: all that matters is the burning road leading to it. The three friends perched on the back of a jackass, ride along this road ("there are mysterious connections between the donkey's body and the young girls' genitals"). It is the scene of a true epic which sees "all of nature become a jackass (or rather a jenny)," and the maids are followed by an amorous priest and a country policeman. Traveled by a narrator devoured by desire, the road leads to the most fanciful destinations and seems to cross the entire planet ("Now he was speaking out loud, and on the surface of the planet, millions of Hindus, Canadians, fellas and Cafras were listening to him, bare headed...").

The tale's apparent eroticism is that of surrealism: equally naïve and ribald, "innocent" though overtly scatological. It is, in fact, woven with a set of Rabelaisian images that are both joyful and healthy. There is no pornography ("sex, to my liking, should be a nocturnal instrument," says the narrator at one point), and love scenes are most often reduced to a simple suggestion ("Her left breast, with the movement of each breath, lifted a camellia: this made seventy-one camellias a minute. How could I dare love her, like everyone, on a sofa?")

The fact remains that the profound sensuality of Delteil's book comes, for the most part, from the passion it shows for writing: this is what establishes it as a reference work for the first half of the twentieth century. The reader will note that the narrator's most intense orgasms come when he is alone, during a truly pantheistic communion with nature, which needs no human presence: "I'm thirsty. I remove my jacket and toss it into a field. In shirt sleeves, I walk across a land of honey and genitals. With each step, my

feet find carnal pleasure. [...] I feel the action of the muscles in my legs, the spasm of oxygen enjoying my lungs. The earth's exhilaration settles into my being...." This walk into the very heart of nature is a metaphor for the act of writing; the book then finds its justification in the constant questioning of what constitutes it and qualifies it as an object of desire, and a garden of pleasures. Thus the work is woven with insistent allusions to masters of literature, constituting a veritable metatext, the two major references pointing not only to Francis Jammes ("The complete poet: beard, books and life [...] Rimbaud's own brother"), but also and perhaps especially to Paul Valéry.

One of the esthetic keys to the book is given at the conclusion of the work, when Corne's body, in a faint, reminds her lover of the "sumptuous sonnet," 'La Dormeuse' (1922). Delteil's story is interrupted by the quotation, giving way to the poet from Sete's great lesson: poetry is a pure matter of "forms." Delteil restates this lesson in a less than academic way: "Oh syntaxe, oh synthèse, apogée, I wish I were a flaming heresiarch so I could violate you in a moonless city, on a night in the midst of an epidemic!"

### Biography

Son of a modest family from the Cathare region, Joseph Delteil occupies a unique place in modern French literature. Associated early on with the surrealists (Jacob, Souplault, Aragon), his first two novels, *Sur le Fleuve Amour* (1922) and *Choléra* (1923) are wildly praised by André Breton, who makes him Radiguet's (the author of *Le Diable au Corps*) (1923) rival. But the publication of his *Jeanne d'Arc* (1925), followed by his scenario for Dreyer's film (*La Passion de Jeanne d'Arc*, 1928), and praise from Chagall and Claudel lead to his exclusion from the surrealist group.

Seriously ill from 1931 on, he definitively leaves Paris and begins to seriously question life ("I've reached an age when a bit of truth, a bit of humanity do a heart good"). He moves to la Tuilerie de Massane, near Montpellier, in 1937, to lead the life of a country writer with his American wife Catherine Dudley, creator of *La Revue Nègre*. La Tuilerie became a Mecca of "regional" culture, frequented by painters and poets, publishers and novelists, including his faithful and capricious friend, Henry Miller.

SERGE BOURJEA

**Editions**

*Choléra*. Editions du Sagittaire, chez Simon KRA, “collection de la revue européenne” (Philippe Soupault, dr.), Paris, 1923.

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## DENG XIXIAN

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d. after 1594

Chinese sexual alchemy writer

***Explanation of the Meaning of the Cultivation of Truth, by the Great Immortal of the Purple-gold Splendour***

The title, *Zijin guangyai da xian xiuzhen yanyi*, translated by Robert van Gulik, as above, is rendered somewhat differently by Douglas Wile: *Exposition of Cultivating the True Essence by the Great Immortal of Purple Gold Splendour*. The book is known in joint editions, together with another work of Deng Xixian, his comments on *The True Classic of the Complete Union, by All-assisting Lord Ch'un-yang*, under a common title *Baizhan bi sheng [Victory Assured in Every Battle]*. The Chinese text is copied in van Gulik's *Erotic Prints* from a late-nineteenth-century Japanese print, checked with a Chinese one dated 1598.

The term *yanyi* (amplifying the meaning) was, since the sixteenth century, a rather common denomination for popular amplification turning history into romance. We may wonder whether the original edition was not a late Ming commercial venture caring for a larger public at a time when prohibition of licentious books was becoming lax. Should it be read as a pleasant pastiche of the battle of love rather than a serious guide to immortality? It is not likely. Van Gulik is rather inclined to associate it with several other Taoist works of sexual alchemy which disappeared from the Taoist Canon when it was reprinted in 1444–1447. But why has this particular work survived?

Whatever the case, the preface, claiming a hazy ancestry, clearly states the double aim of

the author: how to beget children, male or female, how to gain health and long life. This latter quest is what is meant by “cultivation of Truth.” The twenty chapters follow each other in logical sequence, with due regard for explicit pedagogy.

The double aim calls for apparently contradictory precepts. In Chapter 10, the beginner in the practice leading to long life should strive to eliminate lustful thoughts, but the last chapter underlines that perfect begetting can only be performed when both partners are euphoric: “When having intercourse it is necessary that both be aroused to obtain any result.” Quite clear! The author is aware of the contradiction without solving it, for he pointed out at the very beginning of the same chapter: “Male and female by “absorbing” during their intercourse favour their longevity and lengthen their number of years, but ejaculating calm the womb and sow the grain.” A lapse of the male point of view more consistently observed elsewhere? It goes with odd-numbers: the five rejections and five avoidances of Chapter one, nine times nine gentle intromission of Chapter 15, where due sequence is recommended for “absorbing” and “tempering,” in order, when returning one's unshed semen, to “gain the most while injuring the least,” a care for the female partner, which sounds late rather than early Ming (1368–1644).

In Chapter 18, rejuvenation through a female “crucible” is compared to grafting an old tree: the ideal girl should be above fifteen and less than thirty. Underlined in Chapter 4, the ideal requirements for “true crucibles” are women who have not yet given birth, who are clean and pure, and who are without bad breath or bad odor. However sexual vampirism is not without risks when

man finds a truly lovable crucible. Chapter 11 deals briefly with the problem: when feeling about to ejaculate, quickly withdraw and apply the “locking” technique. According to van Gulik, the term means blocking the urethra with the fingers. For Douglas Wile, it implies the use of an age-old technique with the same result by contracting the sphincter without any help of the hand.

No doubt the author takes his task of explaining and listing recipes seriously. Chapter 13 entitled, “Great Pharmacopoeia of the Three Peaks,” goes into minutiae about absorbing feminine secretions. Van Gulik pointed out that the text is quoted verbatim or referred to in several different works (*Sexual Life*, p.283). But couldn’t it be the other way around?

Chapter 9, for example, about “Tempering the point and keeping it sharp” spares no details in explaining how to proceed in order to strengthen the male “jade stalk,” for “during intercourse, if the male has big and long one, he will fill up completely the female vagina and she will be easily aroused.” According to this handbook, massage, meditation, timing, and exercise could bring results without resorting to such a fantastical grafting as of a dog’s penis described in the novel of Li Yu, *The Carnal Prayer Mat*.

On the whole the tone of mild vampirism and considerate care for the “crucible” points to a later period, why not a synthesis of sexual lore and Taoist practice of the sixteenth century?

### Biography

Deng Xixian—Hoping for Sagehood—looks like a penname, Great Immortal of Purple-Gold Splendor being the title of Teng as disciple of Lû Dongbin, one of the eight immortals revered by Taoists. If we may ascribe to him the colophon referring to this and his other work, *True Classic of the Complete Union*, by All-assisting Lord Ch’un-yang, he was 95 in 1594, boasting of having had intercourse within sixty years with more than a hundred different women who bore him seventeen children.

ANDRÉ LÉVY

### Editions

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## DENGCAO HESHANG ZHUAN [THE CANDLEWICK MONK]

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There is little chance that this twelve-chapter-long erotic novel was the work of Gao Ming (who died in 1359), the Yuan dynasty (1279–1368) poet and playwright to whom it is generally attributed. Research on the pseudonyms which accompany it leads to other minor licentious works, but unfortunately to no attribution.

The banned-books list on which the novel appears for the first time nonetheless indicates that it circulated prior to 1810—and it did, indeed, survive proscription under various titles. It most likely dates back to the late Ming dynasty (1368–1644) or early Qing (1644–1911), and thus exemplifies the rich production of

erotic fiction written in the vernacular language of mid-seventeenth-century China. *The Candlewick Monk* [*Dengcao heshang zhuang*], however, differs from the bulk of erotic novels of that time in its unusual combination of torrid eroticism, humor, and fantasy, which together display the author's unbridled imagination.

Yet this little novel is actually based on an earlier source written in classical Chinese and featured in the *Youyang zazu* [*Miscellaneous Morsels from Youyang*], a collection of anecdotes and tales recorded by the famous literati Duan Chengshi (ca. 803–863). In that collection, a short text entitled "Liu Jizhong" involves a small witch who springs out of a lamp to sow discord in the mansion of a respectable official. The same plot is later found in the repertoire of public storytellers of the tenth and eleventh centuries, who used it as a narrative under the title "Denghua popo" [Auntie Candle Flame]. It can also be found in the late-Ming rewriting of the novel *Pingyao zhuang* [*Suppressing the Demon's Revolt*] by Feng Menglong (1574–1646).

Never afraid of being provocative, the author of *The Candlewick Monk* appropriates this plot and adapts it in the erotic style. No longer is a single she-demon the source of problems, but an entire family of demons: mother, son (the Candlewick Monk), and his sisters, four succubae of astounding beauty who take over the house of Mandarin Yang. Once ushered in, the cunning little Monk who has sprung out of a candle flame, starts fulfilling the sexual wishes of Lady Wang, Mandarin Yang's neglected wife. The Monk not only varies his size in order to explore all the interstices of the female anatomy, he also feeds on the vaginal secretions of his partners, to whom he brings previously unsuspected pleasures. In order to save him from her husband's wrath, Lady Wang feels compelled to entrust the Monk to the care of her sixteen-year-old maidservant Jade, who quickly develops a passion for him as well. One day, while taking advantage of Jade, Mandarin Yang discovers the little Monk nestling between her breasts and beats him to death. The mother-demon and her daughters intervene, bringing the little Monk back to life so he can resume his lustful activities, while one of his sisters engages Mr. Yang in a tide of carnal debauchery spiced up with feats of erotic magic. The following day, the six demons vanish after promising to return

and conclude the union of the Monk with Changgu, the fifteen-year-old daughter of the house. To guard against it, Yang and his wife rush their daughter into a pre-arranged marriage with a young libertine, himself also very partial to matters of sex. It is however a clone of the bride that the groom actually weds, much to the chagrin of the young virgin Changgu, who must remain a mere spectator to her husband's expertise in the *ars erotica*. When the hoax is uncovered, the bridegroom is removed and Mr. Yang takes his place. The ensuing lovemaking plunges Mandarin Yang into such confusion that he finds himself close to raping his own daughter. The real daughter leaves her home to live with her in-laws. Lady Wang seizes the opportunity to call on the little Monk, who reappears blessed with even more handsome features and a larger sexual appetite. After the newlyweds return, the Monk seduces the young Ms. Yang, causing the cuckold to repudiate his wife, who soon passes away for having copulated too much. During the funeral, Mr. Yang, the father of the deceased, dies, leaving behind a widow and a maidservant (whom, in the meantime, has given him a son) longing for lovers. The two women eventually get their claws on a strong-limbed bonze whose services they share. The bonze ends up marrying Lady Wang, as predicted by the Candlewick Monk, but only after Wang's pilgrimage to the city of Hangzhou, where she has affairs with other bonzes. On the eve of her reunion with her soon-to-be new husband, the little Candlewick Monk makes one last appearance and reveals that the purpose of his original intervention in the story was to punish Mandarin Yang for an iniquitous sentence he had passed while in office, thus proving that each felony committed in this world is invariably rewarded in kind.

The complexity of the plot merely serves as a pretext to broach a wide variety of sex scenes displaying as many permutations as possible. However coarse and lewd are the story's sexual and verbal excesses, the claim for a total liberation of women from the yoke of a hypocritical Confucian society nonetheless rescues the novel. This intention runs through the whole story and marks it in such a clear way that one is left wondering whether the author of this remarkable novel is not actually a woman.

That mischievous Monk whose size grows according to women's will could well be the



## DENON, VIVANT

fruit of a frustrated spouse's daydreaming. Moreover, isn't this "now-big-now-small" motif a striking metaphor for the male sex organ? In Chinese culture, the glans of the penis is indeed very often compared precisely to the clean-shaven head of a bonze.

If, by chance, this novel turned out not to have been written by a woman, it was nevertheless clearly intended to be *read* by women. As

such, it could, in short, be said to constitute some sort of literary dildo.

PIERRE KASER

Translated from the French by Victor Thibaut

### Edition

*Le Moine Mèche-de-lampe, roman érotique du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle.* Translated by Aloïs TATU. Arles : Editions Philippe Picquier, 1998.

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# DENON, VIVANT

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1747–1825

French diplomat, art historian, and writer

In addition to a career in the arts which put his name on one wing of the Louvre, Vivant Denon is best known for one twenty-page prose work. *No Tomorrow* [*Point de lendemain*], first published in 1777, captures with concision and panache the spirit of *libertinage* so central to eighteenth-century French sociability. The story of a one-night sexual adventure, it stages a moment severed from past and future, a moment with no tomorrow. Epitomizing the libertine view of pleasure as dialectic between social convention and unexpected opportunity, it foregrounds chance as opening up new temporalities of experience, memory, and writing.

One evening, while waiting for his mistress at the Opera and suspecting he has been stood up, the narrator of this first-person memoir written many years after the events described is asked by his mistress's good friend, Madame de T, if he has plans for the evening. Deciding to take his chances, he leaves the Opera with her for a late-night ride that takes them to a château on the banks of the Seine belonging to Madame de T's estranged husband. On arriving there, the narrator realizes he has been chosen to be Madame de T's "companion" for the first evening she will spend with the husband from whom she has been separated for eight years. A second surprise comes the next morning, at the end of the story, when they are joined by the Marquis, Madame

de T's current lover, whose status has been masked from the husband by the narrator's presence. His whole adventure, it turns out, was set up as a carefully constructed ruse to mislead the husband, to convince him, when the narrator returns to Paris that morning, that his wife has properly deferred to the spirit of their reconciliation.

But this is not how things worked out. With geography mirroring desire, the narrator's story is that of a movement from a public to a private space, from an open to a hidden and protected space. Madame de T and the narrator move from the public arena of the Paris Opera to a coach leaving the city, to a country château, to its garden, and to the grassy bank on which they exchange a kiss until Madame de T abruptly decides they must return to their separate rooms in the château. As they near the château, however, Madame de T changes her mind and leads the narrator down a darkened path toward a small pavillon for which Madame de T does not have the key—but which turns out to be open. This pavillon becomes a space beyond any plan establishing Madame de T as manipulator and the naïve young narrator as instrument. In the pavillon there reigns only the power of desire as a force born of chance to which both are equally subject. Carried beyond the categories of planner and duped, of active and passive, of taking and giving, of victory and defeat, they find themselves in a space where language's conventional oppositions hold no

sway: “If, on the one hand, we wished to give what had been taken, on the other we wished to receive what had been stolen; and both of us hastened to obtain a second victory confirming our having been conquered.”

This journey into desire’s uncharted realm then continues from the garden to the château’s most secret space: the hidden room Monsieur de T had built to fortify his languid sexuality at the time he and Madame were married. To enter this room is not so much to move from one point in space to another, but to step outside space, to lose all sense of continuity between here and there, between who I was and who I am, between past and present. A monument to desire, its indirect lighting and trompe l’oeil, its portico and temple consecrated to the goddess of love, compose the perfect replica of a classical grove complete with altar, chalice, garlands, grass underfoot, and the beckoning intimacy of a dark grotto. The room’s walls are mirrors onto which erotic images have been carefully painted. This trip from the Opera to the secret room abolishes carefully laid plans and their deference to society’s insistence on decorum and consequences. The mirrored room offers no breach through which society’s objectifying gaze might watch and judge those who enter it. At liberty to continue or abolish their pure present of chance and the unexpected, the narrator and Madame de T discover there a pleasure uncontaminated by the rules and reciprocities of the social order.

The force of chance presiding over this brief affair takes its fiercest revenge against those who would define themselves as beyond its power, those who claim to manipulate it as only another instrument in the libertine’s arsenal of deception. It may have been by design that Madame de T chose a companion for the evening, but it was by chance that her choice led to a movement of desire and pleasure initiating a quite unanticipated story, unwriteable by the narrator, of how that choice would affect her relation to her lover, the Marquis. The Marquis, too, is a would-be manipulator. Delighted that the coach trip has given the narrator an occasion to know and admire Madame de T, he cannot refrain from congratulating himself on being her lover: “Can you imagine that any man could make that woman settle down? It wasn’t easy, but I have molded her character to the point where she may well be the one woman in Paris on whose fidelity one can count absolutely.” No one, of course, is

better able to appreciate the dubious value of that claim than the narrator. Swept up by his pride, the Marquis magisterially concedes that Madame de T does have one defect: “Between us, I have discovered only one failing in her. Nature, in granting her everything, refused her that divine flame which would crown all her blessings. She inspires everything, makes you feel everything, yet she feels nothing. She is a statue.” The narrator, quite unaware of any such flaw—but hardly for the reasons the Marquis assumes—must fight his laughter as he replies: “But . . . you know her as though you were her husband!”

*No Tomorrow* is a tour de force of disabused analysis summarizing all the manipulations, illusions, and self-deceptions which were the essence of eighteenth-century libertinage. When the story ends, each character occupies a position different from what he or she had originally expected or connived at: Monsieur de T begins a reconciliation with his wife on terms decidedly different from those he had sought; Madame de T finds herself far more enchanted by her choice of an evening’s companion than she had intended; and the Marquis as secret lover becomes the unwitting double of the cuckolded husband. As for the narrator, he can only observe that “I began to laugh at the role I was playing; and we became quite gay.”

### Biography

Born Vivant de Non in Givry, France, 4 January 1747, to a family of the minor nobility. Abandoned legal studies in Paris for the art world around the painter François Boucher. Distinguished for his elegance and strategic sexual liaisons, he wrote a three-act verse play for the Comédie-Française titled *Julie, ou le Bon Père* in 1769, the same year he became curator of the court collection of *pierres gravées* and was named *gentilhomme ordinaire du roi*. Began a diplomatic career in 1774 that took him to Saint Petersburg, Switzerland, and Naples. Published anonymously in June 1777 his short prose work, *No Tomorrow* [*Point de lendemain*]. Serving again as a diplomat in Italy at the outbreak of the Revolution, he was placed on the list of proscribed nobles. Protected by the painter Jacques-Louis David, he changed his name to Vivant Denon and returned to favor with the new regime. Frequented the salon of Joséphine de Beauharnais where he became close to

## DEPESTRE, RENÉ

Napoleon who brought him on his expedition to Egypt in 1798. Published the first European study of Egyptian art in 1802. Named Director of the Louvre and supervised the forced acquisitions of art works in the territory conquered by Napoleon from 1802 to 1815. Retired from public life in protest against the restitution of the Louvre's acquisitions following Napoleon's defeat. Spent the last ten years of his life writing a monumental world history of painting which was published in 1829, four years after his death in Paris on 27 April 1825.

THOMAS M. KAVANAGH

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# DEPESTRE, RENÉ

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1926—

Haitian and French poet, prose writer, essayist, and novelist

Depestre made an early sensational irruption onto the literary scene in 1945 with the publication of his first volume of poetry, *Étincelles* [*Sparks*] published at his own expense by the Imprimerie de l'État in Port-au-Prince. Later the same year, he cofounded a weekly newspaper, *La Ruche*, with fellow students, including Jacques Stephen Alexis who would later write the first Haitian novel with important erotic content, *L'Espace d'un cillement* [*In the Flicker of an Eyelid*] (1959). Since then Depestre continued to publish mostly poetry, but also numerous essays (in both French and Spanish-language journals), a number of which was collected in *Pour la poésie, pour la révolution* (1974), *Bonjour et adieu à la négritude* (1980), and *Le Métier à métisser* (1998). It was only late in life that he published his first fictions in Montreal *Alléluia pour une femme-jardin: récits d'amour*

*solaire* (1973), which were the first Francophone Caribbean narratives that could be classified as forthrightly erotic. Those five short stories were received very badly, in particular by the Haitian intelligentsia who regarded them as "pornographic." Revised and expanded, a new volume published under the abbreviated title, *Alléluia pour une femme-jardin*, by Gallimard in Paris (1981), was awarded the Goncourt prize for short fiction, and enjoyed great success in bookstores. From that time on, Depestre's reputation as an erotic writer was firmly established, especially for his first novel, *Le mâle de cocagne* [*The Festival of the Greasy Pole*] (1979) previously published in La Havana in 1975 (*El Palo ensabado*), contains an unforgettable erotic scene. Six pages in which the narrator describes a fantastic sensual massage of the protagonist, Henri Postel, by a young beauty, Élixa Valéry, which culminates in a coitus sublimely interrupted by the Mambo, Sor Cisa, possessed by the Goddess of Love, Erzuli. In 1988, Depestre published his second novel *Hadrianna dans tous mes rêves*

in which *l'amour fou* [mad love] combining eroticism and marvellous vodou in the most surprising ways, and his second collection of short stories, *Éros dans un train chinois*, appeared in 1990. Although eroticism is omnipresent in Depestre's poetry, particularly in the volumes published before his Cuban exile and *Un arc-en-ciel pour l'occident chrétien* [A Rainbow for the Christian West] (1967) his great book of poetry about the mysteries of vodou and their irreverent bawdiness, only his fictions, in particular his two collections of short stories are truly erotic. For, with one exception, *Cantate d'octobre* [1969], Depestre's writings, whether poetic or fictional, are a broad mixture of eroticism and politics, but through their emphasis on either sexual pleasure or political struggle, we end up with different texts, engaged or erotic.

### *Alléluia pour une femme-jardin*

The definitive edition comprises ten short stories; the first of which gives its title to the collection. This text recounts in four cantos the "two beautiful years" of an intense love relationship between an adolescent, Olivier, and his young aunt Isabella Ramonet, known as Zaza (which is also Elisa's nickname in *Le Mât*), a widow of "legendary beauty" who was the "star" of Jacmel. The last story, "Un retour à Jacmel," tells of the return to his native land of a young Haitian physician, Dr Hervé Braget (his name suggests the Haitian word for the male sex, "braguette"), which becomes the ladykiller of Jacmelian women of all ages and statuses. Between these two narratives which end on a more or less tragic note, Depestre makes his rather nomadic characters, always engaged in free love, wander from one continent to another. In contrast with Sade's exclusive and enclosed locations, their generally diverse and open locations stretch from racist America in Nashville, to Batista's corrupted Cuba, to the Cité Universitaire in Paris where Olivier Vermont in his "Mémoires du géolibertinage" remaps the world according to "the planet's erotic resources" as he discovers columns of young women (listed at length over two pages divided into three columns) with their own distinctive specificities. This multiplicity of imagined conquests recounted by Olivier demonstrates that Depestrian eroticism lies more in lyrical or ludic evocation

of the "femmes-jardins" (those women who "freely assume their bodies' resources, give vent to the flowering of their sexuality, without pangs of guilt") than in the sexual act *per se*.

### *Éros dans un train chinois*

This pre-eminence of the evocation of the sexual act over the act itself is pushed to the limit in *Éros dans un train chinois*. Depestre's linguistic prowess reaches its apogee at the end of the volume with a "GLOSSARY OF TERMS THAT DESIGNATE THE MALE AND FEMALE SEX IN THESE FICTIONS; CATALOGUE OF SOME GENERALLY ACCEPTED IDEAS ABOUT THE EXTRAORDINARY ADVENTURES OF SEXUAL ORGANS" which multiplies the intratextual cross-referencing from one definition to another as in any good dictionary. This nomenclature ranging from *Amande* [the female sex] to *Zoutil* [the male organ; also known as *Sa Majesté Tout-en-Un*] is the follow-up to the collection of "nine love stories and a sorcerer's tale" (as stated the subtitle) brought together according to an exemplary logic of unsatisfied desire (that of the Caribbean comrade shut up in the compartment of a Chinese train, trying in vain to convince his Maoist guide to share his bed) to unsatisfiable desire (that of a young Haitian with an "extra-ordinary" member that no woman is willing to enjoy until a cunning little girl, Josefina Finamour, offers him his first coitus which inaugurates nine days and nine nights of uninterrupted and shared pleasures). These two stories, "Faisane dorée" and "L'œillet ensorcelé," highlight how Depestre borrows from both learned and popular traditions, in particular from those of Haiti in order to weave his carnivalesque (in a Bakhtinian sense) erotic plots which are also political. For, beyond the demand for liberty, there is a manifest commitment to freedom itself, and a struggle against all "integrisms" (religious, social, political) which prevent the fulfilment and rapture of the free couple that man and woman form, without any domination by either sex. Indeed, this eroticism, which Depestre calls "solar," is very far from sadism and masochism, or any other "deviation."

### *Hadriana dans tous mes rêves*

If sexual perversions or violence are marginal in Depestre's erotic short stories, it is quite

different with his most known and praised novel, *Hadriana...* where some important characters are characterized by their sexual *deviations* or their sensual *outbursts*. On the one hand, Hadriana Siloé, in her journal, introduces herself as a bisexual who, in her coffin, dead-living, ardently would bite the breasts of Erzuli, the Haitian goddess of love, then in the same mood remembers her seven successive orgasms under the caresses of her best friend, Lolita, and her unappeased desires to make love with Patrick Altamont, the narrator, and her fiancé, Hector Danoze. On the other hand, the insatiable Germaine Villaret-Joyeuse, who killed her three husbands with her legendary *blow backs*, whom the story of her last extravagant will to take for a drive after her death in Jacmel opens the novel; or the *bòkò* (evil voodoo priest) Rosalvo Rosanfer who tried to make of Hadriana a zombi in order to subjugate her for his sexual fantasies.

Besides, as much as the voodoo is practically missing in the short stories, as much as it is omnipresent in *Hadriana...*, where it is intrinsically linked or associated to the sexual violence and the broad joke, which work out the narrative, but also to this outburst of senses, which makes of it a marvelous baroque and erotic text. Indeed, it is within the voodoo tradition that Depestre draws a series of metamorphoses allowing to this narrative, which opens on the death—that (real) of the widow Villaret-Joyeuse, then that (apparent) of her goddaughter, Hadriana, at the very moment where she accepts solemnly to marry Hector Danoze at Jacmel's cathedral—to lead to the very exuberant carnival and ribald memorable funeral watch of the white fairy of Jacmel on the Square of Arms.

Indeed, for the followers of this mostly festive and erotic religion, the death is not seen as a final step, but as a stage towards a beyond, *Nan Ginen*, Africa, always presents in the mind of the living as the paradisiac place before, *the middle passage*, the slave trade. Hence, death is not strictly lived as mourning, the funeral watch becomes a feast, at least a ceremonial to the memory of the deceased, where one must eat, drink, sing, dance up to the trance to serve (or appease) the *loa*, who express to the living by taking possession of their bodies and their heads, riding them, metamorphosing them into males or females, old men or pretty women, beasts or angels for their pleasures and

festivities. Besides, the relationships between the human and their Gods mostly outline a very erotic ritual, which culminates with the mystical marriage, where the follower, the *sevitè* must devote exclusively a room and a day to his or her loa at home; or the ultimate grade of the voodoo initiation, the “stay under the waters,” rarely reached, for one must be chosen to live among the gods with his or her loa, in the country of Ife or the Simbi. Hence, Depestre could not find a better pretext than this story of zombie or living dead to explore with a profusion of versions the eroticism in all its states, the voodoo mythology being the site of expression of multiple metamorphoses and metaphors of erotic drives and the triumph of love beyond grave, which makes of *Hadriana...* the Depestre novel more rooted in Haitian traditions. But it is also the single one to be really erotic and the most involved in a dialogue with the Western erotic narrative tradition, mainly Georges Bataille's paradigm of eroticism and death, and Sade's rhetoric of overflowing the narrative by philosophical or sociological discourse or essay.

### Biography

Depestre was born in Jacmel, on the southeastern coast of Haiti on 29 August 1926. He attended the Lycées Pinchat in Jacmel and Pétion in Port-au-Prince (1938–1944), then he went to France to study Political Science and Literature at Université de Paris-Sorbonne (1946–1950) with a scholarship from the Haitian government. Exiled or expelled several times from France, Czechoslovakia, Chili, Argentina, Brazil, and Cuba for his political activities, he returned briefly to Haiti in 1957, following a second exile in France where he was involved in political and literary movements through journals like *Présence africaine*, *Esprit*, *Les Lettres françaises*, and *Les Lettres nouvelles*. In this last journal, in the wake of “Krushchev's Secret Speech at the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of Soviet Union” (25 February, 1956), he published, in January 1957, his first criticism of the “real socialism” (*le socialisme réel*, as he called it). After almost one year of house arrest in Port-au-Prince, he fled to Cuba in March 1959 with his first wife, Edith Sorel, to join the Castrist Revolution. In Cuba he lived as “a Cuban among the Cubans” until his appointment as at the UNESCO's headquarters in

Paris in 1978. During his Cuban years, he was a commentator for Radio Havana, a collaborator of the prestigious journal and publishing house, *Casa de las Américas*, and taught at the Universidad de La Habana. He also translated several important Latin American poets into French: Nicolás Guillén, *Le grand zoo* (1965); Roberto Fernández Retamar, *Avec les mêmes mains* (1968); and Cesar Fernández Moreno, *Un catalogue de vieilles voitures* (1986). In the summer of 1986, he retired from UNESCO and left Paris to live with his second wife, Nelly Campano, and their two children (Paul-Alain and Stefan) in a small village in Southern France, Lézignan-Corbières, where he is still living as a French citizen which he became by naturalization in 1991. In 1988, he won the prestigious French literary award, the Prix Renaudot, and the Prix du Roman of the Belgian Académie Royale de Langue et Littérature Françaises for his second novel, *Hadriana dans tous mes rêves*. The Prix Apollinaire was awarded in 1993 for Depestre's *Anthologie personnelle*; and in 1994, the Italian award, Premio Grinzane Cavour, was awarded for the Italian translation of his first novel, *L'Albero della cuccagna, le mât de cocagne* (1979). In 1995, he received a John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation fellowship, and in 1998, the Académie Française's Grand Prix de poésie for his entire poetic work.

JEAN JONASSAINT

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# DESFORGES

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1746–1806

French dramatist and novelist

Desforges was known in eighteenth-century Paris as a witty playwright and actor. He achieved moderate success on stage and saw thirty of his plays staged. Late in his life, he wrote several libertine novels, most of them vaguely autobiographical, none of them very popular.

Legally the son of a wealthy Parisian porcelain dealer, Desforges was, in fact, the result of a liaison between Mme Desforges and the apparently famous Parisian doctor, “le docteur Petit.” Most of the details of his life, particularly the more lurid ones, are known only through his autobiographical novel, *Le poète*. In it, he describes himself as precocious in every way, writing plays at age nine and engaging in sexual adventures at age six. His school years were marked by scandalous amorous adventures that often ended badly.

After his legal father’s financial ruin and the death of Dr. Petit, Desforges was forced to relinquish his dilettantism to earn a living. After trying several different courses of study, he became an actor, first with the Comédie Italienne, then with a traveling theater troupe. By his own reports, the years between 1669 and 1775 were filled with amorous adventures in most of the major cities of France. He married an actress, whom he later divorced. He claims to have found true love late in life, in his second marriage. It was during his second marriage, at age 52, that he wrote his first erotic text—an autobiographical novel, *Le poète*. After its publication, he wrote several more mediocre, vaguely autobiographical libertine novels.

### *Le poète ou mémoires d’un homme de lettres*

Desforges begins his memoirs by proclaiming himself an historian, not a novelist. Even if the tales of his youth might offend the morals of his readers, he would rather do so than offend what he calls the greater cause of historical truth. In spite of this authorial statement of complete

accuracy, it is impossible to know how much of the book is an accurate chronicle of Desforges’s own libertine adventures. His sexual initiation occurs at the age of six and a half, in the dormitory of his boarding school. After the young Desforges wakes abruptly from his first erotic dream, a twelve-year-old girl, Ursule, also a boarder at his school, encourages him to recount his dream in detail and then climbs under the covers and helps him reenact it. They continue as childhood lovers, sneaking around the school for about a year until Ursule falls for someone closer to her own age. Desforges’s sexual life begins in earnest with Manon, who worked in his father’s artificial flower shop. He describes their encounters in poetic detail, with a sort of rapturous joy:

Another region is opened for me ... it’s the sky; it’s more than the sky, it’s ... What double sighs! What unknown ardor! I burn, she burns with me ... with a fire!

She soon becomes pregnant, and is shuffled off by complicit family members. A liaison with the young Adélaïde also ends with her becoming pregnant. After becoming an actor, he travels through France, enjoying a succession of trysts. He seduces the young Gabrielle as well as her widowed aunt; Thérèse is seduced after meeting Desforges at mass; in Marseille a certain weak-hearted Mlle Pezé drops dead *in flagrante delicto*. He paints himself as an amiable, earnest libertine, who genuinely loves each woman before something inevitably goes wrong. He often describes his sexual encounters with an overwrought mix of war and religious imagery:

The celestial shelter is penetrated. The ecstasy of ravishing leads to the violence of irruption, and the priest and the worshiped one—both victims—momentarily leave life in the burning depths of love’s sanctuary.

To summarize his four-volume account, he contends that each of his youthful liaisons led to some kind of disgrace or punishment. The final volume concludes with the names of each woman he seduced and the consequences of the liaison: disappointment, humiliation, prison,

estrangement from children he fathered. He claims that his final punishment for seducing Angélique was marriage itself.

### *Les Mille et un souvenirs*

In the author's preface, Desforges explains that just as he was deciding to embark on a career as a novelist, a friend presented him a manuscript that his father had found among a client's legal papers. Naturally, Desforges decides to publish the manuscript. In the frame of the novel, M. Mélincourt promises the widow Madame d'Arbel a libertine story every night in bed if she will agree to marry him. He provides her with a catalogue of titles which allows her to select each night's anecdote. They are adventurous tales of seduction, secret *rendez-vous*, cooperative valets, and watchful fathers. The details are more logistical—how to sneak into the beloved's bedroom—than erotic. Occasionally the  *récit*  is interrupted by the married couple who comment on the characters or stop the story for their own sexual pleasure.

### Biography

Born Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Choudart-Desforges in Paris, September 15, 1746. Attended the  *Collège Mazarin*  and the  *Collège de Beauvais*  1754–1763; studied medicine, then painting, but abandoned both; worked as a copyist and translator, 1765, began acting at the  *Comédie Italienne* , 1769;

traveled throughout France with a troupe of actors beginning in 1769. Married an actress, Angélique Erlement, 1775; traveled with Angélique to Saint Petersburg to perform in Catherine II's court, 1779; all his manuscripts are stolen on his return trip from Russia, 1782; divorced Angélique, around 1786; published an account of his youthful libertinage, 1799. Died in Paris, August 13, 1806.

DIANE BERRETT BROWN

### Selected Works

#### Theater

*Richard et d'erlet*. 1778.  
*Tom Jones à Londres*. 1782.  
*La femme jalouse*. 1785.  
*Le sourd, ou l'auberge pleine*. 1790.  
*Les époux divorcés*. 1790.

#### Operas

*Les promesses de mariage*. 1787.  
*Joconde*. 1790.  
*La liberté et l'égalité rendues à la terre*. 1794.

#### Novels

*Le poète, ou mémoires d'un homme de lettres*. 1798.  
*Eugène et Eugénie, ou la surprise conjugale, histoire de deux enfants d'une nuit d'erreur de leurs parents*. 1798.  
*Adelphine de Rostanges, ou la mère qui ne fut point épouse*. 1799.  
*Edouard et Arabelle, ou l'élève de l'infortune et de l'amour*. 1799.  
*Les mille et un souvenirs, ou les veillées conjugales*. 1799.

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## DESNOS, ROBERT

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1900–1945

French poet and prose writer

### *La liberté ou l'amour [Liberty or Love!]* (1927).

Desnos's most significant book during his period of involvement with André Breton was undoubtedly *La liberté ou l'amour*, often seen as

the last great work of early Surrealism. The Surrealists had been experimenting with hypnosis as a means of liberating the subconscious since the autumn of 1922, and Desnos had proved a most responsive subject—so much so that he was soon able to enter a trance-like state almost at will. *La liberté ou l'amour*, he claimed, was a book written with “eyes wide shut.” As might be imagined, a novel written under such



conditions almost defies description. However, various themes do begin to emerge upon close reading. One of these is the narrator's search for the unique woman, a quest which involves unbridled eroticism (almost invariably of a highly fetishistic nature), the constant threat of violence, and the repeated evocation of the sea. The iterative structure of the work and the typically Surrealist use of startling metaphors and imagery are clearly visible in the following passage:

How many times, in stormy weather or by the light of the moon, did I get up to contemplate by the gleam of a log-fire, or that of a match, or a glow-worm, those memories of women who had come to my bed, completely naked apart from stockings and high-heeled slippers retained out of respect for my desire, and more unaccountable than a parasol found floating in the middle of the Pacific by a steamship. (*Liberty or Love*)

*La liberté ou l'amour* may also be read as an adventure novel, though one darkly illuminated by the shades of three Surrealist heroes: the Marquis de Sade, Lautréamont, and Jack the Ripper. This aspect of the work is consistently emphasized during Sanglot the Corsair's obsessive pursuit of Louise Lame, which constitutes one of the central narrative strands of the work, and by means of a number of intensely blasphemous passages. Two episodes in particular would seem to have upset the authorities on the book's first publication: the first consists of Sanglot the Corsair's visit to the Sperm Drinkers' Club; the second concerns the description of the new Eucharist intended to celebrate the divinity of Bébé Cadum (a figure borrowed by Desnos from contemporary advertising hoardings promoting a brand of soap). Part of the latter ceremony involves a contraceptive sponge standing in for the traditional consecrated wafer. Nor would more conservative readers have appreciated a later execution scene in which the Marquis de Sade takes the place of Louis XVI. The consequence of the publisher's brush with the law was that *La Liberté ou l'amour* was only available initially in truncated form (subsequent editions, of course, have restored the offending passages).

### *Corps et biens*

Desnos's novel (if it may be labelled as such) did not come into being in a vacuum. A number of early texts published in short-lived Surrealist

periodicals (such as the childhood reminiscences, 'Confession d'un Enfant du siècle', published in *La révolution surréaliste* in 1926) or a personal credo entitled *De l'érotisme considéré dans ses manifestations écrites et du point de vue de l'esprit moderne* (written in 1953 but not published until 1953) are useful documents in charting the construction of the author's personal erotic agenda.

Biographical information also proves revealing. It is apparent, for example, that the mysterious unknown woman who haunts the author's imagination was, in fact, the chanteuse Yvonne George. The same singer similarly inspired a number of the poems in *Corps et biens* (note the continuing nautical imagery—the French expression 'perdu corps et biens' is best translated into English as 'lost with all hands'), especially a moving sequence of seven odes entitled 'A la mystérieuse'. These poems, despite their more traditional form and structure, enjoy a clear affinity with Desnos's Surrealist roots.

Generally speaking, the seeming paradox at the heart of *La liberté ou l'amour* and many of the later poems—how can love be both entirely pure and totally licentious—can only be resolved by close examination of the wider discussions on the subject that were engaged in by the Surrealist movement as a whole during the period in question. Although Desnos (who had recently been involved in an acrimonious rupture with Breton) does not feature in the discussions contained in *Recherches sur la sexualité, janvier 1928–août 1932* (edited by José Pierre in 1990), this work nonetheless represents the initial starting point for any wider inquiry.

### Biography

Robert Desnos was born in Paris in 1900 and died of typhus at the Terezine (Theresienstadt) concentration camp in June 1945, shortly after his liberation. An early member of the Surrealist group which formed around André Breton in the Paris of the 1920s, he was the author of a number of important prose works, often with a marked erotic interest, written while in a state of (self-induced) hypnotic trance. During the 1930s, following his rupture with Breton, his career focused on his work for radio and the newspapers. During his lifetime he published two major collections of poetry, *Corps et biens* (1930) and *Fortunes* (1942), generally seen as

his major literary achievement. Indeed, Desnos is now considered one of the principal poetic voices of the twentieth century. Remaining in Paris after the outbreak of the Second World War, he was soon involved in Resistance activity; he was arrested by the Gestapo in February 1944.

TERRY HALE

### Selected Works

*Corps et biens*. Paris: Gallimard, 1930; in *Desnos: Oeuvres*, ed. Marie-Claire Dumas. Paris: Gallimard, 1999.  
*De l'érotisme considéré dans ses manifestations écrites et du point de vue de l'esprit moderne*. In *Robert Desnos*:

*Nouvelles Hébrides et autres textes, 1922–1930*, ed. Marie-Claire-Dumas. Paris: Gallimard, 1978.  
*La Liberté ou l'amour*. Paris: Editions du Sagittaire, 1927; in *Desnos: Oeuvres*, ed. Marie-Claire Dumas. Paris: Gallimard, 1999; tr. Terry Hale, *Liberty or Love!*. London: Atlas Press, 1993.

### Further Reading

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 Dumas, Marie-Claire. *Robert Desnos ou l'exploration des limites*. Paris: Klincksieck, 1980.  
 Pierre, José. *Recherches sur la sexualité, janvier 1928–août 1932*. Paris: Gallimard, 1990; as *Investigating Sex: Surrealist Discussions, 1928–1932*, translated by Malcolm Imrie. London: Verso, 1992.

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## DI GIORGIÒ, MAROSA

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1932-  
Uruguayan poet

### *Misales*

Since the beginning of her literary career in the early 1950s, di Giorgio forged her own poetic path away from the Nativist movement who seek to reproduce the rural landscape and further still from the socially committed poetry that was embraced by other Uruguayan writers of her time. Her lyrical texts transport the readers to a rural, yet supernatural, and sensual world eternally lightened by the moonlight. The plots are minimal and the intense metaphorical images create a rare and original emotional space. At their center is a young girl (not unlike the protagonist from *Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll, whom di Giorgio has recognized among her “literary parents”) who finds solace away from her dominant mother and her numerous relatives in a garden, a protective and dreamlike place where she can freely interact with animals, plants, and other natural beings. Over the years, di Giorgio’s fictional world has

remained practically intact, a fact that she has acknowledged by comparing it to a forest in which she has been planting more trees.

With the publication *Misales* [*Missals*], with its subtitle “erotic stories,” di Giorgio’s magical and sensual world became openly erotic. The book is a collection of thirty-five short compositions, most of them containing the word “missal” or “mass” in the titles, thus suggesting from the start the strong presence of the sacred in everyday life. Indeed, God and the Roman Catholic rites are a recurring theme throughout the book: the young girl who carries a doll in one hand and a missal book in the other, the female who is crucified by the young and virile lover, who announces: “Mi nombre es Dios. No me reconociste” (My name is God. You didn’t recognize me).

Right from the book’s opening words: “Salió un perro-zorro y vino al ruedo. Tenía el hocico largo, trotó un poco y robó un huevo” [A dog-fox left and approached the hedge. He had a long snout, he trotted a little and stole an egg], the reader is drawn into a mysterious space, reminiscent of the Biblical paradise or fairy tale scenarios inhabited by virgins with such

symbolic names as Mrs. Desirée, Mrs. Saint Elizabeth, and Mrs. One, who cross the prairies all dressed in black habits and have a “trenza que las partía por la mitad desde la nuca al ano” (a braid that parted them in two from the nape to the anus), robust young horseriders, lovers who fornicate in the forest, dogs, butterflies and other natural creatures -including many species of animals native to di Giorgio’s birth region. These characters interact with each other without restrictions and participate in the stages associated with the lovemaking process: the mate selection, the seduction, and finally the “coito deslumbante y terrífico” (dazzling and terrific coitus). The masculine being is usually the predator who approaches the female (either a virgin or one who had a husband for a long time) in order to announce that her bridal night has arrived. The phallus is described as a dagger, a tongue or a “robusto, afelpado., en cuya punta se formaba algo, empezaba a salir una cosa, como con trabajo, como una rosa del Cabo, una clara preciosa, que ella quiso tocar y beber” (robust and plush, at the end of which something was forming, something was beginning to come out, as if struggling, like a rose or a gardenia, a precious egg white, that she wanted to touch and drink), while the female organs are “una gran enagua sexual, todo de clitoris ... como pimpollos de rosas rojas en hilera”—a big sexual petticoat, all made of ovaries ...like rows of rosebuds). The female fertility is endless and the menstrual period is a “drop of crystalline water” or a “circular and red cherry.” After the copulation, the female becomes pregnant and gives birth to a variety of things, such as eggs, rabbits, lizards, and mushrooms. At the same time, female gestation is intimately connected to food and the protagonists feed each other or end up devouring their own offspring, thus suggesting even further the regenerative life cycles and the strong link that exist between people, animals and nature.

## Biography

Marosa di Giorgio was born in the northwestern region of Salto where her parents and maternal grandparents, Italian peasants from near Florence who immigrated to Uruguay, owned two small farms. Her childhood and adolescence in the countryside among her extended family profoundly impacted her life and intimately inspired her literary work. Since the early eighties, she resides in the city of Montevideo.

RENÉE SCOTT

## Selected Works

*Los papeles salvajes*. 2 vols. Montevideo: Arca, 1989–1991. They include the previously published books: *Poemas* 1954, *Humo* 1955, *Druida* 1959, *Historial de las violetas* 1965, *Magnolia* 1965, *La guerra de los huertos* 1971, *Está en llamas el jardín natal* 1971, *Gladiolos de luz y luna* 1974, *Clavel y tenebrario* 1979, *La liebre de marzo* 1981, *Mesa de esmeralda* 1985, *La falena* 1987, *Membrillo de Lusana* 1991, *Misales (relatos eróticos)* 1993; *Misales (relatos eróticos)*. Santiago: LOM, 2001.

*Camino de las pedreras*. Montevideo: Planeta, 1997.

*Reina Amelia*. Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo, 1999.

*Los papeles salvajes*, Buenos Aires: Adriana Hidalgo, 2000. It includes *Los papeles salvajes* and *Díamelas a Clementina Médicis*.

## Further Reading

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Pallares, Ricardo. “Marosa di Giorgio: Liebre de marzo en febrero.” *Tres mundos de la lírica uruguaya actual*. Montevideo: Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, 1992. 45.

Porzecanski, Teresa. “Marosa di Giorgio: Uruguay’s Sacred Poet of the Garden.” *A Dream of Light and Shadow*. Ed. Marjorie Agosin. Albuquerque. University of New Mexico Press, 1995. 303–314, 327–328.

Scott, Renée. “Entrevista con Marosa di Giorgio.” *Discurso literario*. 3.2 (1985): 271–273.

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## DI NOTA, DAVID

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1968–  
French novelist

### **Apologie du plaisir absolu**

David di Nota's *Apologie du plaisir absolu*, dedicated to a Maria Cristina Franco Ferraz, is a first-person novel relating the narrator's quest for a dress for his wife Vitalie. The narrator's name remains unknown, but various similarities with the author's life (both are former danseurs, both wrote a novel) suggest that David di Nota modeled the narrator, at least in part, after himself.

Two explicit sexual episodes aside, both of which involve the author and Vitalie, the novel contains few explicit sexual references. The entire novel, starting as Vitalie is about to wake up and ending with the characters' return from their Saturday afternoon shopping trip, takes place in a single day. Relatively brief, involving a mere two characters, and following a simple storyline, it could qualify, notwithstanding its description as a novel in the title page, as a short story.

The title's reference to "absolute pleasure" alludes not only to the few erotic episodes, but also to the narrator's optimistic belief in man's capacity to be happy on Earth. This is expressed in the lengthy descriptions of minute details that fill the narrator with contentment, most of them pertaining to Vitalie's body, clothes she tries on, or beauty products he applies to her face.

The author's attention to tiny details, very similar stylistically to Yukio Mishima's in novels such as *The Temple of the Golden Pavilion* (1956), translates into a frugal, at times meager, plot. The narrator successively observes young women in a neighboring park while Vitalie is still asleep; forages through her lingerie and beauty products; waits impatiently in the toilets as she talks to her mother on the phone; makes love with Vitalie; enters into a dispute when she refuses to go out to buy a dress, as promised; eats his breakfast; reads a magazine; makes love with Vitalie again; takes a bath with, washes, and applies make-up to Vitalie; spends hours

with her trying on dresses in various fashionable Parisian clothing stores; eats a late lunch; then finally buys an evening pant suit for her and heads back home as the day draws to an end.

The two, relatively brief, erotic scenes both take place in the morning. Shortly after Vitalie wakes up, she and the narrator have sex on the carpet. An hour or so later, they repeat the performance in the living room. In keeping with the unostentatious storyline, the love scenes have little to do with the main fare of much popular pornographic writing—tales of indefatigable vaginas, enormous penises, and odd sexual techniques—and remain, cunnilingus aside, of the man-and-woman, man-on-top variety. Even though the narrator is attracted to Vitalie's lingerie, he stops short of fetishism. He briefly mentions his intention to give Vitalie a spanking (*fessée*), but decides against it. For most of *Apologie du plaisir absolu*, eroticism is a subtext, rather than an explicit component, of the novel. As the narrator takes a bath with Vitalie and washes her, regularly points out her beauty and sexual appeal, and eyes her as she changes clothes in clothing stores, his attention to small details of her anatomy—breasts, legs, skin, in particular—more than the characters' actual involvement in sexual intercourse, conveys a sense of continued, jubilant sexual desire.

Homosexuality and the reversal of traditional gender roles are two major sub-themes. Even though the narrator professes his aversion for a gay clothing salesman, he displays all the characteristics associated with male homosexuality in the popular psyche: professional danseur, attracted by fashion, women's clothes and make-up, sophisticated, and garrulous. Vitalie, on the other hand, matches the description of the stereotypical male: less talkative, in charge of all important decisions, she quickly finds shopping tiresome, and dresses in men's apparel. These cross-gender roles do not play a significant role in the erotic scenes.

The novel's briefness (148 pp.), fractured nature, short sentences, many of them with no

## DI PRIMA, DIANE

verbs, the use of the first person and of the present tense, and the time limitation to a single day's span all help carry the impression that the narrator is jotting down sensations and ideas in real time, as he is experiencing them, even during the two erotic scenes. Small events, such as the noise of a spoon in the breakfast bowl or the sight of soap scum on Vitalie's breasts, trigger long soliloquies on the shape of the bowl or on the chemical characteristics of beauty products. Many of these remarks are well thought out and make good use of tasteful puns, well-placed adjectives, and the French language in general. As they become constant and not always significant, some of these digressions, particularly regarding the role of *haute couture* and the feel and appearance of every single dress in a half-dozen stores, can become tiresome. They also abruptly interrupt the narrative, as does a paragraph on Coco Chanel's hatred for the color purple that is somehow inserted half-way through the first love scene. The use of unusual French words and of specialized knowledge borrowed from fields ranging from medicine to chemistry and literature has the same effect: when put to good use, it is witty and intriguing; when abused, the author comes across as verbose and pedantic and the story loses its focus.

### Biography

Born on December 27, 1968, David di Nota started as a dancer in the prestigious Opéra de

Paris. Resenting other dancers' dullness and competitive drive, he abandoned his dancing career in the early 1990s and started a literary career. Now living in London, he is the author of several short novels in French, including *Festivité locale* (1991), *Apologie du plaisir absolu* (1993), *Quelque chose de très simple* (1995), and *Traité des élégances, I* (1999), all of them published by Gallimard, in the *L'infini* collection edited by Philippe Sollers.

PHILIPPE R. GIRARD

### Editions

*Apologie du plaisir absolu*. Paris: Gallimard, 1993.

### Selected Works

*Festivité locale*. 1991.

*Apologie du plaisir absolu*. 1993.

*Quelque chose de très simple*. 1995.

*Traité des élégances I*. 1999.

### Further Reading

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Savigneau, Josyane. "Au fil des lectures: un coup pour rien." *Le Monde* (19 November 1993).

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## DI PRIMA, DIANE

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1934–

United States poet and novelist

### *Memoirs of a Beatnik*

Diane Di Prima's *Memoirs of a Beatnik* is fictionalized autobiography, a mixture of memoir and erotic fiction chronicling di Prima's early years

as a poet and bohemian in New York City in the early 1950s. It was published in 1969 by Olympia Press—The Traveler's Companion, Inc., reissued in 1988 by Last Gap Press, and reprinted in 1998 by Penguin Books.

*Memoirs of a Beatnik*, which has sold more than any of di Prima's books, is loosely structured upon the organic drift of the seasons from 1953 through 1956, relying upon the cinematic

technique of montage to present sets of interconnected ideas regarding di Prima's identity as Beat poet and sexual adventurer.

As Beat history, *Memoirs* records valuable insights about Greenwich Village and the place of the woman artist in the burgeoning art world following World War II. Di Prima writes convincingly of the bar scene in the Village, the pads inhabited by painters and writers, and the "Rule of Cool" governing subterranean behavior for women. One catches glimpses of what life must have been like for di Prima as she honed her talents as a poet: her study habits and reading lists; her relationship with the poet Ezra Pound, with whom she corresponded when he was at St. Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, DC; her first reading of Allen Ginsberg's "Howl," which jolted her into realizing that she wasn't the only one writing poetry to represent the marginalized and abject; and the composition of her first book of poems.

More often, di Prima relies on fiction to explore sexual practices and mores. She herself experimented widely with sex, believed in free love, and had several children out of wedlock, but she states in the afterword to the 1988 edition of *Memoir* that most of the sex scenes are fabrications written to placate her publisher, Olympia Press's Maurice Giodias.

As erotica, the book takes its cue from the word "Beatnik," a term coined by San Francisco journalism Herb Caen in the late fifties. "Beatnik" is a trivializing pejorative that through the suffix "nik" transformed "Beat," defined in the popular media as sex crazy and anti-establishment, into the evil "pinko commie" of the Cold War, while simultaneously converting the demon Beat of free sex into the childish and comic, effectively nullifying the cultural threat posed by Beat. *Memoirs*, then, plays with the notion of Beat sexual practice as paradoxically degenerate/dangerous and infantile/inconsequential.

Di Prima's fantasies rely rather clumsily on flashbacks and dreamscapes to introduce sex scenes. Strings of characters are presented in a minimal story line frequently interrupted by long scenes of explicit sex. The language resists subtlety and titillation to embrace vulgarity. "Cocks," "cum," and "fuck" are used repeatedly. Lesbian and heterosexual sex is featured, including group sex, the most illustrative being an orgy with Beat heroes Jack Kerouac, Allen

Ginsberg, and Peter Orlovsky. Rape and incest narratives appear as well.

By writing for hire, di Prima created a self that exists as sex object and male fantasy. The lesbian scenes function much as they do in male-focused erotica, as a salacious trigger of male sexuality. The rape and incest scenes are modeled on a form of a masculine fantasy: the taking of the female body for male sexual gratification is accepted as the woman gives herself up to the power of the male body, even at times persuading herself that she enjoys the violation.

But *Memoirs* presents a complicated process of undermining its own textuality. The sex stories, many of which ratify male power, also suggest that women need to shape and assert their sexual identity in ways that defy male power. Di Prima's heroine strives to reject the cultural mandate that a woman is defined in her relationship to a man. For instance, most of the males in the book are known only by their first names, stripped of patriarchal heritage and thus individuality and power. The narrator leaves them when she wants to, and both the Beat and Beatnik narratives end when she realizes she is pregnant, a scene which is described as entirely woman-centered: her lover has left for the day, and she serenely packs her books, ready to take off without him into the unknown.

All erotic fantasy in *Memoirs* is eventually subverted to some degree by the juxtaposition of non-fiction prose forms, such as a diatribe against contraception and an interactive passage in which the narrator tells readers to use a blank space provided to list their favorite kisses. The most dramatic anti-erotic device is the use of two subchapters that break the erotic template, making explicit the relationship between fabula and audience. The first describes a mid-November evening during which the narrator and her friends have an orgy; the sex is explicit and hot. The fallacy of the Beatnik myth is exposed in the next subchapter, in which reality is presented as indifference, boredom, a cold apartment, and no sex.

In its play with narrative construction, its embracing and rejection of its erotic content, *Memoirs of a Beatnik* has emerged as an important example of the experimental drive characterizing both Beat literature and the women's movement, suggesting that the erotic, while it has a place in both myth and reality, is not the primary substance by which "Beat" or "woman" is defined.

## DISKI, JENNY

### Biography

Born in 1934 in Brooklyn, New York. Di Prima is the one female writer most readily identified with the American Beat literary movement. She attended Hunter High School in New York and then Swarthmore College from 1951 to 1953. She co-founded the New York Poets Theater and the Poets Press; and co-edited with poet and activist Amiri Baraka (LeRoi Jones) *The Floating Bear* (1961–1969), one of the most important avant garde publications from that period. Her first book of poems, *This Kind of Bird Flies Backwards*, was published in 1958.

DiPrima has authored over a dozen volumes of poetry and two memoirs, taught poetry at Naropa University in Boulder, Colorado, and was awarded National Endowment for the Arts grants in 1966 and 1973.

NANCY M. GRACE

### Editions

*Memoirs of a Beatnik*. New York: Olympia Press, 1969; San Francisco, CA: Last Gasp of San Francisco, 1988; rpt. New York: Penguin Books, 1998.

### Selected Works

*This Kind of Bird Flies Backwards*. 1958.  
*Dinners and Nightmares*, 1961. Expanded ed. 1998.  
*The New Handbook of Heaven*. 1965.  
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*Haiku*. 1966.  
*Hotel Albert: Poems*. 1968.  
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*Revolutionary Letters*. 1971.  
*The Calculus of Variation*. 1972.  
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*Freddie Poems*. 1974.  
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## DISKI, JENNY

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1947–

British novelist and essayist

Three themes pervade all of Jenny Diski's stories: a troubled search for religion (which will not be addressed here), a fascination with mentally distressed characters, and a strong

presence of eroticism and desire. It is, indeed, the specific combination of sex and madness that characterizes Diski's work. Erotic encounters feature in Diski's fiction both as a means of escaping the drab reality of everyday life and as catalytic events which help the characters transgress the constricting rules of society. Sexual

ecstasy is employed by Diski in its original sense of ex-stasis, that is, of being outside oneself. Orgasmic experiences, along with dreams during sleep, become a means of transcending reality and entering a different realm. This escapist theme is reinforced in her writings by a tendency to portray characters who seem to linger permanently on the verge of a nervous breakdown, often shunning family responsibilities or simply fleeing from intolerable social and personal circumstances. The distrust of—and resistance to—the outside world carry with them further implications for Diski's characters. Repeatedly they seem to prefer auto-eroticism and masturbation over sexual contact with other people, further precluding the outside world. Even where sex occurs with partners, a lack of intimacy persists. The often isolating experience of mental trauma further adds to the feeling that Diski's characters are constricted by their melancholic individualism and incapacity to share emotions. The ecstatic, escapist theme also resurfaces in Diski's autobiographic essay *Skating to Antarctica*, where she describes her favorite space as an all-white room, devoid of any visual stimulus. It is her longing for this rare environment that causes Diski to take a trip to the Antarctic.

Diski's first novel, *Nothing Natural*, is at the same time her most explicitly erotic and most excessive text. Told from the perspective of Rachel, a single mother in her early thirties, the novel traces her unusual relationship with Joshua. Starting from a chance meeting at a mutual friend's, Rachel soon develops an obsessive longing for the elusive and secretive Joshua, which grows even stronger once she realizes that his aggressive and even physically violent love-making awakens in her a sado-masochistic penchant of which she was unaware until then.

Mo, the protagonist in *Rainforest*, is a young researcher who plans a trip to the jungle in order to collect scientific data. There, she realizes both that her ivory-tower view of the orderly structure of nature does not hold up against the chaotic reality of the actual environment and that her own repressed sexuality, once it is released during a brief visit by one of her colleagues, proves that she has a physical body as well. She abandons her academic career and turns to cleaning houses, preferring to re-establish order in a universe that no longer provides her with clear answers.

Some of the minor characters from *Rainforest* reappear in *Happily Ever After*, a novel that follows the lives of the inhabitants of a small house in London. Liam, a former colleague of Mo and now the owner of the apartment building, has been left by his second wife, his former student Grace, and now lives in a semi-permanent alcoholic stupor, which is interrupted only by visits from Daphne, an elderly woman and former novelist who lives in the attic. Even though Liam is obsessed with youthful beauty—he left his first wife and family in order to enjoy Grace's breasts freely—he finally succumbs to Daphne, whose shriveled old body seems to fade from his perception once he has learned to love her for who she is. Even after she leaves him, he is content with his life, finding happiness in country walks and conversations at the local store. All through the novel, his earlier, immature sexuality metamorphosizes into mature eroticism, and he increasingly focuses on the life of the mind. True to its title, *Happily Ever After* ends on a very optimistic note, which is rare for Diski's texts. Even though the novel includes its share of grim moments, including a desperate case of infanticide, it leaves Liam in a contentedly a-libidinous state, and Daphne at ease with her crazed view of life.

While experimentations with narrative point of view occur in a number of Diski's texts, no narrator is more peculiar than Nony in *Like Mother*, the anencephalic baby of Frances, whose story makes up the bulk of this novel. Frances grows up in postwar London, rebelling against the phony values and empty façade of her parents' lives by quietly chanting swear words and by using her prepubescent body to create and then control desire in Stuart, who will much later father Nony. She withdraws into ballet dancing, shunning all emotional involvement with her surroundings. When she gives birth to her brainless child, she rejoices in the fact that Nony will never feel or know pain.

Some of the short stories in *The Vanishing Princess* also deal overtly with erotic themes. "Leaper," which takes its title from a woman's suicide, examines desire for physical love as it arises in the vicinity of death. Diane, the lesbian partner of the dead woman, is seeking sexual solace from a woman she met immediately after her lover's death. Their brief but passionate encounter comes to an abrupt end when Diane reveals her involvement with the suicide victim.



## DJEBAR, ASSIA

“Bath Time” revolves around the sensual longing for uninterrupted time spent by oneself, and the impossibility of combining intimacy and privacy. “Shit and Gold” is a modern retelling of the classic fairy tale of the miller’s daughter and Rumpelstiltskin. However, the task of finding the vindictive dwarf’s name is replaced by the heroine’s proposal to make him forget his name during three nights in which she uses all her sexual experience to delete his memory.

With *Only Human: A Comedy*, Diski returns to her initial theme of obsessive desire. While her early novels relied extensively on the physical longings and ecstasies of her characters, in this book she concentrates more on the psychology of eroticism. The narrative is a retelling of the biblical story of Abraham and Sarah, told in part from the perspective of God, who, to make things worse, grows increasingly jealous of the love and passion his human creatures invent. The novel also expands on Diski’s fascination with the divine, the obsessive, and the erotic.

### Biography

Born in London, England; repeatedly spent time in mental institutions, first when she was 14; subsequently lived with the novelist Doris Lessing; attended University College, London; worked as a teacher; studied anthropology; married, one daughter; regular contributor to the *London Review of Books* and the *Observer*.

GERD BAYER

### Selected Works

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# DJEBAR, ASSIA

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1936–  
Algerian novelist

Described by Kenneth Harrow as the dominant voice in Maghrebian fiction, she is above all known for her ability to express women’s revindications within a context of Islamic faith, re-writing Algerian history, and theorizing identity. Indeed, one element of her own biography often

discussed in her fiction is the fact that French schooling cut her off from a gynecaea, the warmth of female companionship otherwise taken for granted by women of her culture, as well as cutting her off from Berber and Arabic-language culture. Yet with all this, there is still a notable erotic element to her fiction. Studies published by Clerc and Timmerman show that her works, and in particular two novels in the

Algerian Quartet, are not without a troubling sexual tension, particularly in the case of an adulteress in *Vaste est la prison* and of a political prisoner in *La femme sans sépulture*. In the absence of consummated desire, it is especially as visual or scopic desire that the erotic element is expressed. Yet an earlier novel, *L'Amour, la fantasia* is also revealing of this element. When a French soldier views a group of unveiled women, they react indifferently, saying that his gaze is not the same as that of an Algerian man. They wonder whether he has a gaze at all. A hedge separates them from him, yet it is not this physical element that makes them feel safe, but the look itself. The women feel at liberty, since there is no perceived threat of seduction. By contrast, the Algerian man's gaze is considered almost tactile. Clerc interprets this gaze based on Freud's concept of the incest taboo: the unveiled woman, regardless of her relation to the male viewer, is a possible object of desire.

*Vaste est la prison* recounts the estrangement of a married couple from the perspective of Isma, the wife, who is a musicologist, university lecturer, and filmmaker. Indeed, the film she is making can safely be assumed to be *La Nouba des femmes du Mont Chenoua*, Djebbar's 1979 film, yet the identity of author, narrator, and protagonist do not meld. This fluid identity of the actants, especially since the intimate history in the narrative present alternates with twentieth-century Algerian history, has been theorized as giving formal expression to the sisterhood the author aspires to. The passage of greatest erotic tension in *Vaste est la prison* is perhaps the one in which the adulterous protagonist dances in front of her beloved. She had long resisted being "touched by a man," or dancing as a couple. Her objective was the autonomous body. Yet on this fateful summer night she loses herself completely in the delirium of dance, and afterwards, looking back, realizes that she has been "seen" by the beloved. When her marriage disintegrates, and Isma confesses to her husband, he becomes violent, repeatedly attempting to strike her in the eyes and blind her, thereby underscoring the importance of the gaze to desire.

*La femme sans sépulture* is about the heroic Zoulikha, a woman who fought in the Algerian resistance, died, and whose whereabouts are unknown. Her family is therefore unable to grieve properly. The paradoxes in this novel are poignant. It is the repeated and intensified interro-

gation by the French police commissioner that pushes Zoulikha to choose a life as a guerilla in the mountains, a fact for which she is grateful. As for the interrogations, they are not without a palpable sexual tension felt by both parties, troubling in light of their ideological differences, the power imbalance between them, and the context itself. The narration also confuses the violence contained within such desire, hinting that this rape would not be entirely unwanted. But just as the text suggests taboo sexuality of colonizer and colonized, it reflects upon some marital unions among Algerians as exploitive. This is the case with a girl fourteen being married to a man of more than seventy, as well as with one of Zoulikha's husbands, who was quickly depleting her inheritance.

*Vaste est la prison* and *La femme sans sépulture* are novels in which marriage is represented as neither happy nor lasting. Yet the protagonists find the resolve to start anew. Perhaps it is their female networks, the certain solidarity of grandmothers, mothers, sisters, and even in-laws that gives them the courage to do so. Eroticism is therefore but one aspect of love, which is most importantly sororal. Despite a few cases of cowardice, the lasting impression of *La femme sans sépulture* is of a feminine support group on which Zoulikha can fall back.

Another work that is interesting from the perspective of erotic literature is *Nuits de Strasbourg*, which discusses sexuality more explicitly than these novels set in Algeria. Yet perhaps because of this, it seems less representative of Djebbar's fiction. In another way, it is representative, however, because it situates sexuality within a context of power, of struggle, including the specter of violence.

### Biography

Assia Djebbar is the pseudonym of the Algerian writer, playwright, and filmmaker Fatima-Zohra Imayalen, born on 4 August 1936 in Cherchell, Algeria. She attended French schools as a young girl and studied history at ENS Sèvres (1955) as the first Algerian woman to be accepted there. She taught history at the University of Algeria (1962–1965), and French literature and cinema (1974–1980). In 1958 she married resistance member Ahmed Ould-Rouï, whom she divorced. In 1980 she married the poet Malek Alloula. From 1983–1989, member of a French ministry

## DON JUAN

advisory group dedicated to Algerian emigrants and their representation on television. Founding member, in 1993, of the International Parliament of Authors. Distinguished Professor and Director of the Louisiana State University French and Francophone Studies Centre, the largest of its kind in the United States, since 1997. Since Fall 2001 she has been Silver Chair Professor of French at New York University. Among her numerous distinctions are the 1996 Neustadt Prize for Contributions to World Literature, the 1997 Yourcenar Prize, and the 2000 *Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels*. She is a member of the Belgian *Académie Royale de Langue Française* and on June 16, 2005, she was elected to the *Académie Française*. Djébar has been mentioned as a candidate for the Nobel Prize in Literature.

FRANK RUNCIE

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# DON JUAN

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### The Myth from Tirso de Molina to Molière and Byron

Don Juan's name has become synonymous with seduction and serial sex, and the term 'don Juan' can be applied to any man who is sexually successful with numerous women. But despite the strong emphasis on sex indicated by the don Juan figure, comparatively few of the hundreds of works dedicated to the character and theme are clearly erotic (although in the case of the many dramatic versions this would be affected by staging and performance). While before Romanticism the tale did facilitate male fantasies about women's sexual desires, it also had overtly moral purposes about death and judgement. The earliest known version, *El burlador de Sevilla* [*The*

*Trickster of Seville*], popularly attributed to Spanish playwright Tirso de Molina and thought to date any time between 1616 and 1625, brings don Juan's career to an end with the statue of an angry father of one female victim, a man who don Juan killed in a duel over her honor: the statue drags don Juan to Hell for failing to repent of his sins. The original don Juan shows few erotic sensibilities, and his true purpose lies in ruining women's reputations and tricking them into sex. The pleasure lies in conquest rather than the satisfaction of sexual desire. Subsequent versions, including Molière's *Dom Juan* (1665) and Mozart and da Ponte's opera *Don Giovanni* (1787), kept the same emphasis on the flouting of social conventions and on female conquest in

preference to overt displays of eroticism. In these two works don Juan fails to carry out a successful seduction—his fame as a seducer resting on his reputation—so that flirtatious foreplay rather than the sexual act itself becomes the primary vehicle for suggestions of sexual desire. In contrast, an excess of actual sexual encounters bordering on rape, in Shadwell's *The Libertine* (1675), directly countered any sense of eroticism. Molière did, however, allow *his* don Juan to feel that to be faithful to one woman was to be unjust to all the rest, implying that for don Juan indiscriminate sexual activity was simply a kindness to women—a justification that would subsequently become more overt with Kierkegaard.

With the advent of Romanticism, the emphasis shifted from judgement for sins to the male individual quest for fulfilment, which would often take the form of a search for the perfect woman who, of course, could never be found. Byron's poem *Don Juan* (1819–1824) includes a virginal don Juan's initiation into sex by an older woman as well as the sex slave of a harem of Turkish women and the plaything of the Russian Empress Catherine, in each case suggesting a fantasy of the passive male as a sex toy for women—an element that would reappear in twentieth-century versions. Possibly the most significant work about don Juan in this era was not any work of literature, but philosophy, Søren Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, which included two essays on Mozart's *Don Giovanni*. Kierkegaard takes up Molière's earlier notion of don Giovanni's serial fornication as a kindness to women by presenting him as the epitome of female erotic desire. Later in the same work Kierkegaard offers us a voyeuristic portrait of Mozart's donna Elvira, whose hysteria at the loss of don Giovanni leaves her running about in a revealing dishevelled state, a motif of erotic display also found in relation to donna Anna in E.T.A. Hoffmann's short story 'Don Juan' (1813), a reinterpretation and critique of Mozart's and da Ponte's character. Hoffmann also asserted that, despite her avowals to the contrary in the opera, Anna succumbed to don Juan's sexual persuasions—generally a more pleasurable notion for the male reader than her avowed commitment to her virtue. Also significant in respect of eroticism is the most popular Spanish version, Zorrilla's *Don Juan Tenorio* (1844)—performed annually in Spain and better known there than the Tirso

original. In this version, don Juan finds his good woman, Inés, and intends to reform her: her death sends him back on his old course, but her ghost returns to redeem him as he dies. This overly sentimental play nonetheless provides a focus of eroticism in the character Inés: an innocent novice, she describes in detail her awakening sexuality, while elsewhere don Juan himself comments that he will open her up like a flower to the dew.

In the same year, 1844, the protagonist of Nikolai Lenau's poem *Don Juan* seduces women until he becomes sated, and throws away his life in a duel through sheer boredom. Lenau's motif of satiety introduced a note of weariness with the life of seduction and the endless pursuit of sex that would become more commonplace as don Juan left Romanticism behind and began a search for utopias beyond women. Twentieth-century versions of don Juan move his quest on to a search for higher entities than the perfect woman. Many of these don Juans, indeed, shun the company of women, who nonetheless chase after them as a result of their insatiable desire—the male fantasy made manifest. Shaw's drawing-room comedy version, *Man and Superman* (1901–1903), contains much about the search of John Tanner (don Juan) for the Nietzschean Life Force, and his flight from the predatory Ann Whitefield, who succeeds in capturing him at the end. Their final exchange is suggestive of a sexual climax, as they talk more urgently and Ann breathes harder and faster. For Shaw's women, however, sexuality is a means to an end, subordinate to the drive to reproduce. Max Frisch's *Don Juan oder die Liebe zur Geometrie* (Don Juan or the Love of Geometry: 1952, revised 1961) works a similar vein. This don Juan wishes to devote his time to the abstract study of geometry, but the insatiable demands of women drag him in a mire of drinking and bad temper. Shaw's and Frisch notion of don Juan as the victim of female desire occurred earlier with Edmond de Rostand's *La dernière nuit de don Juan* (1914), where don Juan functions as a plaything for women. Thus although don Juan himself popularly symbolizes endless sexual pleasure, don Juan's history comes in the end to mean the degeneration and staleness of such pleasure, suggesting that its erotic possibilities will sooner or later be exhausted—a sort of literary detumescence.

ANN DAVIES

## DONNE, JOHN

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## DONNE, JOHN

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1572–1631

English Poet and Cleric

John Donne (1572–1631) was the first and greatest of the Metaphysical Poets: a term coined by Dryden to describe their characteristic exploitation of unpredictable imagery; their forceful juxtapositions of abstract with concrete and of colloquial with learned allusion. Donne's poetry falls like his own life into two distinct categories: secular and sacred. The second of these, like his magnificent sermons and his prose works

generally, makes only slight and conventional use of erotic reference, as in the conclusion to *Holy Sonnet 10* (XIV):

...for I  
Except you'enthrall mee, never shall be free,  
Nor ever chaste, except you ravish mee.

The use of erotic material, description, and anecdote in his secular poetry however is pervasive, in registers that range from brash self display in certain of the *Elegies* through occasional, Juvenalian detachment in the *Satyres*, ritualisticsensuality

in the *Epithalamia* and wit, light-hearted or cruel; mischief and exquisite tenderness in the *Songs and Sonnets*. The first and last of these groups are considered here in more detail.

### *The Elegies*

Only a very few of his public poems were printed in Donne's lifetime. It is likely that the *Elegies* were among his earliest work, written while he was at the Inns of Court, and intended for circulation among his fellow students: a specific, intellectual, all-male readership, and one very self-conscious at this time of its culturally avant-garde status. The Roman poets, especially Ovid, Martial, and Juvenal, are obvious influences. In these poems, sexual and erotic reference is exploited in a number of ways. *The Comparison* is simply structured by ingenious, epigrammatic pairing of the attributes of a Blazon of Beauty with its repulsive opposite:

Is not your last act harsh, and violent,  
As when a Plough the stony ground doth rent?  
So kisse good Turtles, so devoutly nice  
Are Priests in handling reverent sacrifice,  
And such in searching wounds the Surgeon is  
As wee, when wee embrace, or touch, or kisse.  
(11.47–1151)

The disturbingly multivalent image of priestly sacrifice recurs in the formal context of Donne's *Epithalamion* for the marriage of the Earl of Somerset, December 1613:

So, shee...  
...at the Bridegroom's wish'd approach doth lye,  
Like an appointed lambe, when tenderly  
The priest comes on his knees t'embowell her;  
(11. 87–90)

Images transposed in this way so as to heighten the different registers in which they occur are typical of Donne's erotic discourse generally, most subtly in the *Songs and Sonnets*.

The two *Elegies* most famous for their inventive and energetic display of erotic wit are *To his Mistris Going to Bed* and *Loves Progress*. The former is a dramatic monologue, a form Donne uses frequently. The colloquial invocation, with which it opens is characteristic:

Come, Madame, come, all rest my powers defie,  
Until I labour, I in labour lye. (11.1–2)

The uninhibited celebration of sensual delights that follows is likely to be more wishful thinking

than autobiography. The splendid clothes and ornaments the lady is commanded to cast aside are those either of a rich, even a noble lady, or of a very expensive courtesan, neither a likely sexual partner for a student of average means. The lovers' situation is in any case a dramatic context for passion and its verbal analysis:

Licence my roving hands, and let them goe  
Behind, before, above, between, below.  
Oh my America, my new found lande... (11.25–27)

*Loves Progress* is a debate-variation on the common motif of the woman's body as a landscape to be explored. The lover's goal being 'the Centrique part' or vagina, he may approach it from the head, traveling downwards as Shakespeare's Venus indicates to Adonis (*V and A*, 11.229234) or from the feet, as does Nashe in his *Choise of Valentines* (11.100 ft), where the lady is a prostitute. Donne's pragmatic conclusion and the puns on financial dealing which express it suggest that in this instance so is his:

Rich Nature hath in woman wisely made  
Two purses, and their mouths aversely laid;  
They then which to the lower tribute owe  
That way which that exchequer lookes must goe.  
(11. 91–94)

### *The Songs and Sonnets*

These are now generally recognized as falling into two groups. In the first are poems that center primarily on a conceit, and sometimes a situation, most often erotic. Ovid, and his Renaissance followers are direct influences. *The Indifferent*, for instance, is a replay of *Amores* II iv, and *The Flea* exploits the Seduction Poem format to take to new and brilliantly funny extremes the common trope of the lover's comments on the intimacy a flea enjoys with his mistress:

Marke but this flea, and marke in this,  
How little that which thou deniest me is:  
Mee it suck'd first, and now sucks thee,  
And in this flea, our two bloods mingled bee...

Oh stay, three lives in one flea spare,  
Where wee almost, nay more than maryed are:  
This flea is you and I, and this  
Our mariage bed and mariage temple is;

Though parents grudge, and you, w'are met,  
And cloystered in these living walls of Jet.  
The lady kills the flea, and points out that neither of them seems the worse for it:

## DORAT, CLAUDE-JOSEPH

'Tis true, then learne how false feares bee;  
Just so much honor, when thou yeeld'st to mee,  
Will wast, as this flea's death tooke life from thee.

In the second group are poems of mutual or unrequited passion, and some, possibly influenced by Neoplatonic concepts, which deal with the union of true lovers as a kind of transcendence:

Thou sunne....  
Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;  
This bed thy center is, these walls, thy sphere.  
(*The Sunne Rising*, 11. 25–30).

Among these extraordinary philosophical and intellectual explorations of physical passion, *The Dreame* takes the situation of Ovid's *Amores* I. v., where Corinna wakes the poet from his siesta to make love until both are exhausted, recasting it with subtlety and tenderness:

Thou art so true, that thoughts of thee suffice,  
To make dreames truth; and fables histories;  
Enter these arms, for since thou thought it best  
Not to dreame all my dreame, let's do the rest.

*The Extasie* is the most difficult of these poems, and also the most revealing. It presents a rare experience, of spiritual union, and its analysis through Donne's very precise perception of the relation of such a state, once achieved, to physical consumation. The interdependence of erotic and intellectual passion is taken to the highest reach of human potential:

To'our bodies turn wee then, that so  
men on love revealed may looke;

mysteries in soules do grow,  
yet the body is his booke.

### Biography

Born in London in 1572. Brought up as a Catholic: studied at the Inns of Court from 1591; saw military service abroad 1596–1597; secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton 1598; MP for Brackley, Northants. 1601. His elopement with his employer's neice, Ann More, in the same year, effectually ended his hopes of further advancement. After years of poverty alleviated by occasional patronage he converted to Anglicanism, and was ordained a priest in 1615. His clerical career was highly distinguished. He was elected Dean of St Paul's, 1621, a post he held until his death ten years later.

ELIZABETH WATSON PORGES

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## DORAT, CLAUDE-JOSEPH

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(1734–1780)  
French poet, novelist, dramatist

### (attributed) *Les Egarements de Julie*

A novel in three parts first published in 1755. Controversy exists regarding its authorship. Barbier's *Dictionnaire des œuvres anonymes*

(3<sup>rd</sup> edition, 1874, vol. 2, p.38) attributes the novel to J.A.R. Perrin (died 1813), as does the Brancart edition of 1883, whereas others cite Dorat as the author, including Georges Albert-Roulhac and Magdy Gabriel Badir.

The 1755 edition by Hochereau l'ainé in Amsterdam is rare. Better known editions followed in Amsterdam in 1756 and in London

in 1776. As its title would suggest, the novel is a late manifestation of the libertine novel for which Crébillon fils is famous. The work's style is galant and its content is suggestive rather than obscene, but in spite of this the work was forbidden during the Restoration, added to the Index in 1825, and officially condemned by order of the Cour Royale de Paris on 5 August 1828.

Narrated in the first person, *Les égarements de Julie* follows the heroine from her humble origins in a series of adventures around France, focusing on her sexual development and her social ascent. From the early age of 13, Julie decides to make the most of her physical charms in order to improve her material situation. In insisting upon the theme of *égarement* (in the sense of the principal character being led astray), the work retains the plotline of the libertine novel (Cp. Crébillon fils's better known *Les égarements du cœur et de l'esprit*, 1736–1738), whilst containing a moralizing strand, which sees the heroine reconciled with bourgeois moral values at the close of the work. In accordance with this dual influence, perhaps, the early stages of the novel contain interspersed retrospective comments of regret which suggest that Julie was obliged to act as she did according to her libertine temperament and her penchant for vice:

Qu'êtes-vous devenus, bouillants transports, appétits déréglés, auxquels je ne savais rien refuser? Temps orageux d'une jeunesse inconsidérée, je vous ai employés à courir follement après un bonheur dont je ne saisissais jamais que l'ombre (1776 edition, vol. 3, pp. 99-100).

The explanation which passages such as this give for her early actions is a combination of age, natural temperament, and education ('Qui put jamais résister au vice, après avoir eu le malheur d'y être instruit? nous ne fûmes jamais que ce qu'on nous fit', vol. 1), but in contrast with the older Julie's retrospective judgements as narrator, the young character seems at the time to lack any concern for the future, or any moral conscience relative to her actions. Julie seems quite at home with the rules of society, one of the guiding principles of which is women's power over men.

The first section charts Julie's early sexual experiences and the origins of her social ambition.

The style is restrained, which means that the sexual episodes in the novel are alluded to clearly but never described in detail. Julie's first contact with sexuality comes from spying on a childhood friend (Sophie) and her lover; setting up one important strand of the work as a whole; namely, that sexual pleasure can be voyeuristic as well as physical, and one of the reasons for the work's anonymous publication was almost certainly these early pages, where a lesbian scene between Julie and Sophie is alluded to. Julie's first lover, Sieur Valérie, is also introduced, but is pitted against the older but rich financier M. Poupard, described throughout as physically repulsive and morally ridiculous but who is intended for Julie in an arranged marriage by her aunt. Encouraged by Poupard's advances, Julie soon learns that she can easily flatter him enough to be showered with presents, without committing herself physically.

After having been tricked out of her newfound fortune by a third man, the Marquis de Bellegrade, the second part sees the newly impoverished Julie enter into a relationship with the merchant Démery, very much along the lines of her previous liaison with Poupard. More importantly, she also meets a young serving girl, Cécile, leading to a second apparently lesbian scene in the book, until it turns out that Cecile is actually a young man (Vépry) in disguise and Julie and he become clandestine lovers. The second section is notable for the rocambolesque elements which it uses: unfortunate turns of the plot, such as when Démery dies of an attack of apoplexy which obliges Julie and Vépry to leave Bordeaux for Marseille, chance meetings, such as the following episode in Marseille when Julie meets her childhood friend, Sophie, and surprise events, such as when Sophie's new fiancé turns out to be the same Marquis de Bellegrade from part one.

In the third part, Julie plans her revenge on Bellegrade by ruining his relationship with Sophie, yet the result is that the situation turns against her and Vépry leaves her. Despite the 1970 edition's claim that '[l]a dernière partie n'ajoute rien aux succès comme aux déboires de la ravissante Julie', the final section inflects the plot to a significant extent: Julie falls into a serious illness, only to be saved by an unattractive but modest philosophical man, Gerbo, who lives on the floor above. Though a seemingly



unlikely candidate for her affections, Gerbo's tale of previous misfortunes at the hands of people less virtuous than him, his care for Julie, and his virtuous and modest nature touch Julie to the extent that she will settle with him, and as narrator, finish her tale by deploring her licentious nature.

### *Les malheurs de l'inconstance*

An epistolary novel in two parts first published in 1772, and including a preface by the author. The plot is centred upon the Duc de \*\*\*, who has failed to seduce Mme de Syrcé. In order to get his revenge, he encourages his young nephew cousin the Count de Mirbelle to seduce her and then ruin her reputation; the Duke also plans to win Mirbelle's current lover, the English widow Lady Sidley, for himself. Mirbelle is originally hesitant, yet is spurred on by the Duke's mockery, seduces Mme de Syrcé but then falls genuinely in love with her. Sidley learns of the new liaison by an anonymous letter and, heartbroken, retires from society, whereas Mme de Syrcé, when she has learned everything from Mirbelle himself, miscarries their child and dies. The now ruined Mirbelle kills the Duke in a duel.

The Duke, upon whom the plot is centered, may be taken as one of the models for Laclos's comte de Valmont, despite differences in style and skill between the two authors (Trousson, p. 894). If Lady Sidley is a self-styled habituée in misfortune ('Le ciel semble m'avoir fait naître pour les chagrins les plus sensibles; & s'il me donna le courage, ce fut pour l'exercer par l'infortune' [part 1, letter 1]), who eschews social convention and proudly follows her heart, Mme de Syrcé fights her feelings for Mirbelle until the end of part one. In the final letter, Mirbelle, having secretly followed her flight to the country to avoid him, comes across her in a garden and she gives in to him.

Despite the 'frivolity' and superficiality with which much of his work was charged by contemporaries, Dorat's novel, ten years before *Les liaisons dangereuses*, creates a genuinely tragic ending, borne of the breakdown of moral order in a society characterized by dissipation. In posing, in filigree, the problem of the interrelation of nature and society, the novel also asks the fundamental question of whether man is morally good or bad (1983 edition, p. ix-x).

### Biography

The younger son of a noble family, Dorat served briefly in the military before resigning his post to take up writing. His literary output, spanning the 1760s and 1770s, is abundant and varied, yet widely considered by contemporaries and later critics as superficial; only recently has the importance of some of his works been recognized. An author of *Héroïdes*, six tragedies, a text on theater (*La déclamation théâtrale*), and novels (six are attributed to him, yet only three with certainty), Dorat's narrative work is in line with contemporary developments in the genre which link sensibility and virtue, with some echoes of Rousseauism, even though contemporaries were scornful of such writers' mingling of philosophy and libertinage ('des espèces de Socrate de toilette qui ont affublé la philosophie et la morale de toutes les franfreluches de la frivolité', Baron Grimm, *Correspondance littéraire*, quoted by Trousson, p.891). Laurent Versini has recognized the importance of Dorat's *Les Malheurs de l'inconstance* for some of the characters and situations in Laclos's *Les liaisons dangereuses* (1782). His output also contains libertine poetry, notably *Les baisers* (1770), an imitation of the work of the same title (*Basia*) by the neo-Latin poet Joannis Secundus (Fr. Jean Second) (*B. The Hague, 1511 – D. Tournai, 1536*).

MARK DARLOW

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[Anon.] *Les malheurs de l'inconstance, ou lettres de la marquise de Syrcé et du comte de Mirbelle* (Amsterdam, et se trouve à Paris: Delalain, 1772). 2 parts.

[Translation] *The Fatal Effects of Inconstancy; or, Letters of the Marchioness de Syrcé, the Count de Mirbeele [sic] and others* (London: J. Bew, 1774). 2 vols. *Les Baisers, précédés du Mois de mai* (La Haye/Paris: Delalain, 1770).

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## DOSTOEVSKY, FEDOR

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1821–1881

Novelist, short-story writer, journalist

The Russian 20th-century philosopher Nikolai Berdiaev wrote that Fedor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky “laid bare the sensual element in the complex Russian nature and his plots are worked out in the stormy atmosphere of passion: there is nothing like it in any other Russian writer,” which earned him the epithet “the Russian Sade.” Sexual desire plays an important role in his works and “the plots of Dostoevsky’s great novels of the period 1866 to 1880 are moved by sexual secrets and scandals” (Fusso 2002–2003, 47). His works are considered erotic not because they arouse sexual desire, but because they present eroticism as a philosophical problem with ethical, psychological, and social implications. Structurally, the author presents the problem of eroticism through a complex doubling of plot lines and characters, typically contrasting tender, maternal affection to destructive and stormy sexual passion. Synthesis of the two is achieved not in the establishment of a traditional family, as in Tolstoi’s *War and Peace*, for example, but in the subordination of sensuality to compassion. There are, in fact, few happy couples in Dostoevskii’s work.

His first published work, the epistolary novel *Bednye liudi* [*Poor Folk*] (1846), exhibits the strong influence of the Naturalist writer Nikolai Gogol, whose most famous characters—lowly civil servants—are characterized by deeply

repressed sexual desires and, in some cases, a morbid fear of women and marriage. The hero of *Poor Folk*, Makar Devushkin, is a humble clerk whose surname derives from the Russian word *devushka* (young lady). The novel is structured around his epistolary attempts to court Varvara, a sentimental woman with a past reminiscent of Rousseau’s Julie. Devushkin hopes to woo her with his literary style, but she is violently seduced and carried off by Bykov, whose name is taken from the Russian word for bull. In what would become a recurring motif in Dostoevsky’s work, a gentle, somewhat feminine hero loses the girl to a strong and violent male who inhabits a more traditional masculine identity.

The fallen woman appears again in “Zapiski iz podpol’ia” [Notes from the Underground] (1864) in the character of Liza, a young prostitute who longs to be loved and to escape the life of the brothel. The underground man, combining the violent passion of Bykov and the sentimental tenderness of Devushkin, is both moved to comfort Liza and to dominate her. In a moment of sentimental tenderness, he is sexually aroused and possesses her—illustrated in the text by an ellipsis—after which he seeks to humiliate her by placing money in her hand. Liza’s refusal of the money demonstrates her pride and dignity in the most degrading circumstances. The tyranny of men is also the theme of “Krotkaia” [The Gentle Creature] (1876), a desperate first person narrative by a pawnbroker,

similar in character to the underground man, whose wife leaps from a window clutching an icon in order to escape his sadistic treatment.

The prostitute Liza is clearly a prototype for Sonia in *Prestuplenie i nakazanie* [*Crime and Punishment*] (1866), the first of Dostoevsky's great novels written after his Siberian exile. Driven to prostitution to support her half-siblings, the meek Sonia exhibits great moral strength. Raskolnikov, the hero of the novel, who kills an old pawnbroker to prove that he is above the law, learns humility from Sonia and eventually does what she commands, confessing his crime in Haymarket Square and kissing the earth that he defiled. Raskolnikov's double in the novel is Svidrigailov who has also committed a crime. Rumors circulate that he corrupted a young girl who later, on the eve of his suicide, haunts his dreams, staring at him with an impudent, adult smile on her face. In the expurgated chapter from *Besy* [*The Demons*] (1872), entitled "U Tikhona" [At Tikhon's], the radical Stavrogin also confesses to the rape of a young girl, thus exposing a violent will to power at the heart of his utopian politics. So central is this motif to Dostoevsky's portrayal of sexual desire and the power relations between men and women that it has been rumored since the late 19th century that the author himself committed such a crime. Ieronim Iasinsky made it the subject of a short story entitled "Ispoved'" [Confession] (1888), in which Dostoevskii confesses to his literary nemesis, Ivan Turgenev, that he raped a young girl.

Dostoevsky's novel *Idiot* [*The Idiot*] (1868) explores the psychology of the gentle male as embodied in the Christ-like Prince Myshkin, whose name is formed from the Russian word for mouse. Myshkin is torn between his love for the socially acceptable and progressive Aglaia and Nastasia Filipovna, a passionate woman with a past. Inspired, it appears, less by passion than by a desire to save Nastasia, Myshkin pledges to marry her, but Nastasia is ultimately unable to accept his offer and runs to the violent Rogozhin who eventually murders her. Having failed to save Nastasia or to find love for himself, Myshkin returns to Switzerland at the novel's close, his health destroyed. His fate is not unlike that of Aleksei, the hero of *Igrok* [*The Gambler*] (1867), whose passion for the emancipated Polina appears to both mirror and feed a growing addiction to gambling,

which leaves him a physical and emotional wreck.

Erotic passion is also central to *Brat'ia Karamazovy* [*The Brothers Karamazov*] (1880), a novel organized around the crime of parricide. Violent tyranny is associated with unbridled sensuality in the character of the father, Fedor Karamazov. Each of the three brothers, Dmitrii, Ivan, and Alesha has a particular relationship to the erotic. Dmitrii, or Mitia, the eldest brother, is a traditional member of the upper class who indulges his sensual tastes and appetites, while Ivan, a modern intellectual, subordinates his erotic desires to his radical philosophical and political ideals. Alesha, a character in the tradition of Prince Myshkin, is a gentle young man who, at the beginning of the novel, is studying under Father Zosima to become a monk. Smerdiakov, who may be the illegitimate child of Fedor, is an utterly corrupted individual. The main female characters are Grushenka, another woman with a past who uses her sensuality to tempt Fedor Karamazov and his sons, and Katerina Ivanovna, who combines elements of aristocratic pride with the seriousness of purpose of that century's "new woman." Although Katerina Ivanovna punishes Dmitrii by delivering damning and spiteful testimony against him, she reveals what is for Dostoevsky the feminine virtue of self-sacrifice in her desire to save Ivan from his nihilism.

Dostoevsky's most damning portrait of unbridled sensuality is perhaps the one contained in the short story "Bobok," which appeared in the author's column *Dnevnik Pisatel'* [*Diary of a Writer*] in 1873. In it, Dostoevsky presents the posthumous sexual confessions of decaying corpses in a graveyard. The title, "Bobok," which means *seed*, is a reference to the New Testament parable of the mustard seed. In contemporary Russian society, it would seem, there is no fertile soil for the seed of spiritual insight to take root.

Dostoevsky's presentation of eroticism as a struggle between compassion and passion, which is closely connected to political and philosophical issues of power, earned him a central place in Russian writings on the philosophy of love in the fin-de-siecle. Strongly influenced by Neo-Platonism, various writers and thinkers of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century saw in Dostoevsky's work the confrontation of fundamental philosophical principles—masculine and

feminine, body and spirit, the dionysian and the apollonian. Vladimir Solov'ev saw the resolution of such antinomies in Sophia, the feminine principle of holy wisdom, Viacheslav Ivanov in the androgyne, and Vasilii Rozanov in the sexual union of a man and a woman.

### Biography

Born in Moscow, 30 October 1821, the son of a doctor; attended the Military Engineering School in St. Petersburg, 1837–1843; then served the minimum term in the military. Published his first work of fiction, *Bednye liudi* [*Poor Folk*], 1846. Sentenced to death for involvement with the radical Petroshevsky Circle but reprieved at the last moment; sentence commuted to time in a prison labor camp in Siberia, 1850–1854, followed by internal exile, 1854–1859. First wife died of tuberculosis on 15 April 1864; his brother, Mikhail, died on 10 July 1864. Had disastrous affair with Apollonaria Suslova (nicknamed Polina) and developed gambling addiction. Married his stenographer, Anna Grigorievna Snitkina in 1867; had four children; one died in infancy, another at age three. In addition to fiction writing, was active as an editor and a journalist; wrote a column of social commentary and fiction, *Dnevnik pisatel'ia* [*Diary of a Writer*], at irregular intervals between 1871–1881. Died of a hemorrhage in his throat on 29 January 1881.

BRIAN JAMES BAER

### Editions

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# DOUGLAS, NORMAN

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1868–1952

Travel writer, novelist and essayist

## *Some Limericks*

Gershon Legman claims that the limerick in its modern form was accidentally created when Edward Lear's 1846 *Book of Nonsense* (a volume of "very tepidly humorous limericks") was reprinted in London in 1863. Seized upon almost immediately by publishers and magazine editors in Britain and North America, the limerick fad was launched under such innocuous rubrics as "nonsense rhymes" or "nursery rhymes." The obscene or scatological limerick, which circulated primarily by word of mouth, would likewise seem to have become rapidly very popular.

Since the limerick is not generally familiar outside English-speaking countries, it is as well to provide an example here. Attention is particularly drawn to the rhyme scheme (*aabba*), the fact that the opening line almost invariably contains a geographic reference, and the fact that the limerick in its 'adult' form is generally associated with exclusively male gatherings. Significantly, this particular example was published in *The Pearl. A monthly journal or facetiae and voluptuous reading* (1879–1880) under the heading "nursery rhymes":

There was a young man of Peru,  
Who was hard up for something to do.  
So he took out his carrot,  
And buggered his parrot,  
And sent the results to the zoo.

If Legman's suppositions are correct, the birth, apogee, and decline of the limerick largely coincide with Norman Douglas's own life span. Though modest by later standards (Legman's 1964 collection contains more than 1700 examples), the sixty or so specimens that Douglas provides represent an important contribution to the study and popularity of the form—as is suggested both by the numerous pirate editions of *Some Limericks* which have been put into

circulation (Legman lists six, and there has been several more subsequently) and the fact that several later compilations (such as Count Palmiro Vicarion's *Book of Limericks*, 1955) were clearly written in imitation of Douglas.

The interest of *Some Limericks*, however, is not restricted only to the nature of the "lyrics" (to employ Douglas's term) themselves but also includes the mock-scholarly introduction and detailed footnotes and indexes which accompany them. Cyril Connolly claimed in 1965 that *South Wind* survives as a novel "because it pleases, because Douglas's cackle is still infectious." The same might be said of *Some Limericks*, with its wry annotations, listing of variant lines, and spurious references. In a sense, the limericks themselves (and it is not known how many, if any, Douglas wrote himself—the one cited above from *The Pearl* is certainly included) are of less importance than the modernist games that the author is intent on playing with them.

This is, of course, to locate *Some Limericks* as more central to Douglas's *oeuvre* than is usually assumed to be the case. Interestingly, about the same time he started collecting material (circa 1917), he must also have begun to compile that list of "abusive, vituperative or profane expletives" (i.e., the swear words of Florentine cab drivers) which he mentions in a footnote to *Alone* (1921) but which, in fact, had been cut from the manuscript on the advice of his friend John Mavrogordato. Indeed, the use Douglas threatens to make of these Tuscan blasphemies is close in spirit to the later limerick collection since the project would not only entail the "scientific" recording" of data but also "an elaborate commentary" which might also be described as a "study in folklore." (*Alone*, p. 176) Equally significant, Douglas's autobiography (*Looking Back*, 1933) also involves a complex game between a seemingly inconsequential corpora (namely, the visiting cards that various callers have left behind) and the author's own memoirs of the individuals in question.

That being said, Douglas himself was renowned for his earthy sense of humor and there can be no doubt that the material contained in *Some Limericks* held a particular appeal for him, not least as an antidote to the hypocrisy and stuffiness which he considered pervaded British sexual morality. (Psychologically, the limerick is, of course, an indication of sexual anxiety.) He probably also rejoiced in the fact that the original edition of *Some Limericks* was printed by Orioli (a close friend and traveling companion) in Florence the same year that the same publisher brought out the first edition of D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover*. Given the intense rivalry which existed between the two men, it is not altogether impossible that Douglas delighted in bringing out a work which far surpassed Lawrence as far as four-letter words were concerned. He would no doubt be delighted to learn that today, since it was published in a limited edition of only 110 copies, *Some Limericks* is an extremely scarce and collectable work.

### Biography

George Norman Douglas was born in 1868 at Falkenhorst, near Thüringen in Austria, of mixed Scottish and German descent. In 1893, he sat the examinations for the British Diplomatic Service and was quickly posted to St Peterburg where, within two years of his arrival, a minor sexual indiscretion (the first of many to follow) effectively put paid to any hope of further advancement. Retreating to Italy, he bought a villa overlooking the Bay of Naples with money inherited from his father and set about writing the studies of the area and travelogues of trips further afield for which he is still justly acclaimed: *Siren Land* (1911), *Fountains in the Sand* (1912), *Old Calabria* (1915), *Alone* (1921), *Together* (1923), and *Capri. Materials*

*for a Description of the Island* (1930). His first novel, *South Wind* (1917), later listed by Cyril Connolly as one of the key 100 books of the Modern Movement, became an international best-seller. Meanwhile, Douglas's eclectic range of interests gave rise to a collection of *London Street Games* (1916), a bawdy and occasionally scatological compilation of limericks (*Some Limericks*, 1928), and two intriguing books on aphrodisiacs (*Paneros: Some Words on Aphrodisiacs and the Like*, 1930; *Venus in the Kitchen*, 1952). He died in Capri in 1952.

TERRY HALE

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# DRAMA

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From the dawn of Western drama with the Greeks, theater has been intimately connected to eroticism, since dramatic action invariably centers on conflict arising from the correlation between, and incompatibility of, power, duty, and desire. Indeed, tragedy evolved in part from fertility rites associated with Dionysus. Primitive cultures often enacted rituals focusing on the violation of sexual laws, and the acting out of forbidden desires on stage, notably in Sophocles's *Oedipus* trilogy (c. 428 BCE), can be read as a further extension of this cathartic process. It is striking that over 2500 years later, Sigmund Freud would refer to such types in Greek tragedy as manifestations of deep-seated human sexuality. Euripides's *Hippolytus* (428 BCE) and Sophocles's *Phaedra* deal with the passion of a stepmother for her husband's son, Hippolytus, seeing in him an idealized, and younger, version of her spouse. The same story has inspired many other dramatic works throughout the centuries, including versions by Seneca the Younger (54 CE), Jean Racine (1677), Per Olov Enquist (1980), and Sarah Kane (1996). Structuralists have interpreted this myth as constituting an inverted form of the Oedipus tale.

The phallic ceremonies and ribaldry of pagan rites passed over into comedy, which often ventured into erotic topics. Cratinus's *The Bottle* (423 BCE) deals with a man's wife and mistress battling for his affections. The central element of Aristophanes's *Lysistrata* (411 BCE) is the power of sex within a community. An Athenian woman, the comedy's protagonist, is exasperated at the war against Sparta dragging on without resolution, and comes up with a novel method of forcing the Greek soldiers to sue for peace: depriving them of sexual relations. This and other comedies by Aristophanes (448–380 BCE) are characterized by an underlying bawdiness, and plays such as *Wasps*, *Birds*, and *Frogs* combine social satire and humor with obscenity. The reception and commercial success of these sexual comedies influenced the course of later

writers, such as Menander (c. 342–292 BCE) who retained sensuality as an integral feature of his works, and it may be argued that this ultimately altered the development of comedy to include the obscene as a usual component. Bawdy and obscene mime and farce was the standard fare of the theaters throughout the Roman Empire. The comedies of Plautus (c. 254–184 BCE) take up Greek stock types; in *Pseudolus* (191 BCE), the protagonist is in love with a prostitute, and mixes with pimps, other harlots, and indulges in revels as part of his journey to marry her. Prostitutes, pimps, and sexually excited youths are standard in Plautine drama. Roman comedy and mime took on negative connotations for the Christians, and this affiliation with sexual excess would later arouse the censure of the Church. Even though the Council of Illiberis (305 CE) mandated that the acting profession was incompatible with the Christian faith, the indecent pose and dress of female mime artists of the Byzantine theater would be condemned by ecclesiastics as late as the tenth century.

Theatrical performance on the Indian subcontinent dates back around five thousand years, and evolved largely independent of Western influence, with the exception of some Hellenistic elements introduced during Alexander the Great's invasion. The concept of the tragic, in its traditional Western sense, was absent from Indian theater, resulting in a predominance of romantic tragi-comedy, stemming from both Hindu and Buddhist traditions. *Mriccha Katika* [*The Little Clay Cart*] (c. 2nd century BCE) probably by Shudrakaone, is of the earliest known Sanskrit plays, and sets out the love of a young man named Charudatta for a rich courtesan, Vasantasena. The romance is complicated by the attraction of a rival courtier for the same young woman. The play was made into a movie, *Utsav*, directed by Girish Karnad in 1984. In a similar vein, Kalidasa's *Malavika and Agnimitra* (c. 3–4th centuries CE) dramatizes a king falling in love with a princess disguised as a maid, and

overcoming his principal wife's jealousy in order to wed her. The stock commonplaces of later Western comedy are here: disguised identity, romantic intrigue, supported by an undercurrent of sensuality. As with many Hindu religious stories, there is very little explicit erotic portrayal, although dramatizations of the Shaiva and the Vaishnava myths centered on the union of the lord and his consort, a divine couple of lovers joined harmoniously. While this lacks the incestuous or deceitful desire integral to the Greek or Roman stage, it does give expression to the idealistic coupling of male and female principles of love. Sanskrit literature would also produce one of the earliest and most celebrated treatises on love and sexuality, Vatsyayana's *Kama Sutra* (1st–6th centuries CE).

Chinese drama similarly centered on romantic tragi-comedy, though in a much more stylized form. In Wang Shih-fu's *His hsiang chi* [*Romance of the Western Chamber*] (c. 13th century), the heroine, Hai-t'ang, becomes a second wife, only to find this happiness destroyed when her new spouse's first wife has him poisoned, since she wishes to be free to be with her new lover. In one scene, Hai-t'ang comments on her luck in finding a husband, and details the vices prevalent in her society, with mistresses, orgies, and promiscuity being the order of the day. Traditional Chinese drama was never in the vernacular nor without music until the early twentieth century, following the 1907 revolution. One of Confucius's precepts laid down that actors' bodies be covered as much as possible. As a result, female characters developed a "sleeve language," using their robes in graceful and sometimes sensual movements. Like Chinese drama, Japanese drama is underpinned by conventions, and is, in many respects, close to the Western operatic tradition. The roles in the two main strands of theater, *kabuki* or popular drama and the *Noh* plays, were traditionally played by men, though the replacement of women during the early stages of *kabuki* (c. 1603–1652) was a drastic attempt to subdue eroticism. However, a different kind of erotic potential was created with the use of male adolescent prostitute performers known as *wakashu* who perfected the role of *onnagata*, or carefully stylized women. Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1724) wrote a series of brutal plays involving failed love and suicide, the *Buuraku*. The zenith of *kabuki* was during the eighteenth century, and erotic subjects

were among the most popular plays, together with dramas dealing with the exploits of outlaws. In more recent times, Mishima Yukio (1925–1970) wrote some twentieth-century adaptations of the traditional *kabuki* genre. His *Madame de Sade* (1965) caused a scandal due to its subject matter; one of the characters, the Countess de Saint-Fond, represented carnal desires. Shuji Terayama (1935–1983) has produced several plays dealing with the scenario of the seduction of young men by mature women, tormenting them and driving them to violence or insanity in the process. The development of Korean drama dates back to religious and folk rituals, and traditional plays depict corrupt officials committing adultery, or sexually active Buddhist monks, among other themes. These were usually performed in village squares and lacked the elevated style and status of classical Chinese and Japanese theater.

As with Greek drama, European drama began as an expression of religious narratives from the tenth century onwards. By the thirteenth century, the staging of these liturgically based events rapidly moved from the church to public squares, and such performances became major episodes in the life of the local community and environs, lasting several days and attracting a large number of participants and spectators; it is estimated that as many as 16,000 people gathered at an eight-day Passion Play performed in Reims in 1490. Inevitably, the plays developed a reputation for rowdiness and general debauchery, which led to the Paris Parliament banning them from the capital in 1548. By this time, theater, while still confined to religious topics, was firmly out of clerical control and with a central emphasis on the suffering body, with the obvious erotic potential of the interaction of female and male actors within a relatively confined local environment. This is particularly true in the dramatization of the legends of virgin martyrs such as Agnes or Catherine whose refusal to submit to the sexual demands of an oppressive tyrant led to torture and execution. As Passion plays faced interdiction throughout Europe during the course of the sixteenth century, whether from censorious Catholic or Protestant ecclesiastics objecting to the non-biblical content, troupes and theaters increasingly began to experiment with staging works on non-religious topics. In Coventry, the last religious cycle of Passion and Corpus Christi plays was staged in



## DRAMA

1580, in Shakespeare's youth, and the setting up of professional acting companies and commercial theaters followed in the wake of the mysteries' demise.

The standard plot of the *commedia dell'arte*, which arose in Italy during the sixteenth century and whose influence and stock characterizations spread across Europe, usually involved a pair of young lovers overcoming obstacles in order to marry—and thus legitimately satisfy their desire—and bawdy farce was a mainspring of this genre, which has been passed on to comedy until this day. Jean-Baptiste Poquelin Molière's comedies leave much room for visual gestures related to sexual references, and suggestive wordplay is an essential ingredient. One of the most celebrated examples occurs in *L'École des femmes* (1662; *The School for Women*), where the innocent pupil Agnès declares to her master, Arnolphe, who has brought her up in ignorance in order to marry her himself, that a young male intruder has taken something from her, and stops mid-sentence. This conjures up, in the mind of Arnolphe and the spectator, images of her virginity or various bodily parts having been appropriated by her new suitor, only to discover that it is her glove that the young man has carried off with him (even though this seemingly innocuous gesture suggests a fetishized object). Elizabethan drama differed from its religious antecedents, and indeed from its Continental equivalents in one substantial respect: female roles were usually played by boys. While this precluded a criticism often levelled against European theater, that actresses demeaned the status of their gender and deliberately aroused lascivious feelings in their predominantly male audience, the cross-dressing dynamic raises the question of homoeroticism. Anti-theater commentators such as John Rainoldes concentrate on the danger of watching beautiful boys wearing women's clothing. One of the first plays openly to deal with a homosexual subject was Christopher Marlowe's *Edward II* (c. 1592). Theatrical costumes for actresses became freer and decorsetted in the early part of the nineteenth century in Europe and North America, and later on *décolleté* gowns became normative, leading to accusations of lewdness that were essentially unchanged from those levelled against actresses two centuries earlier.

Renaissance comedies of love are inherently both erotic and chaste. There is rarely any direct

portrayal of sexual activity; eroticism is projected to offstage behavior and to descriptive passages, or confined to more indirect allusions to sexuality such as innuendo. One reason why heterosexual interaction is unseen is evidently related to the fact that, in England at least, sexual play would appear unconvincing to contemporary audiences given that the heroine was played by a boy actor. Cross-dressing by males was a comic device; in women it was designed to be alluring. In early modern drama, the most common occurrence of the sexual act tends to be violent. Sexual assault is depicted as an effect of extreme male desire imposed on a beautiful female. The violation of women is essentially tied to male power structures, and the motif of sexual violence is portrayed in relation to homosocial ties. Such tragedies are an evolved form of the traditional saint's play where a female martyr successfully resists the lecherous advances of a persecutor. The Roman legends of Lucretia and Virginia, in which the protagonist commits suicide, is a common topos in early modern theater, prominent examples being Thomas Heywood's *The Rape of Lucrece* (1608) and John Webster's *Appius and Virginia* (c. 1608). Such verbal testimony is designed to titillate as well as inform the audience, the sexual content inviting the voyeuristic complicity of the male spectator. Thomas Middleton's *Women Beware Women* (c. 1622) contains the "seduction" scene of Bianca by the Duke while her mother-in-law plays chess (II, 2). The young woman is lured away from the game and shown naked pictures, evidently in order to arouse her sexual appetite. Consensual, though offstage, sex is portrayed in Middleton's *A Mad World, My Masters* (c. 1605), which concerns an adulterous meeting. Similarly, a reported sexual act is at the crux of *Othello*. Desire is the prelude to marriage, and the fact that a substantial proportion of early modern drama deals with couples who have not consummated their union contributes to the creation of an erotically charged and expectant atmosphere. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (c. 1594) allows the pair to have conjugal relations (in III, 5, Romeo leaves after his wedding night), creating a love that is unashamedly both romantic and sexual.

English comedies written between 1590 and 1640 generally adhere to a tenet maintaining that marriageable young women should be modest in speech. In Shakespeare's *Much Ado About*

*Nothing*, Hero's maid, Margaret, tries to cheer up a heavy-hearted bride by joking she will 'be heavier soon by the weight of man', and Hero scolds her immodesty. Very few comic heroines express physical desire in explicit or vulgar terms, and eroticism is most often expressed through lewd dialogue and erotic puns, a typical example being John Fletcher's *Wild Goose Chase* (1621). The Whitefriars Theatre opened in 1607 and specialized in the contemporary public taste for suggestive comedies. Notable examples of plays staged at the theater include Ben Johnson's *Volpone* (1606) which contains 97 bawdy jests, Lording Barry's *Ram Alley* (1608) which has a total of 153 lewd jokes. John Day's *Humour out of Breath* (1608) was a romantic comedy about two dukes and their respective families engaged in a feud; in the women's wishes for their match, they engage in strong conversation that contravenes early modern propriety that demanded that a young women know and say nothing of the male body. In Ben Johnson's *Bartholomew Fair* (1614), a woman's need for a chamber-pot leads to her initiation into prostitution. Jacobean drama often implies a morbid eroticism in connection with women, and plays' sexual language, such as Middleton, is frequently more explicit than Shakespeare's. These features, briefly extinguished under the Puritan Commonwealth in England, were continued with the Restoration comedy of manners and endured until the early part of the eighteenth century.

In more modern times, the history of eroticism in the theater is closely linked to the rise of censorship. This became an increasing phenomenon during the eighteenth century in Europe, and was linked with both changing demographical trends in society as well as the growth of libertine attitudes connected with Enlightenment ideas. The interplay of master-servant relationships of European comedies did not exclude sexually and socially subversive readings, even if the status quo was left intact at the dénouement. The Licensing Act of 1737 gave powers of censorship of the stage to the Lord Chamberlain's Office; the Examiner of Plays had to approve all texts of plays in British theaters until the abolition of the office in 1968. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, however, some plays began to attack codes of aristocratic and bourgeois morality in increasingly open ways. Leandro Fernández de Moratín's *El Viejo y la*

*niña* [*The Old Man and the Young Girl*] (1786) typifies this new wave of socially informed comedies, and explicitly undermines the notion of arranged marriages. Romantic liaisons were therefore held up as a personal choice, and this may be seen as a burgeoning expression of sexual liberation.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, and throughout the twentieth, theater became associated with the avant-garde movement. The French playwright Georges de Porto-Riche published several plays on the eternal triangle of a man torn between his wife and his mistress, for example *Amoureuse* [*A Loving Wife*] (1891) and *Le Viel homme* [*The Old Man*] (1911), as well as producing a modern version of *Lysistrata* (1893). The plays of Henrik Ibsen (1828–1906) feature a strong vein of sexual tension, typified in *A Doll's House* (1879), which caused controversy over its iconoclastic depiction of marriage. Oscar Wilde's social satires can also be read as transgressive in their challenge to widely accepted social conventions and morality in plays such as *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895). Somerset Maugham and Noël Coward both wrote comedies about the new sexual freedom experienced in the 1920s onwards in Britain. In Maugham's *The Constant Wife* (1926), the protagonist, Constance, gains economic independence through working and also sexual freedom when she embarks on holiday with a lover for six weeks. Federico Garcia Lorca's (1898–1936) dramatic output is characterized by surrealist elements and a sexual frankness that disturbed Spanish audiences of the 1930s. Terence Rattigan and Tennessee Williams managed to disguise their homosexuality through presenting their viewpoint as women. Rattigan's *Deep Blue Sea* (1949) was written after the suicide of the author's partner. Rattigan had intended this to be a gay love story, but modified this idea to a heterosexual plot since a homosexual theme would not have been approved by the Lord Chamberlain and would have damaged his reputation. In the same year, Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* deals with the sexually active Blanche Dubois and her impotent husband, whose sexual problems, so it is hinted but not explicitly spelled out, stem from his latent homosexuality. Gay and lesbian drama assumed increasing significance in the late twentieth century, coinciding with the decriminalization of homosexual acts in many parts

## DU BELLAY, JOACHIM

of the world since the 1960s, and the shift in attitudes this engendered. Jo Orton's farces, such as *Entertaining Mr Sloane* (1964), and *What the Butler Saw* (1969), are emblematic of these new sexually licentious works of the decade. Martin Sherman's *Bent* (1979), a gay love-story against the backdrop of a concentration camp, and Tony Kushner's *Angels in America* (1990), about AIDS, represent how far once taboo issues have penetrated mainstream drama. These trends, together with the growth of feminist theater since the 1970s, demonstrates the progressive nature of theater to reflect society's questioning of conventional notions of sexual and gender roles.

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# DU BELLAY, JOACHIM

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c. 1522–1560  
French poet

### *L'antérotique de la vieille et de la jeune amyé* (1549)

Published only once in his lifetime, this short narrative poem is a piece of juvenilia. It was printed alongside the first edition of *L'Olive*, Du Bellay's collection of 50 sonnets, but was omitted when that work was published in an expanded edition in 1550. There is, however, only scant thematic connection between the two works. *L'Olive* commemorates the poet's chaste and mystical love for an unnamed lady and is a conscious demonstration of the literary theory set forth in *La deffence*. *L'antérotique de la vieille*, on the other, hand, is a declamatory invective which represents the negation of Du Bellay's poetic *credo* both in form—rhymed decasyllabic verse—and inspiration—libertine realism.

Described by several critics as being of dubious taste, *L'antérotique de la vieille* is an account first of the world's ugliest, and then, of the world's most beautiful woman. The title of the poem is somewhat baffling for *anterotique* derives, not from the classical Greek “anterot,” signifying “requited love,” but, rather, from the sixteenth century neologism *Antéρως*, or “anti-love,” which Hugué took to mean *contr'amour*, or “antithesis of the subject of love.” The contrast between the old hag and the young maiden corresponds to a traditional poetic idea—the celebration of womanly beauty tempered by thoughts of its inevitable decay and destruction. However, the grotesque realism of the first portrait precedes the second. And the old crone's ugliness occupies more space than the idealized beauty of the maiden and the love she inspires—95 compared with 74 lines. The poet's conclusions regarding the vaunting and transforming power of love occupies the remaining 46 lines of the poem.

Du Bellay's portrait of the elderly duenna and his description of her as protector of the young virgin (*Vieille peste des jeunes filles* v. 48), draws on well-worn classical models from Horace, Sextus Propertius, and Ovide. Du Bellay may also have been influenced by both Guillaume de Lorris and Jean de Meun(g) who were temporally and geographically closer to him. They too give grotesque descriptions of the ravages of age, similar to those in the *Anterotique*. Du Bellay's Old Woman is all but bald, and has only three blackened stumps for teeth. Her eyes are bloodshot and her wrinkled face is covered with grime. In fact, so ugly is she that the sun hides itself in her presence and her putrid breath reminds the poet of the sulphurous gates of Hell. And she is an intolerable troublemaker who has done more harm in this world than the "fatale Pandore."

The description of the young maiden stands in sharp contrast to this and instead of looking back seems to anticipate the formal perfectionism expressed three centuries later by such poets as Gautier (*Émaux et camées*) or Oscar Wilde (*Salomé*). *La jeune amyé* is an allegorical figure for virginal feminine beauty. She arouses both erotic desire and poetic inspiration. Nevertheless, Du Bellay rarely rises above the hackneyed in his imagery: the maiden's golden hair is a diadem, her rosy complexion recalls early dawn, her skin is now polished ivory, now shimmering alabaster. So thrilling is her beauty that she is comparable to all the treasures of the East, and so on. What does come as a surprise is the absence in the poem's conclusion of any obvious moral lesson. Du Bellay does not, for example, imply that the beautiful girl will, if she lives to old age, join the ranks of the decrepit. Instead he insists on the renewing power of love "Quel est (ô Amour) ton pouvoir." (V. 203), and he even has the old woman, in the role of voyeur, respond to sexual arousal, for having espied the poet and his maiden, she attempts to seduce the startled poet. The poet does not return the compliment. Rather he concludes that the power of love is such that it can "warm the bones" of someone as unlikely as the hideous *Vieille*.

Certes vanter tu [amou] peux bien  
 Qu'en ciel & terre n'y a rien  
 Qui plus fort que ton feu se treuve.

(You [love] can certainly boast that  
 In heaven and earth there is no fire hotter than yours)  
 V204–206

Du Bellay wrote another poem on a similar theme, *Contre une vieille*, published in 1558 in the collection of verse entitled *Les Jeux Rustiques*.

### Biography

1522?–1560, French poet of the Pléiade whose manifesto, *La deffence et illustration de la langue francoyse* (1549), urges the study and of the classics and the use of French as a literary language. Du Bellay's poetry is imitative of Latin and Italian models and includes a collection of Petrarchan sonnets, *L'Olive* (1549) as well as *Divers jeux rustiques* (1558). He served in Rome for four years as secretary to his cousin, Cardinal Du Bellay. Two further volumes of verse, *Les Regrets* (1558) and *Les antiquités de Rome* (1558) blend Du Bellay's impressions of Rome with nostalgia for his native Anjou. They contain some of his best known poems. The *Antiquités* was translated by Edmund Spenser (*Complaints*: 1591).

E.M. LANGILLE

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## DU CAMP, MAXIME

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1822–1894

French novelist, poet and essayist

A ‘man of letters’—travel-writer, journalist, novelist, poet, art critic, social historian, biographer, and pioneer photographer—Maxime Du Camp is nonetheless chiefly remembered for his friendships with the writers Gustave Flaubert and Théophile Gautier, his *Souvenirs littéraires* (1882–1883) and early experiments in photography. He was editor of the *Revue des deux mondes* where Flaubert’s *Madame Bovary* was first published in serial form (1856–1857) and famously suggested cuts to his friend’s novel. A 1996 biography describes Du Camp as a ‘spectateur engagé’ on the nineteenth-century French literary scene and this is perhaps an apt description. A friend of great writers rather than a great writer himself, he is also the dedicatee of the final poem of Baudelaire’s *Les fleurs du mal* (1857), ‘Le Voyage’.

The orphan son of a famous surgeon, Du Camp was financially independent and thus free to sample a variety of occupations. He met Flaubert in Paris in 1843. Flaubert was a reluctant student of law, Du Camp was a dandy, man-about-town, and occasional journalist. It was an intense attachment. During a trip to Rome in 1844, Du Camp carved his and Flaubert’s names on a pillar in the Temple of Fortune and wrote to his friend that it was ‘like a silent prayer to the goddess that she never separate us’. Realizing an adolescent dream, in his early twenties Du Camp had traveled alone to Asia Minor, Italy, and Algeria and published an account as *Souvenirs et paysages d’orient* (1848). It was he who encouraged the more sedentary-by-nature Flaubert to travel. The friends first took a walking tour through Brittany in 1847, an account of which they set down in *Par les champs et par les grèves*, each contributing alternate chapters. The travelogue was not published in complete form until the early 1970s.

Their next journey was more ambitious. Du Camp had taken up the new art of photography

in 1849. The same year, he secured an official assignment from the French government to travel to the Near East to photograph sites of archaeological interest. Flaubert was to accompany him, charged with the task of information collection by the Ministry of Agriculture and Commerce. In the autumn of 1849, Du Camp and Flaubert set off on a tour which was to take eighteen months and which would encompass Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Asia Minor, Greece, and Italy. After their return, Flaubert began work on *Madame Bovary*, while Du Camp concentrated on photography and journalism. He had returned from the East with several hundred paper negatives mostly of the antiquities, including the first photographs of the Sphinx and the temple at Abu Simbel. The resulting book, *Egypte, Nubie, Palestine et Syrie. Dessins photographiques recueillis pendant les années 1849, 1850 et 1851* (1852), was the first book of photographs to be published in France. Each copy contained one hundred and twenty-five original photographs. *Le Nil, Egypte et Nubie* (1854) contained a further two hundred and twenty.

The two books were popular successes, and their author was made an Officier of the Légion d’Honneur (he had already been made a Chevalier for his role in the 1848 revolution) and celebrated as a ‘voyageur’. Both Flaubert and Du Camp had set out with an expectation of the Orient informed by the writings of Romantics such as Hugo and Chateaubriand and the paintings of Eugène Delacroix, as a fantasy space into which assorted desires—erotic and imperialist—could be imaginatively projected. Although Du Camp’s written and photographic records of their travels are, for the most part, factual and journalistic in style, they would be instrumental in reinforcing the continuing nineteenth-century fascination with romantic antiquity and an imaginary Orient. Certainly Du Camp’s carefully edited version of their travels, with the obligatory smattering of exotic local ‘color’, is entertainingly complemented by the alternative account afforded by Flaubert’s travel notes

and letters home to their mutual friend, Louis Bouilhet, which abound with tales of visits to prostitutes and bath-houses (see *Flaubert in Egypt: A Sensibility on Tour*). For example, Flaubert observed Du Camp's state of polymorphous erotic agitation in the Orient: 'we had scarcely set foot on shore when Max, the old lecher, got excited over a negress who was drawing water at a fountain. He is just as excited by little negro boys. By whom is he *not* excited? Or, rather, by *what*?' Flaubert found his friend's published accounts of their travels 'insignificant' and 'flat beyond words'.

A glimpse of the other Du Camp is also to be found in an amusement he undertook with Flaubert and Bouilhet in 1846–1847. 'Jenner, ou la Découverte de la vaccine', a burlesque parody of a classical five-act tragedy, exists only as one act and outline notes. The piece is a scatological exercise in periphrasis, never intended for publication but revelatory of a particular kind of nineteenth-century repressed.

Du Camp's first novel, *Le livre posthume, Mémoires d'un suicidé* (1853) was a manifesto of Saint-Simonian anti-romanticism portraying art as an undertaking with a moral, even humanitarian, aim. The hero, 'eaten up by the devouring anxieties of impossible dreams', is eventually driven to suicide. *Les forces perdues* (1867), usually considered Du Camp's best novel, covers similar territory to Flaubert's *Education sentimentale* (1869), in its depiction of a young man's affair with an older woman and ultimate disillusionment. As in *Le livre posthume*, the hero cannot bear to continue living in the world and the novel ends with his death.

Du Camp also published plentiful art criticism, a volume of poems, *Les chants modernes* (1855), social histories of Paris and veritable mines of information about nineteenth-century French literary culture and personalities, the *Souvenirs littéraires* and *Souvenirs d'un demi-siècle* (the latter not until 1949, fifty years after his death). The only works to be translated into English are the *Souvenirs littéraires*, his 1890 biography of Gautier and a short fable, *The Three Flies*, published in 1902.

### Biography

Born in Paris, February 8, 1822. Educated at the Lycées Louis-le-Grand and Charlemagne, Paris.

Traveled alone in Asia Minor, Italy and Algeria in 1844–1845, then with Gustave Flaubert in the Near East in, 1849–18451. Served as an officer in the revolution of 1848. With Théophile Gautier and Louis de Cormenin, founded the *Revue de Paris* in 1851. Following its suppression in 1859, moved on to the *Revue des deux mondes*, then to the *Journal des débats*, 1864–1894. Made a Chevalier of the Légion d'Honneur in 1848 and became an Officier in 1852. Elected to the Académie Française in 1880 and subsequently became its director. Died in Baden-Baden, 8 February 1894.

NOLA MERCKEL

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See also **Flaubert, Gustave, Gautier, Théophile, Orientalism**

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## DU FAIL, NOËL

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c. 1520–1591

French author of rustic tales

***Propos rustiques* (1547); *Balivernes ou contes nouveau d'Eutrapel* (1548); *Contes et discours d'Eutrapel* (1585)**

A series of 13 village tales in dialogue form, Du Fail's *Propos rustiques* was a popular work that ran to 8 editions from 1547 to 1580. The *Propos* was intended to glorify rural life, by comparing an idealized tranquil past with a decadent and noisy turbulent present. The tales are set in two imaginary hamlets: Flameaux, which shows no trace of outside or modern influences, and Vindelles, the epitome of "modern decadence." The three narrators Anselme, Huguët, and Roger, assembled for an open air banquet, recount the successive tales whose fluid structure is perfectly suited to digressions, interjections, and lively discussion. Du Fail's denunciation of modern life attacks the abandonment of traditional values and the wickedness he observed especially in young people. Like Plautus, Virgil, Pliny, and, closer in time to the author, Rabelais, the socially conservative Du Fail makes the case that country folk should be made to realize how well off they are, and that, further, they should not try to better themselves by abandoning traditional patterns of life. We are told, for example, in tale 6—*La difference du coucher de ce temps et du passé, et du gouvernement de l'amour de village*—that the intrusion of foreign (Italian) manners has encouraged the village youth to squander their time in vain, unclean pursuits. Young "gallants" haunt the village tavern. They are idle, dandified coxcombs, who flirt shamelessly, but display no loyalty towards their amorous conquests. And for their part, the young women, according to the misogynist lawyer Huguët, may make an ostentatious show of affection and even kiss a man on the mouth, but they love only money and material gain. In sharp contrast to the present, the villagers of the past lived in prelapsarian innocence. Whole families might sleep in the same bed without fear

of outrage; a man might even see a woman completely naked without displaying signs of arousal. In fact, so innocent were the people of these times that it was not uncommon for a grown man to know nothing of sex, save masturbation. "Now," in contrast, boys of 15 are not only sexually experienced, they routinely catch venereal infections, including the dreaded syphilitic pox, called alternately "*le chancre des Pollains*" or the "*mal Italien*." In this portrait of the decline of rural life, change has come through contact with noxious outside influences, typified by the new-fangled Italian manners much in evidence at the Valois court. The confrontation between past and present is an "epic" battle between the inhabitants of the two villages, Flameaux and Vindelles, a fight in which women folk take a leading and symbolic role.

A similar tendency toward social conservatism is evident in *Les Balivernes* as well as in the *Contes et discours d'Eutrapel*. Three men, Eutrapel, Polygame, and Lupolde discuss various aspects of life in the village. Eutrapel, is a rustic gentleman and confirmed bachelor whose name derives from the Greek Σντραπελοζ signifying jocose or jocular. Polygamy, on the other hand, means married more than once, or, a remarried widower. Not surprisingly, the three men talk a good deal about women, and the advantages and perils of marriage. Eutrapel wants to find a wife, preferably an ugly one, on the grounds that she would be less likely to cuckold him. This claim gives rise to a lively discussion, the conclusion of which is a composite portrait of the ideal wife who, according to Lupolde, would have an English face, Norman breasts, a Flemish body, and most importantly, a "cul de Paris." He then affirms that infidelity in women is the result of a husband's brutish tyranny, or is a response to his jealousy and possessiveness. To maintain a wife's affection, the best strategy, he claims, is to grant her an "honest Christian" freedom. Adultery in men is also condemned, and once again the dangers of promiscuity, especially venereal infection, are invoked. Finally, the argument against the desirability of marriage appears

all but unassailable when Eutrapel introduces a cuckold who bemoans how he has become “his wife’s son, her little sausage, her spindle,” and so forth. His despondency provides Eutrapel with the perfect excuse never to marry.

Du Fail is a fascinating chronicler of the profound changes afoot in sixteenth-century rural life. His attitudes are even more compelling when one considers that, highly educated and clearly receptive to the ideas of the Reformation; he nevertheless portrayed the Catholic peasantry of his native Brittany as a model of human happiness.

### Biography

Lord of la Hérisseye, magistrate, and author of three books of country tales, Noël Du Fail was born into the rural aristocracy of Brittany c. 1520 (Château Letard, in Saint Erblon [Ille-et-Vilaine]). His biography is sketchy. We do know that he studied under the celebrated Hellenist and professor of rhetoric Turnèbe (1512–1565) at Sainte Barbe College in Paris, and that, although a gifted student, he led a rowdy and turbulent existence. Unlucky at cards, and unable to pay his debts, he joined the army to avoid creditors (1543–1544). In 1553, he became a counselor to the Lower Court of Justice at Rennes, and occupied that post until 1571, at which point he took a seat as a High Court judge (Parlement de Bretagne) in the same city. Excluded from the High Court in 1572 because of his Protestant sympathies, he was re-admitted in 1576, and retained his position until 1586. Du Fail’s career in the law inspired a work on the decrees of the Parlement de Bretagne (*Mémoires*

*recueillis et extraits des plus notables et solennels Arrests du Parlement de Bretagne* [1579]), which became a standard reference work for over two centuries. Du Fail is now remembered, however, for his literary vignettes of rural life drawn from the point of view of a sixteenth-century country judge. Inspired in part by Rabelais, whose wit and earthy sense of fun he shares, Du Fail published two collections of *contes* in 1547–1548, *Les Propos rustiques*, and *Les Balivernes, ou contes nouveaux d’Eutrapel*. A third collection of tales published in 1585 and entitled *Contes et discours d’Eutrapel*, is a continuation of *Les Balivernes*.

E.M. LANGILLE

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## DU LAURENS, HENRI-JOSEPH

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1719–1793  
French novelist

Dulaurens wrote disguised under a number of pseudonyms including d’Henriville, Laurent d’Henriville, abbé de Saint Albin, Brises-Crosses,

Modeste-Tranquille, and Xang-Xung. The ethical freedom of the individual was the central concern of this defrocked priest, journalist, pamphleteer, philosopher, and novelist, whose bold ideas on pleasure were viewed as so much impertinence in the eyes of the clergy.



## Work

The work of Dulaurens echoes the concerns of the Enlightenment. Following in the steps of the *philosophes*, the writer attacked society's framework of sexual and moral prohibitions while defending a view of man as the slave of prejudices, institutions, and churches that were in opposition to his nature: "In all actions of life, the only voice to heed is the voice of nature, while ensuring that one does not succumb to another form of slavery, that one remains one's own master and not the slave of oneself and of one's ideas." Man can attain happiness only by discovering and following his natural instincts, because moral or religious laws are merely the masks of authority and power. By using two characteristics of eighteenth-century philosophy—irony and the idea of utopia—Dulaurens criticized all conventions opposed to nature and preached the discovery of the experience of pleasure, the fulfilment of the body through which man discovers his true nature, his self-awareness and, ultimately his freedom.

In *L'Arrétin moderne* [*The Modern Arrétin*] an essay first published in 1763 under the title *Arrétin ou la débauche de l'esprit en fait de bon sens* [*Arrétin or the Debauchery of the Mind as a Matter of Good Sense*], the tribulations of Xang-Xung serve as a pretext for a wealth of anecdotes and reflections. In the midst of discussions on topics as varied as agriculture, beards, and the usefulness of vice, one comes upon the *Histoire merveilleuse & édifiante de Godemiché* [*The Marvellous and Edifying Story of Godemiché*] whose incipit is worth citing: "Godemiché was born in year one of the creation of the monastic wishes of young fifteen-year-old girls forbidden by law from disposing of their birthright." The story relates the experience of Sister Conception, who has become pregnant by the Father Superior. In an effort to change the outcome of events, the latter consults a sorceress and follows every one of her prescriptions without scruple. The young nun must be fed mandrakes and black pudding in order that the oracle pronounced by an aged Sybil in chapter 23 of *La bonne foi du Diable* [*The Devil's Good Will*] may come to pass: "...a virgin will bear Godemiché. This child, the picture of virility, will be the comfort of young girls and make the miseries of convent life easier to bear." The plan succeeds; once in the bosom

of the young abbess, Godemiché quickens with life and reaches puberty.

*"The first use he made of his existence was to slide from the abbess's bodice to a place that modesty forbids me to name [...] The abbess immediately fell into throes of ecstasy: "[...] a delicious spasm shot voluptuously through her at each thrust from Godemiché and she cried out: ah!...ah! I'm dying...my sweet Jesus, is it possible that goodness has made your creatures susceptible to such rapturous bliss? Scarcely had Godemiché filled the mother abbess with his unction than he flew [...] under the skirt of a young novice [then] flitted from nun to nun, filling them with pleasure."*

Similar emotional outbursts are also found in *Imirce ou la fille de la nature* [*Imirce or The Daughter of Nature*] (1765). In this experimental novel, Dulaurens intends to show that human nature is first and foremost animal, and that human specificity frees itself of this animality little by little. We assist at the artificial creation of two naive characters and at the spontaneous development of their intellectual, moral, and metaphysical notions. Ariste, a philosopher, decides to perform an experiment by placing two children, Imirce and Émilior, in a cave. Sex comes into play very early: Lying beside Imirce, Émilior "caresses her budding breasts." At the end of the twenty-two years of the experiment, Imirce leaves the cave, discovers the world and recounts her impressions, ever in harmony with the goodness of nature: "Our hearts, pure as day, and our innocent hands found nothing wrong in these natural caresses [...] This instinct is without doubt a natural one [...] Modesty is a virtue of education." In the character of Imirce, sentiment gives way to instinct and an inconstancy seen as quite natural is thus legitimized: "I was naked, [Ariste] kissed my breasts with rapture, smothered me with caresses. I looked beneath his clothes, to see if he had the same object with which my lover gave me so much pleasure; he understood what I was thinking and intoxicated me with the sweet delights of love. Novelty, change, are pleasant to women and made my pleasure all the more intense; and from that moment, poor Émilior was forgotten."

The anti-religious rehabilitation of pleasure, a leitmotif in the works of Dulaurens, is the theme of *La Chandelle d'Arras* [*The Candle of Arras*] (1765). In this mock-heroic epic of eighteen cantos, composed in less than two weeks, the writer attacks prejudice by reworking an old

legend, which holds that in 1105 the Virgin bestowed upon the Bishop of Arras a miraculous candle capable of curing that city's inhabitants. The story relates the grotesque adventures of Jerome Nulsifrote and Jean la Terreur, two violinists of Arras. Jean la Terreur visits Purgatory and Hell and holds a number of conversations with Adam, Moses, and Joseph. Then, suspended high above the abbey of Avennes on Saint Dunstan's bow, he decides to let go: "Suddenly the holy king grabbed hold of his machine; at the same moment the bow grazing his body sliced off his instrument." Jean la Terreur's "sad machine" falls into the budding bosom of a young sister in tears: "...on this white breast Priapus quickens with life and, sliding from the bodice to underneath the shift, proceeds to lose himself, we don't quite know where [...] suddenly, Godemiché springs from her shift and flies off to fill Mother Cornichon with his unction." At the end of a long journey, Jean la Terreur receives a candle from the Virgin. But Dulaurens's audacious pen has this object of fervor perform miracles quite different from those for which it was intended, as testified by the experience of a young virgin come to venerate it: "Holy lamp! You burn me up, what charms you have! Divine pastor! Keep going, push the candle in more, if you can..."

### Biography

Born in Douai on May 27, 1719, Henri-Joseph Laurens (also Dulaurens or Du Laurens) waged a lifelong battle with authority. Dulaurens already had a reputation for being a troublesome, though brilliant, student during his days at the Jesuit College in Anchin. The publication in the same book of his first works, *Discours sur la beauté* [*Discourse on Beauty*] and *La vraie origine du géant de Douai* [*The Real Origin of the Giant of Douai*] (1743), earned him a forced exit when his lampooning of a number of people was viewed as slanderous. Subsequently judged responsible for the subversive writings of others, notably Jean Meslier, Voltaire and Holbach, he was obliged to flee the country to escape imprisonment. Ordained a priest in 1744, Dulaurens soon rebelled against clerical discipline; he published a collection of satire against the Jesuits, *Les Jésuitiques*, the same year he left the priesthood (1761). He next appears at the center of

various scandals including an escapade with a nun from the convent of Saint Julien of Douai, who stole a purse containing around 20,000 *livres* (pounds of silver) before running off with him. Allusions to his poverty are many. Dulaurens writes "*pour avoir du pain*" [to buy bread]; even more urgently, "*la faim l'oblige d'aller vite*" [hunger obliges him to move quickly]. After a period of wanderings and illicit writings, he was arrested. He publicly renounced his errors on June 19, 1767 and on August 31 was condemned to life imprisonment. Dulaurens spent 21 years in the prison in Mayenne, then was transferred to the convent-prison in Marienborn where he died insane on August 17, 1793.

DOMINIQUE PÉLOQUIN

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## DUBÉ, JEAN-PIERRE

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1954–  
Canadian novelist

### *La grotte*

*La grotte* is like a grenade lobbed at a formerly church-dominated society and its surviving vestiges. Although it is not a Sadean novel, Dubé, like Sade, uses transgression as an important tool. The explicit depiction of homosexuality, especially in the clergy, is among the elements that would have been unthinkable until recently. This novel is full of madness and anger arising, in part, out of stern moral condemnation of all but church-approved manifestations of sexuality.

Because *La grotte* is recounted in fragments which are not in chronological sequence, the story emerges only slowly. A tortured and psychologically unstable priest is attracted to a young boy in a residential school and initiates a sexual relationship with him. One night, he encounters the young adolescent walking with a girl near a religious grotto and, in a jealous rage, strikes out at him with a plaster statue of the Virgin, killing him. The stories of other characters affected by that murder are told in various parts of the novel. Finally, the girl, now a young woman, recognizes him. He is sentenced to a long period of incarceration during which he is visited by a counsellor who reveals that he was the victim’s best friend. The friendship that develops between them evolves into love. This time the homoerotic element emerges as a

positive factor. A process of healing and liberation takes place for both men. The eroticism of these passages is sensual, tender, and healing. Its depiction can perhaps be read as a sign that a revolution has occurred in the Franco-Manitoban community. However, this redemption is not available to the woman who witnessed the death of her friend. Her trauma goes back even further, to the grief and loneliness of her widowed father who took her into his bed to console him for his loss. It was less the incest itself that has broken her, than the brutal rejection by her father when he discovered she was pregnant. For her there is no going back, no finding of healing through erotic love.

The role of eroticism in this novel clearly goes beyond psychological factors to the political, social, and institutional factors that contribute to them. This novel emerges from a very specific milieu. Like the large French majority in Quebec, the francophone population of Manitoba had historically been almost uniformly Roman Catholic. A small minority in an overwhelmingly English-speaking province, it relied on the Church for its social structures and its way of life, from its origins at least until the 1960s. After 1970, the change to reliance on more secular language-based organizations came swiftly. Nevertheless, the embrace of the austere version of Catholicism (the term *jansénisme* is used in Canada) that typified the Quebec-based francophone Catholic clergy was not relaxed all at once. The intensity of this carefully constructed novel arises, in part, from the stifling moral

atmosphere that resulted and, in part, from the enclosed, embattled situation of the French-language society within a mainly anglophone province.

### *Ma cousine Germaine*

This novel of adolescent love and sex is dominated, for two-thirds of its length, by the exploration of their sexuality by two adolescents, both aged sixteen. Although Germaine plays a major role in it, to a large extent *Ma cousine Germaine* is an exploration of masculinity. The title is a play on the French term for *first cousin* which, in the feminine, is *cousine germaine*. Germaine is a first cousin of Jean-Paul, the narrator and principal protagonist of the story. Because they are first cousins, their love and sexual passion has an ambiguous status, on the border between acceptable and incestuous. Aware of this, they take care not to show undue signs of affection in public. The result is a very secret affair in which their intimacy flourishes. Its growth is described in numerous explicit and highly erotic passages of sexual experimentation as they discover their sexuality and the various ways that their bodies and their imagination can provide pleasure. The last third of the novel marks a sharp reversal after their affair is discovered by Germaine's mother. Jean-Paul and Germaine have another cousin, Marc, who is a tough, violent, a bully. Marc kidnaps Jean-Paul and, while raining blows on him, demands to be told Germaine's most intimate secrets. Jean-Paul fears for his life and, in his attempt to escape, accidentally causes Marc's death. The remaining part of the novel recounts Jean-Paul's flight in Marc's car across the American border and his new life as he assumes Marc's identity, thus, in a sense, becoming his own cousin. He meets a woman whom he later marries. His greatest sexual discovery, however, arises out of his relationship with Bill, his employer, who reveals to him sources of sexual pleasure of an intensity that he had never imagined. They form a deep friendship and the sexual attachment is as gentle as it is intense.

*Ma cousine Germaine* takes place in a more or less contemporary setting in which the church is, at most, a background presence. Although a social evolution has occurred since the period

depicted in *La Grotte*, the individual is still subjected to strong social pressures arising out of prejudices, gender stereotypes, and intolerance. In this highly erotic novel, certainly one of the most explicitly sexual ever written and published in French in Manitoba, heterosexuality and homosexuality alike are both celebrated passionately and condemned harshly. When Jean-Paul's mother discovers her son and her niece together in his bedroom, she reacts with understanding and wisdom. When Germaine's mother discovers them, she reacts with outrage and condemnation and makes their behavior a matter of public knowledge. Soon words like incest and perversion are being used by Marc who had always taunted Jean-Paul with homophobic barbs, merely because he had given up playing hockey to play a less rough version, called *ringuette*, on a mixed team.

*Ma cousine Germaine* is, in part, a protest against phobic, mindless sexual prejudice. It is also a work of erotic literature that is a milestone in the social and artistic maturation of French-language literature of western Canada.

### Biography

Jean-Pierre Dubé was born in 1954 in La Broquerie, a village in the southeast of the Canadian province of Manitoba. Dubé pursued university studies in philosophy at the Collège Universitaire de Saint-Boniface (affiliated with the University of Manitoba) and at the Université Laval, Quebec City. A journalist by profession, he was for a number of years editor-in-chief of the Manitoba francophone weekly *La Liberté*. He has since worked as an educational policy advisor. Among his works are two plays, two novels, and two scenarios for musical stage productions, all in French. It is his novels, *La Grotte* and *Ma cousine Germaine*, that contain an important erotic element.

ERIC ANNANDALE

### Selected Works

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## DUCHAMP, MARCEL

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1887–1968

French-American artist and prose writer

Modern art historians regard Marcel Duchamp as one of the most influential artists of the 20th and 21st centuries. Yet most of his life he rebelled against art, even against his own famous cubist-futurist canvas "Nude Descending a Staircase"—and created pieces of "anti-art" which he refused to commercialize. These works, plus his life style of contented semi-poverty, of reading and playing chess, constituted nothing less than an attempt at deconstructing the whole enterprise of Western art, which he considered "washed up." In addition, he was one of the most literate of modern artists, well-versed in mathematics and science and greatly influenced by French symbolist writers, from Rimbaud and Laforgue to Mallarmé and Jarry. His major works rely to a great extent upon his literary notes and titles, writings which are full of erotic word play and creative puns. He once stated that art's only legitimate "ism" was eroticism, as against movements like Cubism or Surrealism.

Brought up a Catholic, he became an atheist at an early age, earned money in Paris by drawing risqué cartoons, and experimented in the radical new movements of Fauvism and Cubism. After 1912, he began creating works that substituted satire, literature, erotic humor, and pataphysics (Alfred Jarry's imaginary science) for Classical, Romantic, and Modernist art. From the middle of the twentieth century to this day, artists in the Pop, Minimalist, Primitive, Cognitive, Post-Modernist, Performance, and other art movements have been strongly

influenced by his anti-artistic, anti-social, anti-capitalist, and anti-religious iconoclasm.

The best-known examples of Duchamp's conceptual, literary anti-art pieces are what he called his "readymades." These are ordinary items purchased in flea markets or hardware stores and given the status of unaesthetic sculpture merely by the chance selection of the indifferent artist and his casual attachment of a title to them. By far his most significant readymade was a urinal he bought in a plumbing store in New York in 1917 and entitled "Fountain." He rotated the fixture 90 degrees so that the drain holes would spout urine if it were used; and of course the title reflects back on the male user. But the urinal also suggests a number of puns from French slang. Duchamp had recently arrived in New York and enjoyed bilingual humor, also bisexual humor. Common slang terms in the French of the time for a prostitute were *latrine* and *pissotière* [public urinal], and the French word *fontaine*, in the feminine gender, had been popularly in use for "vulva" since the Middle Ages. Indeed, the urinal has the shape of a vulva, which makes it both yonic and phallic. In his notes there is the comment, "One has for female only the public urinal and one lives by it" (*Salt Seller*, p. 23). Further bisexuality along with religious satire were added to "Fountain" by the nicknames he and his friends gave to it which were based on its iconic, religious appearance when placed on its back: the Madonna of the Bathroom and the Buddha of the Bathroom. Finally, Duchamp signed the work "R. Mutt" which is a play on the manufacturer's name, J.L. Mott, and *motte*, the French word for "pubis, pussy." It also includes the French

pronunciation of art (the “R”). Elsewhere Duchamp used the R-art reference in an invented word “arrhe” and in the double R of his female name for himself, Rose Sélavy. The name is pronounced “Rose, c’est la vie,” with the added slang meaning of “Rose (the vulva) is life.”

All this word play and erotic humor had a serious purpose, to mock the social importance of the traditional bourgeois art object and to establish erotic shock as an aesthetic method. Later he created a phallus out of plaster and called it “Objet-Dard,” “Object-Prick,” a play on objet d’art. When he reproduced these works in miniature collections to give to friends, he made sure that each one contained sixty-nine pieces.

Many of Duchamp’s erotic works involved machinery. He had always wanted to be a mathematician or a scientist, and his writings and sketches are full of fantastic scientific inventions. An important influence was his friend Francis Picabia’s paintings of machines making love. But his own most powerful machine, a machine célibataire [bachelor machine] entitled “The Large Glass” or “The Bride Stripped Bare by Her Bachelors, Even,” comes closest to Jarry’s electrical-magnetic “Machine-to-inspire-love” from his science-fiction novel *The Superman* (1902).

In Jarry’s work, the love-machine is attached to the Superman, falls in love with him, overheats, explodes, and immolates him in a kind of orgasmic love-death. Duchamp’s machine is less violent but equally masturbatory. It consists of two superimposed plates of cracked glass nine feet tall divided into two rectangles, upper and lower. The top one contains the Bride enclosed by the two plates, her body and various organs vaguely resembling automobile parts, with a “love cylinder” and a “reservoir of love gasoline.” The lower rectangle has nine malic (“male-ish”) molds representing nine uniformed Bachelors which are attached to other sexual machines. The auto-eroticism is coded into the French title, “La Mariée mise à nue par ces célibataires, même.” MARIÉE and CÉLIBATAIRES include the name of the artist MARCEL, and même, “even,” is a pun on “m’aime,” “loves me.” The title thus contains both “Marcel loves me” and “the Bride loves me.” The virgin Bride also represents the Virgin MARIE in Mariée. The puns transmit the message of the

glass, that art like profane and sacred love is a humorous, see-through fiction of desire (Duchamp called it “hilarious”).

Lodged permanently at the Philadelphia Museum of Art, “The Large Glass” also consists of 93 documents of enigmatic notes dealing with the machine’s operation. This operation is mostly mental since (1) the parts do not move; and (2) Duchamp got tired of working on the piece after eight years and left the rest of it up to the spectator’s imagination. Conceptually, the documents reveal that the Bride strips herself bare while masturbating and gives a signal to the Bachelors to become aroused and assist her in her stripping and in her (potential) orgasm by their ejaculation.

The last twenty years of Duchamp’s life from 1948–1968 were spent on a complementary project, “Étant donné,” another large work installed in the Philadelphia Museum. Here the Bride is again stripped bare and is spied upon by spectator-voyeurs through a peephole in a door. This time she is realistically portrayed as a mannequin lying nude and faceless on her back, her sex gaping, her left hand holding a phallic gas light. In the distance there is a yonic waterfall (cf. “Fountain”) activated by a motor. She has just had an orgasm; and her body is modeled on that of Duchamp’s great love of the 1940s, Maria Martins. The “Étant donné” of the title is usually translated “Given” or “Given that.” The artist was given his love, Maria, given that she was his desire.

Thus the Bachelor-Artist along with his bachelor machines can only aspire; and like Ixion he makes love to a mental fiction in the shape of a goddess, a dea ex machina, from whose imaginary union the work of anti-art is born—and dies. Both Brides are a secular travesty of desire, of the vulva, the Fountain, the Rose, the Madonna of the Bathroom, the Virgin Mary. Duchamp’s work and life demonstrate that humans are virtual games-people, and that “art,” “arrhe,” is an absurd erotic pun, a crazy coition of the word and the world. Biological desire is life, the spectator’s life and the life of the artist-non-artist Marcel Duchamp, aka Rose Sélavy. *Rose, c’est la vie.*

### Biography

Born at Blainville-Chevon, Normandy, France, 28 July 1887. Educated at the École Bossuet,

## DUCHAMP, MARCEL

Rouen, 1897–1904; studied painting at the Académie Julian in Paris and worked as an apprentice printer in Rouen, 1904–1905. Military service, 1905–1906. Cartoonist in Paris, 1906–1910, painted Fauvist and Cubist works. Exhibited controversial painting “Nude Descending a Staircase” at New York Armory Show, February 1913. Turned down for war service in 1914 because of heart murmur, moved to New York in 1915. Period of readymades, 1913–1917. Executed “The Large Glass,” 1915–1923, worked with members of the New York Dada movement. Moved back to Paris, 1923, lived there until 1942, became chess expert, married Lydie Sarazin-Levassor in 1927, divorced seven months later. Collaborated with French Surrealists, 1934–1942, moved back to New York, love affair with Maria Martins, 1946. Married Alexina (Teeny) Sattler in 1954, became naturalized American citizen in 1955. Worked secretly on last major piece “Given: 1. The Waterfall, 2. The Illuminating Gas,” from 1946 until his death from cancer on 2 October 1968.

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# DURAS, MARGUERITE

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1914–1996  
French novelist

Marguerite Duras's creative corpus includes an unknown quantity of dime-store fiction published during the Occupation and more than ninety novels, stories, plays, and films. The great majority of those texts address issues of sexuality and desire. Duras returns insistently to the scene of desire, studying it close up, slowing it down, repeating and transforming its details, its lighting, its rhythm, and the sequence of its unfolding. She textualizes incest in *La vie tranquille*, *Un barrage contre le Pacifique*, *Navire night*, *La pluie d'été*, *Agatha*, *L'Amant*, *L'Amant de la Chine du nord* and lesbian desire in works such as *Un barrage contre le Pacifique*, "Théodora," *Le ravisement de Lol V. Stein*, *India Song*, *La femme du Gange*, *L'Amant*, and "Dialogue avec une Carmélite." If she subtly infers unarticulated male homoerotic desire in 1970s texts with redoubled male figures (such as *Détuire dit-elle*), as James C. Williams contends (18), she explicitly addresses male homosexuality in *La maladie de la mort* and *Yeux bleus cheveux noirs*. But throughout her career, Duras remained primarily concerned with relations *between* the sexes and most especially with female characters and feminine desire. She valorized female characters, increasingly brought them to the textual fore, and examined their erotic relations and the unsatisfied longings, impossible communication, and unbridgeable separations she associated with those relations. Duras's preference for heterosexual relations at their most extreme provoked one critic to recall her use of the term "impossible" love (Frost, 131) and another to conclude that in her work "the most sexually desirable of other bodies is that very body with which, for reasons of cultural custom, social, or personal circumstances, or even sexual orientation, no relationship is possible" (Hill, 139). Many forms of difference separate Duras's characters from one another, including those related to gender, class, race, and ethnicity (*Un barrage contre*

*le Pacifique*, *Moderato cantabile*, *L'Amant*, *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord*), national identity, colonial divisions, and political allegiances (*Hiroshima mon amour*, *L'Amant*, *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord*, *La Douleur*'s "Ter le milicien" and "Albert des Capitales"), mental states, and sexual orientation.

In 1940s–1950s texts such as *La vie tranquille*, *Les impudents*, "Le Boa," and *Un barrage contre le Pacifique*, Duras presents adolescent heroines approaching heterosexual initiation with a 'cautionary' erotic scene revealing the inequalities and violence of normative bourgeois patriarchal heterosexual relations. These scenes are commonly placed outside the reader's direct gaze by means of figural or allusive rendering or, more commonly, by their placement before or after the time of the main narrative. In "Le Boa," Duras give the cautionary erotic scene a humorous and ironic spin by figuring it in the barely veiled form of violent weekly relations between an emphatically phallic boa and its ever-expanding roster of sacrificial chicks. Every Sunday, colonial zoo keepers bring a live chick to the boa's cage, where it regularly finishes ingesting its chick before the girl arrives for her weekly outing. She sees only the aftermath of the murder, in which the boa sits, ensconced in the chick's tepid down, still trembling with pleasure and digesting its meal. Duras's narrator categorizes this murder as an "impeccable crime," for it leaves no trace, no blood, no sign of remorse.

Duras further unveils the violence and power relations structuring bourgeois heteroerotic relations in *Un barrage contre le Pacifique*, whose young heroine is so enthralled in a filmic scene of heterosexual love that she continues to watch, as if past the end of the film, as the erotic scene devolves into violent destruction:

Their mouths approached one another, with the slowness of a nightmare. Once they are close enough to touch, their bodies are cut off. Then, in their decapitated heads, you see what you wouldn't know how to see, their lips face-to-face, open halfway, open still



## DURAS, MARGUERITE

more, their jaws fall apart like in death and in a brusque and fatal relaxation of their heads, their lips join like octopuses, crush each other, try in the deliriousness of the starving, to eat, to make each other disappear in a reciprocal absorption (189).

This scene permits the girl to recognize that equality in heterosexual relations is an “impossible and absurd ideal to which the structure of the organs clearly does not lend itself” (189), and that, given current relations of power, it is this film’s beautiful courtesan who will be consumed.

In so far as they effect revelation and cast change as possible, this early writing articulates an optimistic outlook on heterosexual erotic relations. They offer young females the possibility of recognizing the violence of heterosexual relations and of defining their roles in them differently. In contrast to Beauvoir’s contemporaneous claim that women have no organ suitable for use as an alter ego and thus cannot achieve full sexual subjectivity, Duras’s young heroines discover viable alter egos in their breasts, which she portrays as symbols of autonomy, transcendence, and power into which they project themselves and in relation to which they define their sexual identities. “Le Boa”’s heroine declares that “outside of the house, there was the boa, here, there were my breasts” (107), while *Un Barrage*’s female protagonist rides colonial city streets in a black limousine defining herself in relation to the “erection of her breasts, higher than everything standing in that city, over which they would prevail” (226). She goes on to orchestrate her own heterosexual initiation, choosing the man, the place, the time, and the dress. Rather than emerge as victim of this scene, she derives an ethical lesson from the blood and bodily fluids it commingles: “That in love, differences could abolish themselves to such an extent, she would never forget” (343).

From the late 1950s–1970s, Duras shifted her focus to slightly older women, the bourgeois fiancées, wives, and mothers she contends suffer the most of brutal patriarchal oppressions: “Damned and scorned” since the bourgeois revolution, they have been constrained to live “chez elles, imprisoned, satiated, in a concentration camp universe [and] a state of “infernal idleness [...] I don’t know anything worse than that, even in misery. Women living in misery are happier than bourgeois women. Its an agent [facteur] of suicide” (Marguerite Duras à Montréal, 75). Her writing of this period is often considered her

most political, as it articulates themes proximate to those being debated in feminist and psychoanalytic research. Throughout her career, Duras set erotic relations in relation to social, cultural, institutional, and historical contexts. In this period, she experiments with ways in which disturbing or dislocating normative erotic relations might deconstruct normative gender relations and social structures.

To that end, Duras captures bourgeois women as they are awakening from their infernal torpor and beginning to stir. She finds *Moderato Cantabile*’s Anne Desbaresdes as her son’s piano lesson (and her own state of torpor) is interrupted by a woman’s piercing scream. Desbaresdes rushes to a nearby café only to see, in its dimly lit recess, a woman lying dead on the floor with a man sprawled out on top of her. His face, expressionless except for the indelible mark of desire, is covered with blood from the dead woman’s mouth. As this scene closes, his mouth glues itself, once again, to hers. This violent scene mesmerizes Desbaresdes, as it does one of her husband’s employees, Chauvin, who also happened to witness it. The rest of this narrative traces their attempt to reconstruct this scene in dialogue, each of them playing the role of one of its protagonists. The novel and their efforts end on an allusive and ambiguous note, with the narrativization of the café murder: “I would wish you were dead,” he says, to which she responds, “It is done.”

Duras similarly captures the heroine of *Le ravisement of Lol V. Stein* as she begins to stir—but for the second time. Her first movement had occurred a decade earlier, at the S. Thala ball, where she was to announce her engagement to Michael Richardson. Before that announcement could be made, however, an older woman, Anne-Marie Stretter entered the room with an erotic charge of such magnitude that it wrenched desire out of normative bourgeois circuits. Captivated, Richardson moved with Stretter onto the dance floor as Lol V. Stein receded with her friend Tatiana Karl to assume a spectatorial position in to this erotic scene. Lesbian desire also circulated, as Karl caressed Stein’s hand, and Stein spoke of her need to invite Stretter to dance. For the remainder of the night, as desire circulated freely, Lol escaped and forgot the strictures of bourgeois desire, attaining as she did “the wisdom of the ages.” When at daybreak desire reintegrated

normative erotic and social structures, Lol re-entered her previous trance-like state. Ten years later, married with children, she had just remembered and re-found Tatiana and is beginning her attempt to remember the S. Thala ball and its erotic dynamics so as retrieve and extend its gains. To that end, she persuades Tatiana and her lover to continue their weekly trysts at a hotel as she watches from a rye field. She later takes Tatiana's lover to S. Thala, visits the ballroom, recalls the ball's events to him, accompanies him to a hotel room for sex, and, in its course, briefly re-accesses the state achieved at the S. Thala ball. *Le ravissement* articulates a diminishing faith in the revolutionary potential of sexuality and desire, or, perhaps, a recognition that any such gains are necessarily individual and ephemeral. Provoked spontaneously and accidentally, the S. Thala ball's intense erotics yields the most dramatic and sustained disruption of bourgeois heteroerotic relations. Lol's subsequent endeavor yields a short-lived leap outside, but also the possibility of continuing her attempt, uninterrupted. As this novel's trio returns to its position in the hotel room and the rye field, Duras links their ongoing efforts to the *longue durée* of "God knows how many affairs like Lol V. Stein's, affairs nipped in the bud, trampled upon, and . . . massacres, oh! you've no idea how many there are, how many blood-stained unrealised attempts are strewn along the horizon, piled up there."

Duras took a break from writing in the 1970s, but her films of that decade address similar concerns. *Nathalie Granger's* heroine embodies the purely negative politics of refusal that distinguish Duras's political views from the feminist political agendas of that era, for instance, while *India Song* studies the erotic relations of one woman and two men in an explicitly colonial context and endows its heroine with the passivity Duras associated with women's historical situation and political potential. In her 1970s interview with Xavière Gauthier, *Les parleuses* Duras clarified her views on numerous subjects crucial to understanding her textual erotics, including women and bourgeois patriarchy, feminine desire, homoerotic desire, and the relation of writing and politics.

By her 1980 return to prose writing, Duras had entered the period of her greatest political despair. She was convinced that Western

hegemony was at its end, but that it had succeeded in installing so great a chasm between the West and the East that only a catastrophe could equalize things. Her writing of this era distinguishes itself from her pre-1980 work by its increased distance between protagonists, its invigorated attention to sadomasochism, and the increased explicitness, brutality, and violence in its erotic depictions, which combine with an increasingly minimalist style to propel scenes of dark and disturbing erotic relations directly center stage. The hope implicit in the 1940s–1950s work and the revolutionary or transformative aims implicit in the 1960s and 1970s now give way to hopelessness, despair, and an ultimately conservative stance on erotic relations. The transformative hope she once placed in women and homosexuals, based on their shared marginalization under bourgeois patriarchy and the complicity and revolutionary advantages she believed derive from such exclusion (see *Les parleuses*) now cede the place to negative assessments like the *Les yeux verts* piece on "Femmes et homosexualités," which dismisses both militant feminism and homosexuality, or *Outside's* "Dialogue avec une Carmélite," which permits self-flagellation to replace lesbian desire as a means of sexual release.

The problems Duras now identifies with homosexuality are of a piece with her enthusiastic embrace of women as the only desiring sex and of heterosexuality as the only site structured by difference and thus the only place in which desire can arise ("Pour moi, le désir ne peut avoir lieu qu'entre le masculin et le féminin, entre des sexes différents" [*Monde extérieur*]). On this view, lesbian eroticism lacks the difference required for desire and male homosexuals, unable to enter into erotic relations with women, are equally exiled from desire, caught up in narcissistic, masturbatory, and sterile relations. Duras develops this account in her explicit writings with male homosexuality, in *La maladie de la mort* and its 1986 rewrite, *Les yeux bleus cheveux noirs*, which portray the contractual relations of a heterosexual woman with a man, readers are invited to recognize as gay and, in the later text, with two men, one straight and one homosexual. Both texts associate females with desire and life and gay men with bodily ignorance and death, and both establish heterosexual relations as the inevitable endgame of all erotic relations. They thus

perform, as James Williams finds all of Duras' experiments in erotic pleasure do, "a sublimatory, rhetorical appropriation of the Other as a defence against the threat of homosexual indifferentiation" (Williams, 158).

Despite Duras' enthusiasm for heteroerotics, they scarcely fare better in this phase of her writing, associated as they are with violence, death, unachieved communication, and negative outcomes. She examines sadomasochism, as she had previously, but now she diverges more sharply from the western erotic tradition to examine the woman's relation to that dynamic. In her scenario for Alain Resnais' *Hiroshima mon amour* she had explored heterosexual eroticism in relation to the social and historical contexts of the previous decade—fascism, collaboration, Franco-German relations, and the purges. Then, she had left the sexual relations between the Nazi soldier and the girl from Nevers off scene, showing instead him shot and dying as his love lay grieving across his body. Returning in the 1980s, the erotics of fascism, she eroticizes violence itself, including the violence of torture, and portrays a French woman's libidinal attraction to a fascist male body in *La Douleur's* "Ter le milicien" and "Albert des Capitales."

Similarly, while *L'Homme assis dans le couloir*, *Les yeux bleus cheveux noirs*, and *La maladie de la mort* all establish Duras as a writer of erotic fiction, one of them, *L'Homme assis dans le couloir* also forced the issue of her relation to pornography.

To briefly recall, this short text is entirely composed of a violent sex scene rendered without emotion, personalization, or temporal or spatial precisions. It features three characters—a detached narrator (who is perhaps female and who Duras elsewhere suggests may be herself), a man seated in a shadowy corridor, and a woman lying before him, on the ground, across a path, in the sun. She spreads her legs open to his gaze, then spreads open her labia as well. She cries out. Standing above her, he urinates on her body, beginning with her mouth and proceeding down to her vagina. He presses his foot on her body and uses it to roll her around in the dirt. He presses down harder still. As he retreats to the shadowy corridor, she continues crying out. She goes to kneel before him, performing oral sex until his pleasure turns to pain, and then licking his anal region. Turning her over, he

penetrates her and articulates his desire to kill her. She says that she wants to be beaten; "qu'elle voudrait mourir." [33]). Amid the ensuing cries, insults, and beatings, she says "oui, que c'est ca, oui" (thus reminding readers of *Hiroshima mon amour's* famous refrain "Tu me tues, tu me fais du bien"). He continues insulting and beating her until, finally, her head flops about on her neck, her face becomes a "chose morte" (35), and the scene falls silent. He lies down on her body (in the manner of so many previous characters, including the boa, *Hiroshima mon amour's* female lover, and the male in *Moderato cantabile's* opening scene). Motionless, she is dead, or merely asleep.

Due to the international success of its film version, Duras is perhaps best known to many spectators as the author of *L'Amant* and, to many readers, as the author of its 1991 reworking, *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord*. These novels examine erotic relations with a long history in Duras's corpus, including the lesbian desire of the young (semi-autobiographical) heroine for her classmate, Hélène Lagonelle, which receives an explicit and more violent retelling, as Hélène's breasts elicit not only the girl's erotic desire, but desire to kill. Both novels address her relations with her younger brother, which *L'Amant de la Chine du Nord* trace in detail and reveal as having been consummated. But most importantly, these novels also return to the erotic events Duras considers the origin of her writing: her erotic relationship with a man here revealed as radically separated from her by differences of class, race, age, and ethnicity. Here as elsewhere in her late writing, the fact that she is white and he is of Chinese origin, that she is from the lowest *colon* class and he from a well-placed Chinese family, that she is poor and he rich, that he is in his late twenties and she is in her mid-teens, that his religious and ethnic traditions foreclose the possibility of marriage, all of these *differences* augment their erotic desire and diminish the chance of communicating or of overcoming their multi-leveled separations, rendering their love both productive and "impossible."

### Biography

Born Marguerite Donnadiou, 4 April 1914 in Gia Dinh, Indochina (Vietnam). Attended Lycée

Chasseloup-Laubat, Saigon. Moved to France, 1933. Faculté de droit; *licence*, mathematics and political science; Ecole libre des sciences politiques. Colonial Ministry, 1937–1940. Married Robert Antelme, 1939. First child deceased at birth, 1942. Younger brother deceased, 1942. Member, Resistance group, Mouvement National des Prisonniers de Guerre et des Déportés September 1943. Antelme arrested and deported, June 1944–June 1945. Divorced, 1946. Son with Dionys Mascolo, 1947. Member, French Communist Party, 1944–1950. Anticolonial activism, 1950s–1962. Helped found Comité d'Action Etudiants-Ecrivains, May '68. Protests deaths of immigrant workers living in Foyer Franco-Africain, 1970. Relationship with young homosexual man, 1980–1996. Two alcoholic crises and a six-month coma, 1980s. Died Paris on March 3, 1996.

JANE WINSTON

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# DUSTAN, GUILLAUME

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1965–2005

French writer

## “Autopornobiographies”

*Dans ma chambre* (1996) is an “autofiction” charting the sexual activities and relationships of the narrator as he fucks and is fucked by a series of lovers including Quentin, Terrier, Stéphane, and Serge. Initially, Dustan’s style seems a disconcertingly simple, even simplistic, rehearsal of different sexual encounters based around the Paris “gay ghetto” in the Marais. However, the dead-pan oral tone, interlaced with hip slang and English-American expressions, effectively conveys the repetitiveness, the superficial chic, and also the readily available pleasures of a lifestyle based on sex, drugs, and “le look.” Not unlike Renaud Camus’s *Tricks* (1988) and Hervé Guibert’s *À l’ami qui ne m’a pas sauvé la vie* (1990), the first of Dustan’s fiction is an interesting combination of self-absorption and detachment, narcissism and self-deprecation. The detachment can also be seen as a way of dealing with the ritualized or non-ritualized violence of some of the relationships, the constant presence of AIDS—all of Dustan’s friends are HIV positive—and the claustrophobia of a strangely closeted if flamboyantly sex-centered world. At the end of the text he does, however, decide to leave Paris for a distant overseas job, at the very time his sex with his main partner, Stéphane, seems to be turning into love.

In his second novel, *Je sors ce soir* (1997), Dustan is back in Paris. Despite the death of a close friend and the increasing threat of AIDS, he is happy to be back in the clubs with “his ghetto brothers,” where he can look at men with pleasure and without fear. There follows a diary-like description of pick-up rituals—timing, positioning, body-styles and dress-codes—conscious as he is that he needs to work out to follow the increasingly Americanized fashion for muscle-men. Will he or won’t he score? He lingers and loiters in hope, alternating dancing, shitting,

taking ecstasy, and removing and replacing his carefully chosen t-shirt, according to the time and the activity. As the drug takes effect, the text itself becomes more disjointed, ending with his going home alone, masturbating, and going to sleep. Whether modestly or self-promotionally, the book ends with some two hundred credits to other writers, musicians, film-stars, and friends.

Dustan’s next work, *Plus fort que moi* (1998), opens with a brief biography—his father’s departure and the murder/suicide of a family of friends—before charting his own sexual history from teenage park encounters and backroom initiations to the publication of this volume. The text does, therefore, offer an account of the making of a particular kind of a modern, urban, French gay man, defined in terms of the Paris scene and, within that, scrupulously delineated sexual preferences and positions: the author cruises not just the clubs and the streets but, increasingly, the Minitel, in search of compatible partners with an arsenal of sexual acrobatics, sex-toys, and role-plays. Now himself HIV positive, his desire for strong sensations is gratified by ever more men and ever harder sex—fisting, dildos and bondage—as, with unprotected sex, he risks and even invites inevitable death: his sexual journey has become a kind of imitation or even parody of Céline’s *Voyage au bout de la nuit* or O’Neill’s *Long Day’s Journey into Night*. Both he and his increasingly indiscriminately chosen partners are all pleasurable abjected “sluts.” The text ends with the previously mentioned escape from Paris, but not before he dreams of an encounter with an ape...

## Other texts

Having done for the French gay male what writers and film-makers such as Catherine Millet and Catherine Breillat are doing for the sexual life of the French heterosexual woman—except that Dustan is perhaps even more famous for his support of “barebacking” — he then publishes a rather different text, *Nicolas Pages* (1999).

This is a “real-time” diary account of Dustan’s various activities and *amours* between 1995 and 1998, framed by his affair with fellow-author, the eponymous Pages, whom he met when they were invited to appear on the Belgian media. Here the literary model seems to be less Camus, Guibert, Céline, or O’Neill than, perhaps, Bret Easton Ellis, though for the fame rather than for the violence: both Dustan and Pages are, no doubt mistakenly, thought to represent “the new gay dandyism,” with *Nicolas Pages* offering both a hymn to gay sex and an exposure of the stigma suffered by gay men in straight society, but in a mode which is constantly playful, picaresque, and parodic. Dustan’s next novels, also published in his own series by Balland, remain in this playful mode, with *Génie Divin* (2001) comprising a patchwork of short essays, jottings, and interviews (including one with Bret Easton Ellis) and with *LXiR ou Dédramatison La Vi Cotidien* (2002) even more disjointed and “cool.” Here gayness is an aspect of style: the one-night stand has become the flip one-liner; serial sex has become the disjointed paragraph; violence can be read in a set of capitals or exclamation marks. Representing or debunking the discourses of the new millennium, *LXiR* turns every *que* (*that*) into *queue* (*prick*): the fun of sex is still omnipresent, but textualized in parody, punctuation, and pun.

### Biography

Born William Baranès in 1965. Took the pseudonym Guillaume Dustan in 1995. Achieved

celebrity with his first novel *Dans ma chambre*, published by P.O.L. in 1996. Has since published a regular series of novels with P.O.L. and with Balland where he currently edits their “Le Rayon” collection, formerly “Le Rayon Gay.” He has also produced a number of short films including *Nous* and *Back*.

OWEN HEATHCOTE

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The history of Dutch erotic literature is better described through the history of the book trade than through literary history. Although, from the seventeenth century on, the Dutch have been industriously supplying the European erotica market, the country has produced but few writers of erotica of its own whose works have

been able to stand the test of time due to their inherent quality and/or the extent of the scandal they caused. Much of Dutch erotica was written and published anonymously and has remained anonymous. Publishers rather published translations than originals. It is therefore no coincidence that one of the few well-known

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twentieth-century erotic Dutch novels is set in the antiquarian world and was originally written in English: in 1970, W. Schors published, under the pen name of Armand Coppens, *The Memoirs of an Erotic Bookseller*, of which a Dutch version appeared in the same year. Even more significantly, Schors's protagonist, a bookseller whose search for pornography entangles him in various sexual adventures, shows no interest in pornography from the Netherlands: he is solely interested in the French, German, and English classics.

This lack of interest in homegrown erotica is also reflected in the state of (academic) research: the studies and articles about the subject are quickly summed up, there is still no bibliography of Dutch or Dutch-language erotica, much of the original works have not yet been republished and Dutch anthologies of erotica, such as the *Lusthof*-series by Leonard de Vries, from the sixties, or the recent compilation of masturbation poetry by Rob Schouten, are filled with translations. The few studies treating Dutch so-called pornography and erotica hardly ever consider it in its own right, but compare it to explicit French and English books, to conclude that the Dutch books are less: less erotic, less philosophic, less libertine, less literary.

It is therefore rather difficult to give a survey of Dutch erotic literature. The genre is mostly determined by its readership, by censors, and other critics. And this framework is totally absent in the Netherlands. Although very early on (since 1669), Dutch law made 'obscenity' a separate censorship category, the list of early modern titles actually censored on this ground is rather short, and consists mostly of French erotica or translations from the French. A general prohibition was in force, but in daily practice it was often impossible to implement it: what was banned in one town was published in the next. This pragmatic tolerance raised expectations and set the standard for later times. In 1770, when the States of Holland tried to increase censorship measures against books and pictures 'which by their obscene content could insult good virtue and pervert youth' some Dutch publishers reacted with a long request, in which they stated that obscenity was a subjective concept, that the authorities had no constitutional right to keep people from 'poisoning' their own virtue, and which concluded with a practical objection: sales were not stopped by prohibition. On the

contrary: the small booksellers, the ambulant booksellers, canvassers, and wandering Jews made good money from it.

### *Golden Age of Dutch Erotica*

Because there was little censorship, a Grub Street canon of scandalous titles was never established. This does not mean that no erotica was published: from the seventeenth century on, the Netherlands at certain intervals functioned as the sex shop of Europe. Around 1660, the Elzeviers started to publish the erotic works of Pietro Aretino and Niccolò Franco. Soon, others followed suit with publications of the French classics *L'Academie des dames* and *L'École des filles*, after which a flow of *chroniques scandaleuses* and monastery erotica was either channelled abroad in French form or translated into Dutch to serve the domestic market. The history of erotic literature in the Netherlands is characterized by these kinds of peaks of several decades, in which the surge of export and translation kindled the Dutch authors' interest in erotica. The second half of the seventeenth century is a first key moment. In this period, the first Dutch erotica specialist arises: Timotheus ten Hoorn of Amsterdam. He seems to have had a hand in nearly every erotic novel published during this period. He and his associates translated French pornography, *chroniques scandaleuses*, and erotic love stories. He was probably the first European publisher to establish an *officiel*—an 'official' catalogue consisting of semi-erotic, medico-sexologic, and gallant books—indicating to potentially interested readers where to obtain erotica. After thus testing the waters, he started publishing sexually explicit Dutch novels. He was intensely involved with his product. His authors write that their publisher stimulated, pushed, and pressured them to make them write faster, write more, write better, write a second part. It was even rumored that he had written one or more of the novels himself, although there is no proof for this.

Whereas up to that point erotica consisted mainly of dialogues between an older and a younger woman, set in court circles or in the monastery, Dutch writers chose the form of the picaresque novel for their erotic stories. Their novels are urban, mercantile and anti-idealistic in every respect. The hard truths and pragmatic

rules of the city life prevail. The protagonists are students, merchants, craftsmen, thieves, lawyers, and whores. The protagonist and narrator of *D'Openhertige juffrouw*—an Amsterdam whore—is proud of her status as an ambitious business woman, and is not ashamed of making a living in prostitution: 'the fists are made of the same flesh as the arse'. She is a city woman, self-made, self-sufficient, independent, and proud. She wants to be accepted by society, not, like Moll Flanders, by striving for the virtuous position of 'wife' but through recognition of her position of whore. Money is as vital to these new city ethics as lust. To the *juffrouw*, a happy affair is an affair that brings in both sexual and financial satisfaction. When her husband refuses to pay her, she denies him sex, when he does not satisfy her sexually, she finds her satisfaction elsewhere. The *juffrouw's* outlook is systematically materialistic: she is of the opinion that human behavior is determined by physical factors. Money and economic relations determine the make-up of society at large. Social practice is not determined by moral philosophy, but moral philosophy should be founded in social practice.

*D'Openhertige Juffrouw* is the first known example of the whore autobiography as a literary form. Not only did this give a new unity and logic to the anecdotes told, it also gave the writer the possibility to convincingly attack contemporary morals and literary practices. By revealing her own secrets and the secrets of her trade, the *juffrouw* acquires the right to demand the same openness from everybody. It is not surprising that the whore autobiography would be used by many of the famous French and English erotic novels of the eighteenth century.

Novels like *De Leidsche straatschender of de roekeloze student* (The Leiden Rogue or the Reckless Student, 1679), *De Haagsche lichtmis* (The The Hague Rogue, 1679), *D'Openhertige juffrouw* (The Outspoken Mistress, 1680), *'T Amsterdamsch Hoerdom* (The Amsterdam Whoredom, 1681), *De doorluchtige daden van Jan Stront* (The Illustrious Deeds of John Shit, 1684) remained popular for a long time: all through the eighteenth century reprints of these novels were published. The novels were also translated into German, French, and English. The interest in the English translation of *D'Openhertige juffrouw*, *The London Jilt*, even went as far as America: at the end of 1683,

John Usher, a Boston bookseller, ordered two copies of this book with the London bookseller Chiswell. In 1684, he wanted to order more copies, but this time Chiswell had to disappoint him: 'The London Jilt is out of print and not to be had'. Usher did not have to wait too long: in 1684, a year after the first edition, the 'second edition corrected' appeared.

### *Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*

After the death of Timotheus ten Hoorn, in 1710, it would take until the nineteenth century for a new erotica expert to arise. Due to competition from France, Germany, and England, in the eighteenth century the Dutch book trade limited itself more and more to the domestic market: the majority of French and English erotic texts—*Fanny Hill*, Sade, Mirabeau—was not even translated. Attention shifted to erotic poetry. This genre had already been practiced in the seventeenth century, by among others Willem Godschalk van Focquenbroch and Matthijs van der Merwede van Clootwijk, who after the publication of his erotic-libertine collection *Uyt-heemsen oorlog ofte Roomsche mintriomphen* (1651) was forced to public penance before he could enter the officialdom of The Hague. In the eighteenth century, this burlesque-erotic tradition was continued, in among others the anonymously published poetry collections *Het reukwerk van Venus* (1750) and *Galante dichtluimen* (1780). There is some speculation that the latter could have been written by the famous author Willem Bilderdijk, or by poet and translator Hendrik Riemsnijder. Poet, translator, and playwright Pieter Boddaert (1776–1805) posthumously became famous as an erotic poet, when in 1805, his friend, the popular publisher Hendrik Moolenijzer sr., published two books: *Levensgeschiedenis (...)* and *Poëtische en prosaische portefeuille van mr. Pieter Boddaert, verzameld en uitgegeven door eenigen zijner vrienden*. Both these books became big successes. During the whole of the nineteenth century, other erotic writings would surface, supposedly from his estate.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, the publication and export of erotica became big business again. Sexually explicit magazines were known as 'articles d'Amsterdam'. The extremely liberal attitude towards explicit writings prevalent in the Netherlands until 1911 was attractive



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to foreign erotica publishers and sellers. Via Brussels, especially French publishers, such as Gay and Brancard, supplied the north. Specialised Dutch publishing companies also profited from the 'open' legislation.

As early as 1860, the obscure Amsterdam publisher 'Mulder II' had begun to publish erotic works: erotic poetry and anonymous erotic-satiric prose, such as *Het minnespel* [*Courting, erotic stories based on Biblical stories*] and *De ontuchtigheden van het tweede keizerrijk* [*The Lasciviousness of the Second Empire: 'Scenes of worst bestial depravity, derived from secret memoirs from the Empire'*] The torch was taken over by the 'Artistiek Bureau', a pseudonym of Rotterdam publisher Bergé. Bergé and his heirs build up a considerable list of 'titillating' books, both in English and in Dutch. The example of the bureau was quickly followed by other Dutch publishers; German publishers also aimed at the Dutch market. The periodical was discovered as medium for erotica: *Pst Pst* and *De zwarte kat*, for instance, explored and crossed the boundaries of morality.

### 1880–1940

From the end of the nineteenth century, the rise of the so-called pornography trade is reflected in other texts. The *Dictionary of the Dutch Language* mentions occurrences of the word 'pornography' or derivatives thereof only from 1900. As of 1900, a lively legal discussion was entertained about the definition of pornography and the measure in which production, distribution, and publication of sexually explicit writings should be punished. In 1910, the study *Distribution of Offensive Writings* by Voorink appeared, in 1920 *The Pornography Trade* by Van Waes. From the thirties on, the 'State Bureau Concerning the Trade in Women and Children and the Trade in Lascivious Publications' issued lists of titles 'which are to be considered offensive to virtue', in which several Dutch authors were mentioned, most of whom have since sunk in oblivion.

But by that time, there were quite a few well-known writers working in erotica. Naturalism, in trying to paint a faithful picture of reality, could lead to explicit attention to sexuality. The famous thirteenth chapter from *Een liefde* [*A Love*] (1888) by Lodewijk van Deijssel caused quite a stir with a masturbation scene of the

female protagonist Mathilde. It made his fellow-author and friend Frederik van Eeden cry out: 'The book is irksome, annoying, revolting—shocking!—just shocking! that's the word'.

The erotic threat was extended by a new phenomenon—gay erotica. The best-known gay novel is *Pijpelijntjes* [*Scenes from the Amsterdam Pijp*] (1904) by Jacob Israel de Haan. The uproar caused by this outspoken novel cost De Haan his job at the newspaper and his friendship with Aletrino, who recognized himself in one of the protagonists of the book. Aletrino and De Haan's fiancée tried to buy all copies of the first print and shortly after that, a new print appeared in which the characters were less easily recognizable. The dedication to Aletrino was replaced by a motto from Catullus: 'I will fornicate with you from the front and the rear, you who—because my poems are a bit lascivious—think that I myself am not too modest either'. In the twenties, the poet, novelist, and critic E. du Perron published several collections of obscene poetry under the pen names Cesar Bombay and W.C. Kloot van Neukema (W.C. Nut to Fuckinhurst).

### After the Second World War

After the Second World War, the literary world was rudely awakened by the raw and realistic novels of Gerard Reve, Willem Frederik Hermans, Anna Blaman, and Jan Wolkers, followed by the beat generation, of which the rogue novel *I Jan Cremer* caused the biggest stir. Prosecution was rare. One of the few examples is the trial against Johan van Keulen, who between 1955 and 1968 wrote the very popular *Bob and Daphne* series under the pen name Han B. Aalberse. He was eventually sentenced, the offensive character of the books was deemed 'dangerous for public health'. The third part of the series was then republished in a bowdlerized version. The series was undoubtedly inspired by *Lolita*, of which Johan van Keulen made the first translation in the world, published in 1957 by publisher Oisterwijk.

The sixties gave new momentum to Dutch erotica. This decade initiated mass production, at first only with a torrent of translations: apart from *Lolita* also many books by Sade. The Dutch series of Olympia Press was exclusively occupied with the publication of translations. Dutch hopefuls were always turned down by

editor Gerrit Komrij: ‘they are really *nothing*. Shabby mud, as limp as a rag, and very, very Dutch’. One of the few books of Dutch origin published by the Olympia Press appeared only in an English and German version: *House of Pain*: the memoirs of SM queen Monique von Cleef. The author of this book was Willem van den Hout (1915–1985), who under the pen names Willem W. Waterman and Joke Riviera wrote erotic novels and stories for the well-known explicit Dutch magazines *Candy* and *Cash*. Although Van den Hout claimed to have written a Dutch version (*De griezelwereld van Monique van Cleef*) the manuscript has never been retrieved.

Dutch erotica sells best when it is as un-Dutch as possible. That could be the reason why the English-written *Happy Hooker* (1971) by Xaviera Hollander is the most famous ‘Dutch’ erotic work. This also goes for Flemish literature: the most productive erotica publisher of Flanders, the Dageraadpers, initiated its ‘white series’ with *De belevenissen van een gouvernante*, according to the title page a translation of *Adventures of a Governess* by South-African writer James B. Richardson Jr., in reality an erotic novel by J.D. Burton, written in crude Flemish. After that, the same publisher undertook Sade translations, done by famous Flemish authors like Gust Gils, Claude Krijgelmans, Freddy de Vree. The last two clearly caught the bug: under pen names such as ‘Jug me Bash’ and ‘Jan Vlaming’, they wrote several erotic stories, through which the Dutch language was enriched with pleasantly hilarious erotic expressions. This series reached its peak with the novels by Heere Heeresma aka ‘Johannes de Back’, whose brother Faber Heeresma translated erotica for De Dageraad. In his novels such as *Gelukkige paren* (1968), Heeresma, who since 1954 had some fame as a writer of satirical novels, offered a ‘funny look behind the curtains of the decent citizen (and his wife)’, whose sexual taboos were violated, as was to be expected in the sixties. Heeresma also ridiculed the hypocrisy of erotica, by ironically interjecting in this stories with ‘Hey, you. Getting wet down there?’ His stories balance serious excitement and playful absurdity.

The rigid poise of the Belgian authorities, who tried to restrict the distribution of magazines like *Playboy* and *Sextant* and the establishment of new so-called porn magazines, only

inspired resistance. The problems Jef Geeraerts encountered on publication of his *Gangreen I. Black Venus* just made things worse: in 1972, he published *De fotograaf* under the pen name of Claus Trum, a book that would have made the Black Venus blush, and on the cover of which publisher Walter Soethoudt wrote: ‘this book is the end; after this, no other books will ever be written’. In the same year, Louis Paul Boon published *Mieke Maaïke’s obscene jeugd*, according to Boon himself written to scare off the Catholic fans he had acquired with the success of *Daens* (1971). In this story about the precocious nymphomaniac Mieke Maaïke, Boon dispenses with conventional sexual morality. He gives his erotic fantasies free reign, taunts the public at large, insults marital virtue, and upsets moralists and prigs. Of this cult novel, tens of thousands of copies have been sold. Also in 1972, *De Geisha* appeared, a novel by Theo Kars about a man living with two women. The novel, originally offered to the Olympia Press, appeared with the more conventional Arbeiderspers and was an immediate success: within 20 years, it was reprinted 17 times.

From the eighties on, erotica, the description of sex, and the use of so-called pornographic slang have become integrated in literature at large. Hugo Claus, Herman Brusselmans, Tom Lannoye, Joost Zwagerman, Roland Giphart, Adriaan Morriën, Hans Warren, Bertus Aafjes, Lydia Rood: these are but a few names from among the many authors writing erotic poetry and stories. Apart from a firm foundation of sexually explicit magazines, there is a constant production of collections about love and sex, erotic series, and theme issues on pornography of magazines. In a country and a time where sex and erotica are so integrated in public space, it no longer seems useful to isolate ‘erotic literature’ as a separate category.

INGER LEEMANS

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## DUVERT, TONY

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1945–

French novelist and essayist

One of the most polemic and aggressively positive, but also one of the most private and elusive of French sexual minorities, Duvert defends the right of people to live their lives according their own needs and values. He promotes guilt-free sexual expression, including pornography, sado-masochism, and transvestitism. A prerequisite for and symbol of social liberation, sexual freedom for Duvert requires the dismantling of “heterocratic” stereotypes, the rejection of the constraining categories of contemporary social values, the undoing of the repressive socio-economic order which underpins capitalism and stifles positive, natural sexual curiosity and erotic sensitivity. In place of homosexual identity, for example, Duvert privileges a more generalized and unproblematized fusion of the homosocial and homoerotic.

***Récidive***

Like much of his fiction, Duvert’s first novel rehearses many of the techniques of the French New Novel; it is self-conscious, self-contradictory, self-questioning, self-referential, and self-mutilatory. As a series of scenes, some unfinished,

a “homotextuality,” as Phillips sees it, that questions the various versions of and hypotheses for a quest for sexual experience and identity by a “chorus of subjectivities” led by, and/or leading astray, a fifteen-year-old runaway who is crossing France and recounting adventures, *Récidive* is also unconventional and non-linear. It unveils the mechanics of narration, while it undermines psychological reality and the possibility for a fixed or grounded homosexual essence. Narrator-voyeurs, perspectives, and narration shift are confused: between a teenaged boy and an older (?) writer; between lovers passed en route and objects of desire, forester, sailor, recluse, youths; and between first- and third-person. Duvert foregrounds the highly mobile and sometimes violent nature of an often-marginalized, shifting sexuality. As social contexts change, so do the fragments and recombinations of memory and fantasy. As the boundaries between childhood, adolescence, and adulthood, between reader and narrator-voyeurs are blurred and/or transgressed, the binary structures of heterosexuality and textuality as exclusivities are undermined, and moral responsibility is evaded. He rewrote and republished this novel less than a decade after it first came out by shortening it and changing episodes. The newer version still privileges circularity, repetition, dislocation, and fragmentation, however. Indeed, it further

exemplifies the transgressive repetition announced by its title and staged within it.

Other creative works by Duvert are equally as inventive and unconventional. They include (but are not limited to): a cutting and subversive dictionary (*Abécédaire malveillant*); a pornography which exposes and deconstructs its own fascinations (*Journal d'un innocent*); an indictment of the parents of male children (*L'île atlantique*); a satire of science, religion, psychiatry, the police, and high society (*Un anneau d'argent à l'oreille*); a series of darkly suggestive vignettes, scenes of town life that expose the sordid and surreal (*District*); and an extravagant, Rabelaisian composite of imagined professions from the past involving scatology, sexual initiation, and murder (*Les petits métiers*).

### ***Le bon sexe illustré***

Duvert's first book of essays targets conventional sex education material, the five-volume *Encyclopédie de la vie sexuelle de la physiologie à la psychologie* with its misinformed opinions, repressions, fears, taboos, and abuses, written for five distinct age groups: children from ages seven to nine and ten to thirteen; teenagers from ages fourteen to sixteen and seventeen to eighteen; and adults. This sexual encyclopedia is attacked as a mountain of heterocratic, divisive, birth-centric, antisexual propaganda. Duvert argues that its glorification of family, marriage, babies, and parental power, its indoctrination, censorship, and sanitization of information primarily brainwashes. In its artificial imposition of gender roles and morally correct behavior, it upholds an overarching, unhealthy, and crippling sexual order. In the ideology governing tolerated pleasures, the possibility for childhood eroticism is never entertained and thereby pathologized, if not erased. It represents the repression of socio-economic order and exposes the control of a profit-and-loss-oriented society. Duvert urges that the eroticism of minors, children, and adolescents, those representing the present and future of society, be recognized and that their rights to make love, and not only listen to their parents speaking of it, be defended. To recognize and appreciate the distinctive eroticism of the young would be to diminish their social conditioning, to free them from the grips of the family, and to acknowledge

their autonomy as desiring subjects. As a result of such sexual liberation, the two fundamental pillars of the sexual order, the duty to procreate like one's parents and the right parents have claimed to "own" their offspring or "products," would be dismantled and the processes of reproduction of power halted.

### ***L'enfant au masculin***

In his second book of essays, Duvert extends the arguments against heterocracy introduced in *Le Bon sexe illustré*. He focuses on and defends adolescent homosexuality in chapters with titles as different and far-reaching as "The Art of Loving" and "The Family and its Homo," "Maternity" and Misogyny," "Neo-Puritanism" and "The Seven Deadly Sins." Society purportedly tolerates, integrates homosexuality. However, only one-fifth of French parents admit that they would accept the homosexuality of one of their children. In France, the right to be homosexual is only recognized after an adolescent turns eighteen. Furthermore, the more rights and freedoms one wins as an adult, the more minors are marginalized. Homosexual relations between adults and minors are seen as abnormal and criminal. At the root of the heterocratic domination and injustice exposed by Duvert is a totalitarian sexual culture that is neither class- nor sex-related but supported both by males and females, mothers and fathers, conservatives and liberals. It is taught in school, cherished in the family, and exemplified in the media. Until the right of heterosexuals to "reproduce" themselves and their ideologies in their children is abolished, and with it heterocracy itself, Duvert insists that true freedom of life and lifestyle, the language and means by which to address, articulate, and live out the full spectrum of erotic nature, can never be possible.

### **Biography**

Born in 1945 in Villeneuve-le-Roi in the French Val-de-Marne. His works span three decades and range in importance and recognition: from crossword puzzles in the now-defunct *Gai Pied* magazine to essays; from criticism in the literary journal *Critique* and often-cruel vignettes to ludic and subversive novels that confuse genres and narrative points of view, satirize, indict,

intertextualize, and interrogate. He was awarded the Prix Médicis in 1973 for *Paysage de fantaisie* (*Strange landscape*), his fifth novel. Since 1989, Duvert has ceased publishing. There has been speculation — but no proof — that he and the writer Renaud Camus are one and the same.

BRIAN GORDON KENNELLY

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# E

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## E.D.

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Nineteenth-century French novelist

Under these initials from 1888 to 1894, a remarkable French author clandestinely published in Paris sixteen erotic novels that had a keen success among the fans. Afterward he disappeared without a trace, and nobody succeeded in piercing his anonymity. Who really was E.D.? In 1930, Louis Perceau, on the basis of information from specialized booksellers, speculated that E.D. was “a Faculty teacher in Montpellier” named Edouard Desjardins. However, when Pascal Pia wrote *Les livres de l'enfer* [*Books of the “Enfer,”* or publicly forbidden section, of the Bibliothèque Nationale], he examined the archives of the university of Montpellier and found no Edouard Desjardins on the schoolteacher list. He supposed that E.D. could have been a civil servant of Gironde, Edmond Dumoulin, of which they know absolutely nothing. As well, as yet there has been no thorough study on E.D., who seems a ghost of the French erotic literature of the Belle Epoque.

Nevertheless, by the quality of his style (which was why he was taken as a teacher of

arts) and the variety of his intrigues, E.D. well deserves his reputation. His first book, *Mes amours avec Victoire* [*My Love with Victoria*] (1888), described as a “small novel of extragallant love,” had a new edition the next year, revised, corrected, and augmented. The narrator tells how, immediately after having met the Baroness Victoria, they gave each other all the possible pleasures. His second book, *Le marbre animé* [*The Lively Marble*], “by E.D., author of *Mes amours avec Victoire*, Brussels, 1889”—the indication of Brussels or London as a location of provenance was a way for the French publishers to avoid censorship—was the tale of the initiation into sexual pleasures of a frigid princess. Afterward, E.D. published a *Théâtre naturaliste* [*Naturalistic Theater*] (under the imprint “London, Collection of the French Erotic of the XIX century, published by the Society of Cosmopolitan Bibliophiles”), containing seven one-act plays, which were also separately published: *En cabinet particulier* [*In Private Cabinet*], *La discipline* [*The Discipline*], *Après le bal* [*After the Ball*], *La vengeance est le plaisir des dieux* [*The Vengeance and the Pleasure of Gods*], *Entre-deux*



E.D.

[*Intervening Period*], *La raison du plus fort est toujours la meilleure* [*The Strongest Reason Is Always the Best*], *Il ne faut pas jouer avec le feu* [*Do Not Play with Fire*]. These plays could be performed, in dishabille and behind closed door, by volunteer actors, for as a catalogue says, “The author provides explanations as much stunning as precise.”

In two years, E.D. published so many books that it is probable that he had written them some time ago and put them aside. He published three novels on sapphism, *La comtesse de Lesbos, ou la nouvelle Gamiani* [*The Countess of Lesbos, or the New Gamiani*] (1889), *Lèvres de velours* [*Velvet Lips*] (1889), and *Lesbia maîtresse d'école* [*Lesbian Schoolmistress*] (1890). In the foreword to the first, the author warns that his Countess of Lesbos, unlike Musset's Countess Gamiani, is “the personification of gentleness.” Affairs of pure voluptuousness are interwoven with tender affection, which indeed is what the Countess is searching with her girlfriends. The continuation of her adventures, *Lèvres de velours*, begins in Seville, where she has surrounded herself with lesbian dancers, led by the naughty Miss Pirouett, who executes with her “a ballet like they don't dance at the Opera,” that is, a choreographic orgy, whose lascivious figures seem to be doing waltz steps. These lesbian dancers, who have “bizarre and charming practices,” sometimes accept men in their intimacy. With regard to *Lesbia maîtresse d'école*, this novel was inspired by a case in the news, in which the headmistress of a girls boarding school in the provinces was arrested for allowing the schoolgirls to caress each other at will. E.D. imagined what could happen in this boarding school with such humor and goodwill that he invited the reader to exonerate these crazy virgins.

When two famous English novels of “le vice anglais,” *Curiosities of Flagellation* and *The Birchen Bouquet*, were translated into French, E.D. wanted to show that he was capable of treating the subject. The first part of *Jupes troussées* [*Trussed Skirts*] (1889) is “La Discipline au couvent [The Discipline at the Monastery],” adapted from the souvenirs of the chaplain of the abbey of Thétieu. The second part, “Une séance au Club des Flagellantes” [A Session at the Flagellant's Club], is preceded by this advice: “This story is the translation of a letter of my young friend, Sir John Seller, who assisted,

disguised as a woman, in the session that he describes for me upon my request.” *Les Callipyges, ou les délices de la verge* [*The Calypicians, or the Delights of the Stick*] (1889) is presented as a series of conferences on the different manners of whipping, pronounced by woman educators in London boarding schools or in “five o'clocks” at Lady Finefleece's or Lady Splendidorbs'. Another novel by E.D. on flagellation is *Défilé de fesses nues* [*Naked Buttock Parade*] (1890), a collection of anecdotal letters.

In the erotic fairy tale genre, E.D.'s novel *L'Odyssée d'un pantalon* [*Odyssey of a Pair of Pants*] (1890), relating the adventures of a man transformed in woman's panties (that is, at that time lacework and rustle pants) which assist in the intimate acts of their owner, was of great originality. The two-volume *Mes étapes amoureuses* [*My Loving Stages*] (1890) had as its subtitle “By E.D., author of *L'Odyssée d'un pantalon*.” In the foreword to the first volume, E.D. explains that it was the success of *Mes amours avec Victoire* that induced him to write *Mes étapes*, in which the lover of Baroness Victoria relates all the adventures he had before meeting her. After the novel *Les exploits d'un galant précocé* [*The Exploits of a Precocious Gallant*] (1890), the hero of which is a cherub beginning his feminine conquests at the age of fourteen, E.D. published his best novel, *Odor di femina* [*Womanly Odor*] (1891), a history of a Parisian who, weary of women of the world, takes refuge in the countryside and gives himself up to frantic lovemaking with all kind of peasant women.

Although the novelist ended his career at the end of the nineteenth century, in 1904 a publisher put the E.D. initials to *Mémoires d'une danseuse russe* [*Memoirs of a Russian Dancer*], a second-rate book which had previously appeared without an author's name, in order to take advantage of E.D.'s repute. E.D. also must have been a libertine poet, for various catalogues cite a book of his called *Rondeaux et sonnets galants* [*Gallant Rondeaux and Sonnets*], which has been unobtainable.

Such was the itinerary of this masked writer, of whom we do not know whether he was married or single, a man of trade or a rich dilettante—and whose erotic writings are among the most curious of the Third Republic.

SARANE ALEXANDRIAN

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## EGYPTIAN LOVE POETRY, ANCIENT

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Ancient Egyptian love poems have survived antiquity in the form of four papyrus collections, a number of small fragments, and one large ostrakon. Though all of these materials hail from the period 1300–1150 BCE, the language employed in them reflects a more archaic stage of development, suggesting that the poems might be copies or later editions of earlier love lyric traditions.

Native terms applied to these materials include "songs" (ʿsw), "utterances" (rʿw), and "sayings" (tsw). A number of poems also open with the words "the beginning of the song of entertainment" (ʿ>t-> m ʿs ΔmΔ-ib). This title appears also in a few tombs in conjunction with banquet and dancing imagery, suggesting that at least some of the love poems served as diversions at festive occasions.

Though the poems themselves do not appear to have been used in ritual contexts, in a few cases, cultic settings provide literary contexts for the lyrics. Thus, the lovers who speak and are described in the poems are sometimes said to be en route to a cultic festival or center. Some of the poems also employ language elsewhere associated with deities, especially Hathor, the goddess of love. In one poem, Hathor is even invoked by a lover for her help in securing her beloved's perpetual affection.

Egyptian love lyrics are well known for their sophisticated language and emotive contents. Each of the extant poems records the innermost desires of male and female lovers who laud their love for each other, albeit indirectly, in the first person and in alternating stanzas. Periodically,

the poet also makes his voice known. Though the lovers frequently address each other as "sister" and "brother," as well as by a few royal epithets, no incestual relationship is implied. Typically the poems express premarital desires (only one of the poems references marriage explicitly) and often characterize love as a state of mutual bliss and perpetual sensual desire.

A number of topics and themes pervade the love poems, many of which reflect the rich Nile landscape, with its serene and reliable waters and fertile flora and fauna. Thus in Papyrus (P.) Chester Beatty I, we find the female voice describing her lover as "a gazelle prancing over the desert." Elsewhere the beloved is likened to heavenly bodies. The male voice in the aforementioned poem, for example, describes his beloved as "more lovely than all women, look, she is like the Sothis star rising, signaling a happy year!"

Often the lovers describe each other by listing their most alluring bodily features, sometimes equating them with flowers and the attributes of animals. P. Chester Beatty I, for example, portrays the woman as saying, "He offered me the delights of his body; his height is greater than his width!" P. Harris 500 employs agricultural language: "I am yours like an acre planted with flowers for me, and with every kind of sweet-smelling herb."

In one poem, pomegranate and fig trees do the speaking and eventually offer the lovers shade. Throughout, the lovers' innermost desires are expressed self-consciously, even insecurely. They are love-sick for each other, and yet often

## EGYPTIAN LOVE POETRY, ANCIENT

their attempts at secret trysts are frustrated. In one poem, P. Harris 500, the male lover even feigns illness to get the woman's attention: "I'll lie down inside, then I will fake sickness, then my neighbors will come in to visit, then (my) 'sister' will come along with them. She will put the doctors to shame, because she knows what really ails me!" The love-sick state of the lovers sometimes provides the poet with an opportunity to describe the lover as a medicine. Thus, in P. Chester Beatty I, we: "Greater is she to me than the compendium. My *wd3* is her entering from the outside. Seeing her, then, is health—she opens my eyes, rejuvenating my body." This verse also demonstrates the literary sophistication that one finds in these poems. Here, the Egyptian word *wd3* is used for its polysemous nature. On the one hand, it refers to the Eye of Horus, a magical amulet used by Egyptian doctors and embalmers for resuscitating life; and on the other, the pictorial dimensions of the script suggest "seeing" (the word is written with the image of an eye). The poet underscores these associations by saturating the poem with references to seeing, medicine, doctors, diagnoses, and rejuvenation. Such puns are common in the Egyptian love poems.

Metaphorical language abounds, and much of it is shared among the collections. One hears, for example, frequent references to locked doors, morning's first light, and love as an intoxicating liquor. Egyptian love poetry offers a veritable feast for the senses. Taste, sight, touch, smell are all referenced. Thus, in P. Harris 500, we find: "[T]he scent of your nostrils, only you, is what revives my heart!" A great many features, including some of the aforementioned themes and metaphors, appear also in the biblical Song of Songs, which has led some scholars to see Egyptian influence in the biblical poem.

Unlike the erotic elements in Mesopotamian love poetry, the erotic aspects of Egyptian love poetry are rarely explicit, but are instead often expressed by way of euphemisms, innuendos, and double entendres. In P. Chester Beatty I,

we read: "You will have your desire with her door-bolt, and the porticoes will shake. The sky descends with a breath of its wind, so that it brings you her perfume." In P. Harris 500, we find: "My sister's mansion, her door is in the midst of her home. Her doors are open, the bolt is unlocked.... Oh that I were made the door-keeper!" Sometimes, metaphors are chosen for their sexual charge, like the aphrodisiacs mentioned in P. Harris 500: "Sister is a lotus bud, her breasts are mandrakes." Such subtlety goes in the face of a number of Egyptian artistic representations (as well as mythological texts) that do not shy from graphically portraying sexual activity. Be that as it may, rich metaphors and the tight structural patterns of the oscillating monologues are sufficient to evoke erotic tensions and lend to the poems' exquisite beauty.

SCOTT B. NOEGEL

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## ELIADE, MIRCEA

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1907–1986

Romanian novelist, short story writer, and historian of religions

### *Maitreyi*

*Maitreyi* is the fictional representation of an episode from the author's biography. Upon his return from India, Mircea Eliade wrote this novel, which won the Techirghiol-Eforie Prize offered by the Cultura Nationala Publishing Press in 1933. The book was an instantaneous best seller. In 1988 *Maitreyi* (under the title *La Nuit Bengali*) also became a successful movie with Hugh Grant and Supriya Pathak. In 1974 the female prototype of the novel, the real Maitreyi Devi (1914–1990), daughter of the Indian philosopher Surendranath Dasgupta, responded to Mircea Eliade, offering her own version of the story in her book *Ne hanya te [It Does Not Die]*. It is one of the very few cases in world literature when two writers and protagonists of the same events give each their own perspective of it, and surely postmodernism influenced Maitreyi Devi's voicing of the margin.

In *Maitreyi*, Allan, a young engineer, has come to India imbued with all the colonial prejudice about his whiteness and alleged superiority. For two years, Allan has no interest in seeing real Bengali life. He lives among Indian English friends (English people either born or having lived for a long time in India) and enjoys the pleasures of sex with white girls. His only interest is in finding new sensual experiences. The first meeting with Maitreyi means nothing to Allan. She seems dirty and uninteresting, one of those "black" girls.

But all of this changes when he is invited to tea in the home of his boss, engineer Narendra Sen, Maitreyi's father. This is the moment when a very special gaze exchanged by the two young people creates an enormously particular and intimate communion between them. Unaware of the spiritual intimacy that has already sparked between his elder daughter and Allan, Narendra

Sen makes a fateful invitation. In agreement with his wife, he invites Allan to stay with them. Their intention is to adopt Allan culturally, that is, to help him understand the real India, the profound India. But this "profound" India will prove to be their own daughter. The young girl's body will become the territory of exploration and appropriation for the young white male who has felt attracted by the mystery of the Indian land from the very beginning of his sojourn in this exotic country. The body of the beloved will become a metonymy for the Indian land. But his colonial position hides a painful ambiguity. On the one hand, Allan is tempted by the new life that is being offered to him; he wants to know this life and dominate it by knowing it, penetrating it. On the other hand, he feels that this new life might change him, disempower him, and make him abandon his old self. Significantly for this cultural conflict, Maitreyi's first gift to Allan is Lafcadio Hearn's *Out of the East*, a book by an expatriate who yielded to the charm of another Asian country, Japan, and finally almost completely assimilated. In the first part of the novel, cultural and racial issues play a very important role. Maitreyi herself is not bereft of colonial prejudice. She confesses proudly that she is whiter than her sister, Chabu, and consequently Chabu will have more difficulty in finding a suitor, and her dowry must be higher.

The knowledge and love game between Allan and Maitreyi will develop slowly but as precisely as the traditional Indian dance. Allan, although having gone through several sexual experiences, is still virginal in mind and spirit. On the contrary, Maitreyi, a virgin from the physical point of view, has already had love experiences of amazing intensity. She has been in love with a tree and with Rabindranath Tagore, her guru. Maitreyi's voluptuous but spiritual communion with these partners is an enormous challenge for Allan. It is at this moment of the novel that both protagonists get rid of the prejudice and stereotypes that are brought about by the colonial situation they are in. They become the eternal

man and woman in love. Maitreyi's ardent, violent, almost physical thirst for purity creates an oxymoronic space for Allan, who is accustomed to the idea that love can find its accomplishment only in bed. Delicate but highly sensuous intimacy grows gradually. The protagonists' bodily communication through the furtive touch of their legs and feet creates an extremely high tension that goes beyond sexuality. After a symbolic Indian engagement ceremony which consists of Maitreyi offering Allan a jasmine wreath, the two lovers accomplish the ultimate rites of love. For Maitreyi this union must result in fertility and children in order to avoid sin. For both lovers this amorous experience is beyond the carnal. It is a contact with the spiritual, with the supranatural through the touch of flesh, of eyes and lips. It is absolute possession. But as in all love stories, the lovers are finally discovered and Allan is thrown out of the house because he has broken the sacred bond of hospitality. The Sens can judge this situation only through their cultural criteria.

Maitreyi is cruelly beaten by her father, but she tries to keep in touch with her lover. On the other hand, Allan tries to cure himself of his amorous intoxication through abstinence and spiritual recollection in the Himalayas or through other sexual experiences. But everything fails. In a tragic symmetry, Allan is now regarded by the Indians with the same racial prejudice that he himself had at the beginning of his Indian love story. Finally, Allan gets a new job in Singapore and leaves India. There, he finds out that Maitreyi has tried to become a pariah in order to be able to join him. She has given herself to the vegetable seller and has become pregnant. Allan will forever long to look into Maitreyi's eyes once again.

Evolving according to the pattern of the great love stories of the world, which always unite protagonists from opposed families or milieus, Maitreyi and Allan's story is a sophisticated and passionate erotic novel in which the flesh becomes the way to reach the spiritual. Colonial and cultural connotations nuance a love story that takes place in an exceptionally delineated exotic milieu.

### Biography

Born in Bucharest, died in Chicago. Eliade made his debut, while a high school student, with a

fantasy, *Cum am descoperit piatra filosofala* [*How I Discovered the Philosopher's Stone*]. He studied philosophy at the University of Bucharest in the 1920s. The period 1928–1932, when he studied at the University of Calcutta, which awarded him a Ph.D. in philosophy, was a decisive intellectual experience for him. Between 1933 and 1939 he was a lecturer on the faculty of letters and philosophy at the University of Bucharest. In 1940 he became a diplomat. Five years later Eliade settled down in Paris and started teaching at the Ecole de Hautes Etudes. In 1956 he was invited to the University of Chicago as a visiting professor, and eventually got tenure as professor there. Eliade published novels, stories, and numerous philosophical essays. The great synthesis of his studies on religions and myths is *Histoire des croyances et des idées religieuses*, which appeared between 1976 and 1978.

MICHAELA MUDURE

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## ELTIT, DIAMELA

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1949–  
 Chilean novelist

The narrative work of Diamela Eltit offers multiple interpretative possibilities and is marked by its transgression of norms of identity and meaning. Her fiction inscribes an erotic female subject that actively desires and surrenders to her bodily pleasures, in a context of relentless violence and surveillance. It is through the female body, portrayed in marginalized and fragmented terms, that Eltit explores the erotic component. The female body in her novels is held together by the minute interaction between different corporeal parts, which are frequently on the verge of collapse, precluding the construction of a whole corporeal image or stable gendered identity. The importance of corporeal experience and sexual desire in the constitution of a female subject is stressed, and gender difference is posited in terms of fluidity and openness, shattering the notion of binary opposites and normative cultural categories of gender and sex.

It is important to note the relationship between body and language in Eltit's fiction, since language supports the erotic function of her novels. Language is portrayed as flowing from the somaticized maternal body, which is the origin of a mother tongue. Julia Kristeva's concept of the maternal semiotic, the "repressed, instinctual maternal element," is embedded in the flow of Eltit's poetic language, which makes palpable a prohibited return to the pulsating and intimate pleasure of the infant–mother relationship, thus challenging the phallogocentric structure of desire.

Also of importance in Eltit's narrative is the link between the textual and the physiological

body. The rupture of language and syntax in her novels is linked to the corporeal images of female wounds and mutilation. Nelly Richard has also noted how the self-reflective nature of Eltit's writing, which frequently performs a cyclical whirl of auto-citation, mirrors the auto-eroticism of the female body in her narrative.

No synopsis can be given of Eltit's narrative, since there is no plot in the traditional sense. Her fiction demands the collaboration and participation of the reader. Eltit published three novels in Chile during the Pinochet dictatorship (1973–90). The most immediate impact of her first two novels, *Lumpérica* (also known as *E. Luminata*) (1983) and *Por la patria* [*For the Fatherland*] (1986), lies in their experimental character, which provoked within critics a response that Eugenia Brito has described as one of "fascination" and "horror." The estrangement induced in the reader by the narrative strategies employed in these novels, which include the fragmentation of language, shifting time frames, and the absence of an authorial narrative voice, reflects the disorientation of postcoup Chilean society. While Eltit is publicly uncompromising with regard to her challenging style of writing, the publication of her third novel, *El cuarto mundo* [*The Fourth World*] (1988), has led critics to comment upon the increasing linearity and accessibility of her novels from this point on, a shift possibly influenced by the end of military rule in 1989. Although Eltit's texts post-1988 are undoubtedly more accessible in linguistic and structural terms, they retain their complexity and audacity on semantic and thematic levels and actively resist the prevalence of neo-liberal market forces in Chile.

Much of the erotic imagery and language of Eltit's fiction stem from her first novel,

*Lumpérica*. This novel stages a scenario that hinges on one character (L. Iluminada—viz., “la iluminada,” the illuminated one), one space (a public square), an illuminated neon sign (“El luminoso”), and a defined length of time. The novel unfolds into a brittle, nightmarish world of marginality in which the body of L. Iluminada is violently penetrated and marked by the beam of light emanating from the male “luminoso”; an apparatus stripped of any human attributes. This novel posits a defiant, feminine sexuality and consciousness struggling to gain linguistic and corporeal expression in a context of extreme repression. The erotically charged gestures and poses of L. Iluminada are juxtaposed to religious discourse; the boundaries between binary opposites, such as mind/body and torture/pleasure, are blurred throughout; and the incessant rubbing of L. Iluminada and the “pale people” who shadow her suggests a form of nonphallic eroticism.

Coya is the female protagonist of *Por la patria*, who challenges the usual tropes of nationhood by ousting the young male “hero” (Juan) and positing a ferocious and active female presence and sexuality. Set against the backdrop of a shantytown overrun by a military raid and a female prison, this novel juxtaposes cultured Spanish language to the Chilean oral vernacular known as *coa*, in a performance that Eltit describes as linguistic “incest”: an intermingling of disparate discourses and genres. Carnal incest is also depicted in the relationship between Coya and her parents. The escalating linguistic chaos that surrounds Coya’s corporeal intimacy with her mother dominates the first section of the novel, transgressing the established symbolic order of language and desire.

The transgression of the incest taboo is once again explored in *El cuarto mundo* and in Eltit’s sixth novel, *Los trabajadores de la muerte* [*The Workers of Death*] (1998). The latter is structured as a triptych, which stages the incestuous relationship between a young man and his half-sister. While drawing closely on Greek tragedy, the novel’s epilogue and prologue place it firmly within the context of contemporary Chilean society. *El cuarto mundo* is narrated by fraternal twins (one male and one female), whose narrative emerges from the suffocating spaces of their mother’s womb and the family home. Embedded in dysfunctional family affiliations, this novel centers on the twins’ conception, gestation,

and subsequent “fraternal” incest. Allusions to voyeurism, guilt, confession, castration, and corporeal disintegration pepper the narrative. The second section of the novel, narrated by the female twin, is dominated by the pulsating sexual desire that marks her relationship with her brother, and ends with the birth of the twins’ baby: the novel itself.

In *Vaca sagrada* [*Sacred Cow*] (1991), menstrual blood is introduced into the sphere of erotic pleasure and violence, breaking the cultural taboo that marks this female bodily fluid as shameful and repulsive. As the title of this novel suggests, the perception of the female body in society is ambiguous and double-edged. Eltit’s fiction urgently demands that attention be drawn to the violence inflicted on the female body through the existing male-oriented social, political, and linguistic structures, which prevent women’s self-representation and oppressively regulate their desire.

### Biography

Born in Santiago de Chile, August 24, 1949. Eltit studied to become a Spanish teacher at the Universidad Católica in Santiago and subsequently obtained a degree in literature from the Universidad de Chile. She is a professor of literature at the Universidad Tecnológica Metropolitana in Santiago, where she currently teaches. Eltit has also taught as a visiting fellow at UCLA–Berkeley and at Stanford, Columbia, and John Hopkins, among other universities. She remained in Chile during the Pinochet dictatorship (1973–90), during which time she began her literary career, defying the harsh censorship laws and the restriction on the circulation of books. Eltit was one of the four founding members of CADA (Colectivo de Acciones de Arte), an artistic and political collective founded in 1979 in opposition to the military regime and dissolved in 1985. This collective formed part of the artistic and cultural movement labeled the “Escena de avanzada” (“avant-garde” movement) by the Chilean cultural critic Nelly Richard. Eltit also produced her own performance and video art during the dictatorial period, and has collaborated closely with video artist and fellow founder of CADA Lotty Rosenfeld for many years. To date, Eltit has published seven novels, the transcript of the testimony of a vagrant in Santiago, a collaborative photoessay,

and a collection of essays. She has also written film scripts and is a frequent contributor to the Chilean journal *Revista de crítica cultural* [Journal of Cultural Criticism]. Essays by Eltit have also been published in the Chilean press and in national and international journals. In 1985 she was awarded a Guggenheim fellowship in recognition of her literary work, and in 1995 she was awarded the José Nuez Martín prize, awarded annually to the best novel published in Chile, for her fifth novel, *Los vigilantes*. From 1990 to 1994, with the reestablishment of democracy in Chile, Eltit acted as the cultural attaché of the Chilean embassy in Mexico City.

MARY GREEN

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## ELUARD, PAUL

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1895–1952  
French poet

Like Charles Baudelaire before him (truly the first French poet to mirror modernity, to

struggle with the crisis inherent in portraying its always ready obsolescence), then Rimbaud and Lautréamont among the more prominent to follow in his footsteps, Paul Eluard was committed to the pursuit of freedom. Whether as a



soldier witnessing firsthand the absurdity of World War I at the beginning of the twentieth century, as a Dadaist and Surrealist poet of the 1920s breaking or (re)making prosodic vessels to escape the tired constraints of convention, as a political activist flirting with and eventually embracing Communism in 1942 as a way to overcome the tyranny and terror of social injustice, or finally, as the lover of three of the more important companions in his life (Gala, Nusch, and Dominique, seeking to reposition woman at the center of an erotic cosmogony), he sang his song of liberty. Indeed, if Paul Eluard were to be remembered for no other reason, it would have to be for his lifelong commitment to *liberté*.

But early on he found that to liberate—to find a language to say something new in poetry not bound by tradition or rational thought, or by the smug rhetoric and *idées reçues* of the bourgeoisie—was a particularly difficult road to travel in the modern era. When, not long after the publication of his *Poèmes pour la paix* [*Poems For Peace*] (1918) and his discharge from the military, Eluard became a member of the Parisian literati (a Dadaist, a colleague of Tristan Tzara, Louis Aragon, André Breton, and Philippe Soupault, among others), he willingly and knowingly joined the ranks of an artistic cabal bent upon repudiating everything, even at the risk of denying or destroying itself. All too quickly Dadaism became a conformity of non-conformity and ran amok of its own derisive, contradictory logic. Spearheaded on the whole by a small contingent who discerned this impasse, Surrealism emerged from the confusion with Breton reconfiguring it in *Le premier manifeste du surréalisme* [*The First Manifesto of Surrealism*] (1924), promoting, in the words of Wallace Fowlie, “total liberty in all human activities, including the activity of love” (*Age of Surrealism*, 144). It would seem, then, that Surrealism sought to sanction all forms of sexual experimentation, including perversion—not only as behaviors within the grasp of every human being but as generative sources of art. While this hardly proved to be the case for Eluard either literally (his relationships throughout his life tended to be traditional) or aesthetically (throughout his career, he treated love and its thematic congeners discreetly or indirectly, often associating them with “nature”), the possibility of creating a rift in timeworn taboos in order to access a superior reality—to liberate a

*surreality* in which contradictions would cease to exist, in which lovers would exist as one—was more than enough to compel him to cast his lot with the Surrealist cause. He became one of its tireless workers, contributing extensively to the movement’s flagship review, *La révolution surréaliste*, as well as *Une vague de rêves*, its first collected publication. Likewise, he was a coauthor with Benjamin Péret of *152 Proverbes mis au goût du jour* [*152 Proverbs Adapted to the Taste of the Day*] (1925); with Breton and René Char of *Ralentir, travaux* [*Slow, Under Construction*] (1930); and with Breton again of *L’Immaculée conception* [*The Immaculate Conception*] (1930).

Paul Eluard found his true poetic voice in *Au défaut du silence* [*For Lack of Silence*] (1925), the collection *Capitale de la douleur* [*Capital of Pain*] (1919–1926), *Les dessous d’une vie, ou la pyramide humaine* [*The Underpinnings of a Life, or The Human Pyramid*] (1926), and *L’Amour et la poésie* [*Love and Poetry*] (1929). While drawing upon the subversive energy at the heart of Surrealism to craft what Fowlie has deemed “a new erotology” (146), an unwavering belief in the regenerative, destructively creative capacity of love, he began a slow, almost imperceptible stepping away from Breton and his poetics. (The final break occurred in 1938, when Breton insisted upon separating political activism, that is, an alignment with the French Communist Party and its hope for advancing humanitarian goals, from the revolutionary but isolationist nature of his concept of Surrealism.)

Through a series of short, prose-poem pieces devoid of any traditional prosody, *Capitale de la Douleur* conveys a general angst with respect to inhabiting a poorly made world besieged by perpetual war and degradation—a new form of what the Romantics in the nineteenth century called the *mal du siècle*. But in the long run, *Capitale* extols our fundamental need to love as well as be loved, to celebrate “the mystery wherein love creates and delivers” (“Celle de toujours, toute” [She of all times, all]).

Love in its largest meaning, in its emergence and immediacy, in its disruptively creative potential for opening out to the new, free, and unfettered, would be more than enough to convince Paul Eluard to pursue it in his literary and political endeavors until the very day he died—with an oeuvre exemplified by *La vie immédiate* [*Immediate Life*] (1932), *Facile* [*Easy*] (1935), *Les yeux fertiles* [*Fertile Eyes*] (1936, illustrated by

Pablo Picasso), *Chanson complète* [Complete Song] (1939), *Donner à voir* [Offering up Something to See] (1939), *Poésie ininterrompue* [Uninterrupted Poetry] (1946), *Corps mémorable* [Memorable Body] (1947), and *Le Phénix* [The Phoenix] (1951).

In *Derniers poèmes d'amour* [Last Love Poems] (published posthumously in 1962), he has left us the following extraordinarily simple yet utterly profound summation of his lifelong voyage toward love and freedom: "Tu es venue la solitude était vaincue /... / J'allais vers toi j'allais sans fin vers la lumière / La vie avait un corps l'espoir tendait sa voile" [You came, the solitude was vanquished / . . . / I went toward you, ceaselessly toward the light / Life was palpable, hope unfurled its sail].

### Biography

Born Paul-Eugène Grindel, in Saint-Denis, north of Paris on December 14, 1895. Only child of an accountant and a seamstress. After four years of study in Paris, entered a Swiss sanatorium in 1912 to treat a tubercular condition that would plague him for the rest of his life; at the same time met Helena Diakonova (Gala), whom he would marry in 1917 despite his mother's misgivings. Served in the army during World War I as a corpsman and an infantryman. Was gassed. After publishing *Poèmes pour la paix* in 1918 under the name of Eluard, surname of his maternal grandmother, he attracted positive critical attention from various members of the Parisian literati. Discharged in 1919, he became one of them, associating more often than not on a daily basis with Breton, Tzara, Aragon, Soupault, Picasso, Man Ray, Paul Klee, and Salvador Dalí, among others. In the next several years, he was an active contributor to Dadaism and Surrealism, with individual poems as well as collaborations. Of particular note is *Répétitions* (1922) with Max Ernst.

After publishing *Mourir de ne pas mourir* [Dying from Not Dying] in 1924, which he felt would be his last work, Eluard began a ménage à trois with his wife and Ernst. This arrangement brought on the wrath of his father, who was still supporting him at that stage in his life. Eluard ran away and traveled the world, only to meet up with Gala in Singapore seven months later.

He published *Capitale de la douleur* in 1926, considered a major contribution to his commitment to poetry and the role that love was to play in it. Joined the French Communist Party. When his father died in 1927, Eluard enjoyed a brief inheritance that was squandered in slightly less than four years. Divorced Gala in 1930, after which she quickly became Dalí's muse and companion until her death in 1982. In that same year in which his divorce was finalized, he met a young and beautiful Maria Benz (Nusch) and fell head over heels in love, as detailed in *La Vie immédiate* [Immediate Life] (1932) and *Comme deux gouttes d'eau* [Like Two Drops of Water] (1933). Married her in 1934, but not before being expelled from the French Communist Party in 1933. Even though excluded from this movement, he continued to support what he felt was its potential for furthering the common good. At the outbreak of the Spanish Civil War in 1936, he tried to reconnect with the Communists through support for the Loyalists as the only viable means of countering the spread of fascism. With similar concern and activism, he joined the underground forces in Vichy France, resisting the Nazis at every opportunity through his poetry, pamphlets, and leaflets. He renewed his Communist ties finally in 1942. Then, after the liberation of France, he traveled extensively from 1944 on as its postwar cultural ambassador. Devastated by the sudden death of his beloved Nusch in 1946, he published in her memory *Le temps déborde* [Time Overflows], then *Corps mémorable* [Memorable Body] in 1947. At a conference for the World Peace Council held in Mexico in 1949, Eluard happened to meet Dominique Laure, who would become his third wife some two years later. He celebrated their love, its emergence and renewal, in one of the last books published during his lifetime, *Le phénix*. Struck down by a heart attack in September 1952, Paul Eluard died of heart failure two months later on November 18.

MARIE-AGNÉS SOURIEAU

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# EMINESCU, MIHAI

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1850–1889

Romanian poet, fiction writer and journalist

## Poems

Eminescu's best erotic poems were actually inspired by his relationship with the poet Veronica Micle, one of the most elegant and beautiful women of the time, the wife of a university professor from Iasi. Their relationship, with its ups and downs, has given Romanian literature both an impressive epistolary and a beautiful and passionate chapter of literary history. The biographical circumstances were mediated by the poet's successful processing of Romantic motifs from European poetry: the lake, the blue flower, and the solitary genius. In Eminescu's erotic poems the male principle is a positive force, whereas the feminine principle is negative or (if the woman is very young) potentially negative. Woman is a privileged form of *coincidentia oppositorum*, a coincidence of opposites. The search for the perfection embodied in a female form must be abandoned. As there is no perfect woman, the Eros is both pain and joy.

Eminescu's perspective of the couple goes back to the Platonic model. He is sensuous, lucid, polemical, but also reflexive and detached. Very often his portrait is derived from a character from Romanian mythology (the Flyer), symbol of the young girls' nascent sexuality: "dauntless, dark-curved fairy prince" (*Calin, Pages from a Tale*, 133) (citations throughout are from Popescu, *Poems*). She is usually blond, fair-skinned, blue-eyed. Her cheeks have the color of the apple skin. With Eminescu, love is either retrospective (memory), as in *Down Where the Lonely Poplars Grow*, *When Memory*, and *So Delicate*, or prospective (hope for the future) as in *Desire* and *The Lake*. The natural milieu plays a very important role in Eminescu's erotic poetry. The deep forest is symbolic of the mysteries of sex; the lake, the spring, the river stand in for the biological juices of sexuality; the lime tree ensures the aromas of the amorous encounter;

the moon and the stars create a cosmic mirror for the lovers' earthly desire; and the flowers, and particularly the blue flower, are associated with the female, with her beauty and fertility. Love creates one of Eminescu's compensatory universes. Dissatisfied with the shallow exigencies of his contemporaries, the poet hopes that love will help him surpass the straitjacket of the contingent. Unfortunately, he is to be disappointed. Bitter irony and cynicism make him transform his beloved from the icon of his youth poems into the frivolous puppet of his last poems. The poet bitterly remarks that people take all too seriously an instinct, "one of nature's needs" (*Satire IV*, 173) and do not realize that the great puppeteer of all times is will, the force that is behind everything that exists.

Eminescu constructs woman in oppositional images and through constraining idealization. She is angel or demon, Venus or Madonna, icon or puppet. But in spite of his awareness of woman's dual nature, the poet cannot help loving the woman: "I adore this demon saint with big blue eyes and golden hair" (*Venus and Madonna*, 57). The spiteful compensation that the poet offers himself and his reader is the idealization of woman. Be it a hypernegative or hyperpositive idealization, Eminescu's woman is always a construction of man. Within the couple, the relation between the partners is that between the Demiurges and his creature. With very few exceptions, it is always man who initiates the sexual game, and desire is overwhelming. The sexual union is extremely rare, as the poet prefers daydreaming and shivering expectancy to the brutal and undeniable fulfillment of sexual desire.

*Blue Flower* is one of the few poems by Eminescu in which the woman takes the initiative. The first part of the poem is conversational. The young woman invites the man in the midst of superb, glimmering, mating-inspiring nature: "Come where cool crystal brooks complain / Their fleeting fate midst forest greens, / And where the hanging cliff out leans / As though

the thunder on the plain” (84). Frolicking, sensual games are to be played by the two partners: “[M]y long golden hair undone / Around your neck in coils you’ll wind.” Body language signals desire. This conversational part contrasts with the last stanza, where the poet regrets his commitment to pure intellectual pursuits and mourns his lost blue flower.

*Calin: Pages from a Tale* is an erotic story placed in a mythic “lonely castle” amidst an “ancient forest” (131). Calin (the Flyer) climbs up the steep walls of the castle and enters the bedchamber of the emperor’s daughter. *Calin* is one of the few poems by Eminescu in which mating follows courting. The two lovers are “clasped in close embrace” and drink the “lover’s joy their fill” (135). A child is born out of their embrace and the emperor angrily drives his daughter away. But the remorseful Calin searches for his beloved and a superb wedding follows. It is significant that Eminescu succeeds in uniting his lovers through the holy and comforting bond of matrimony only in a mythic environment as in *Calin*. The human wedding is humorously paralleled and mirrored by that of the gallant butterfly and “a timid violet moth” (140).

Eminescu’s best-known poem, translated as *Lucifer* by Popescu and as *Hyperion* by Levitchi and Bantas, is an erotic story which proves the poet’s capacity to make eros mediate between the ontological levels of the universe. The poem is a mythic story about the love between the beautiful young daughter of an emperor and the Evening Star. The astral suitor is invoked twice by the emperor’s daughter from her palace situated on the shore of the sea, a privileged space and a threshold between liquid and non-liquid mirrors. The two apparitions of the lover from the beyond are two cosmic births: from the sky and the sea the first time, from the sun and the night the second time. The Evening Star is asked by the emperor’s daughter to give up immortality because it looks like death to her. From this point in the plot the ways of the two characters diverge. The astral suitor goes back to the place where the world has originated in order to renounce his immortality, but Demiurges can offer him only the following options: hero of the spirit or hero of the deed. Hyperion cannot give up his immortal status as a genius. At the same time, in a corner of the palace (notice the limitations of the space as compared with the cosmic

lodge of Hyperion), Catalin, “a page boy of that house,” will teach Catalina the gestures of love. The princess and the genius will be forever locked into their respective statuses. The longing for evening stars of the princess and the longing for death through love of the eternal genius cannot change the Law. *Lucifer/Hyperion* is an exquisite poem in which eros gets philosophical and cosmic values. It is a poem about the contradiction between the earthly and the beyond that attract each other, as in an amorous game, and then must separate. The illusion of communion is only a supreme coronation of eros and not its permanent status.

### Biography

Born in Botosani, died in Bucharest. He studied at Chernovtsy (now in Ukraine), Vienna, and Berlin without taking a degree. He made his debut with a poem in *Familia* in 1866. Iosif Vulcan, the editor-in-chief and an important Romanian cultural militant, changed the young poet’s name from Eminovici into Eminescu. The poet was a member of “Junimea,” an extremely influential literary society of the time. In 1870–71 he published several poems in *Convorbiri literare*, the literary magazine of Junimea. These poems define a new direction in the evolution of Romanian poetry. In 1877 Eminescu settled down in Bucharest. For six years he worked as a journalist at *Timpul*, a conservative newspaper of the time. The mentor of Junimea, Titu Maiorescu, edited the first collection of Eminescu’s poems in 1883–1884. In 1884, Eminescu fell seriously ill, and in the six remaining years of his life he alternated between periods of lucidity and of serious mental disorder.

MICHAELA MUDURE

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## ENGLISH: UNITED KINGDOM, SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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The study of historical erotic literature must be carried out both within its context as well as in terms of current critical theory. Most modern academic discussions have tended to focus on what is described as the sexually explicit, obscene nature of early modern “pornographic” writing. There is much debate, however, as to whether the use of the word *pornography*, which was coined in the 19th century, actually applies to this period. Historians such as Ian Frederick Moulton and Lynn Hunt argue that the forms of erotic representation that we now ascribe to this term are meaningless in the context of 17th-century erotica.

In order to study erotic literature in this period, the significant role that politics, society, and culture played in the formation of sexual beliefs and practices must be acknowledged. 17th-century erotic writing was in fact a mirror of the times in which it was written. This was a period of dramatic political, social, and cultural changes, all of which affected the types of materials that were published. Erotic literature, in particular, was particularly evident at times of political stress and during the Restoration.

It was also a time of major growth in literacy among both men and women. By the end of the

Stuart period, the English had achieved a level of literacy unknown in the past and unmatched elsewhere in early modern Europe. In parallel with the nation’s growing ability to read was the surge in commercial culture—the extension of regional and national markets in commodities and consumer items—thanks to better communications and to newspapers.

Despite periodical censorship, a great number of poems, plays, books, and ephemeral publications that either related to or attempted to rouse sexual desire appeared in print. The gulf between sexuality/gender as illustrated in the modern media and the individual lives of real people is similar to the mismatch in early modern society between idealized images of conduct and daily experience. Rather than mirroring actual behavior, much erotic literature was designed to shock as much as to arouse. Almost all sexual literature was written by males and was often highly misogynistic, showing cynicism about women, love, and marriage.

The greatest profusion is referred to as “libertine” writing, produced during the Restoration. However, large amounts of erotica in the form of manuscripts, as well as printed works, were produced and consumed throughout the entire

century. Donne's elegies, Shakespeare's sonnets, and Thomas Nashe's "filthy rhymes," for example, tended to circulate amongst readers in manuscript form. The London theater industry, which had developed rapidly and successfully from the 1560s, offered what many people considered to be godless, immoral and subversive plays. In the early part of the century, these included scripts by Ben Jonson, such as *Volpone* (1605), which explored the relationship between discourses of eroticism and the erotic performance.

There were numerous other types of publications, including ballads; broadsheets; pamphlets; chapbooks, or "penny merriments"; almanacs; and books which addressed sexual issues. A great number of erotic works were imported from the Continent and sold in London. Domestically printed publications were published either anonymously or under a false name to avoid prosecution. Many printers also tried to conceal their identities, oftentimes using a false name and/or imprint for the place of printing. The printed works themselves were also often sold "privately" by booksellers rather than showing them "publicly, with the Title Page lying open upon the Stall as other books do, when they are newly out."

At the beginning of the century, both the nation and the political system had been crippled by years of bad harvests, the high costs of warfare, popular unrest, and rising crime rates. For many workers in the printing industries, the beginning of the reign of James I signaled further hardships. In 1603 the new king passed on the monopolistic rights that had formerly belonged to the late Watkins and Roberts to the Stationers' Company. This included exclusive right to produce and wholesale the highly lucrative "English stock," which included private prayers, primers, psalters, and psalmes in English or Latin, as well as a range of popular and/or ephemeral literature.

As the reign of James I, one of the most criticized monarchs in English history, ended, Charles I came to the throne of a country plagued by a troubled parliament and the beginning of the Thirty Years' War in 1618. The Stationers' Company had a tight hold on the printing industry, allowing only around 50 printing presses to operate in London. The company regularly attempted to prosecute offenders, often unsuccessfully. Charles aided their efforts

by establishing the most repressive system of press censorship since the reign of Elizabeth I.

Many of the works that were considered to be "lascivious" in the early part of the century, however, were later seen as relatively harmless. These included translations of the elegists Ovid, Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius, as well as the novelists Petronius and Apuleius. More contemporary works, such as Donne's Ovidian Elegies in 1633 and two bawdy parodies of Chaucer in 1639, were actually censored by the Licensor of the Press.

During the 1640s, however, revolutionary events resulted in an absence of censorship and legal controls, which enabled independent printers to operate in London. This new freedom resulted in the production of massive numbers of new books, pamphlets, and other ephemeral literature. It has been estimated that more books and pamphlets were printed between 1640 and 1660 than in the entire rest of the century.

Many of these addressed topics that would previously have been deemed treasonable, seditious, or scandalous to appear in print. These included political issues, religious topics, and matters of a sexual nature. In fact, sexual freedom and release from the constraints of marriage were tremendously popular topics in books and pamphlets written during the 1640s and 1650s. Anti-Puritan satire, especially dealing with their sexual shortcomings, were also extremely common. Sir Francis Fane's *Iter Occidentale, or The Wonders of Warm Waters*, for example, tells of a Quaker woman who lures "a well Hung Proselyte into the water and so begins an aquatic orgy."

The portrayal of women with voracious sexual appetites was a common feature in contemporary writings. In the *Art of Courtship*, a new bride says, "[N]ow I find such solid bliss, that I'd not be a virgin now." Cuckoldry was another prevailing theme, as was masculine impotence or at least inadequacy. The chapbook *Nine Times a Night* claimed:

Nine times a night is too much for a man,  
I can't do it myself, but my sister Nan can.

John Fletcher's play *The Custom of the Country*, first performed in 1619 and later revived during the Restoration period, carries this theme further. It features Rutillio, "the lustiest fellow" in the play, who labors under the sexual

demands placed upon him by the brothel. In one scene, Rutillo bemoans his physical state, ruined by the requirements of servicing up to fourteen women a day:

Now I do look as if I were Crow-trodden  
 Fy how my hams shrinke under me; o me,  
 I am broken-winded too; Is this a life?  
 Is this the recreation I have aimd at?  
 I had a body once, a handsome body,  
 And wholesome too. Now I appeare like a rascall  
 That had been hung a yeare or two in gibbets.

According to a chapbook called *Fumblers-Hall, kept and holden in Feeble-Court, at the sign of the Labour-in-vain, in Doe-little-lane*, married women also put excessive sexual demands upon their husbands, whose abilities were demeaningly referred to “as a straw in the Nostrils of a Cow, a very slug, a meer fible” or “a meer Gut, a Chittlering, a Fiddle-string that will make no musick to a Womans Instrument.”

Most publications of this sort appeared under anonymous names, often without identifying the publisher and with false imprints. For example, the first known surviving English edition of *La puttana errant, overo dialogo di Madalena e Giulia*, appeared in 1650. Although this claimed to have been written by Aretino, it was clearly a fake which originated with Ferrante Pallavicino in 1641. Published under the pretext of being a textbook of rhetoric, it was in fact a satirical work on rhetoric, the Jesuits, religion, and sex. It took the form of a dialogue between Madalena and her fellow whores in a brothel, describing their way of life and the arts of persuasion they needed to learn.

The English version, *The Whores Rhetorick*, first published around 1660, took a slightly different form. It is based on the exquisite whore Julietta, who had just arrived in London from Venice. Much of the book is based on the successful efforts to defraud clients through the efforts of the crafty bawd Magdalena and Gusman the pimping hector. Intervening sections discuss sexual techniques and aids, such as the “strummulo” and the “merkin,” which were forms of false pubic hair for whores worn bald through overwork. It also related current sexual scandals, such as the Dutch whore who had Rhenish wine poured into more than one orifice, and a drunken whore with a candle stuck in her “commodity” which had to be extinguished by a “codpiece engine.” Samuel Pepys mentioned

being tantalized, yet horrified by this book in a diary entry from 1668. Although he used the work as a masturbatory aid, he later destroyed the book by burning it.

*La puttana errant* was only one of a number of erotic works imported from the Continent and translated into English. *L'Ecole des filles*, or *The School of Venus*, also proved to be very popular, after first appearing in 1655 under the false imprint of Leyden. As with other contemporary examples, this takes the form of two dialogues. The major characters are Robinet, who has fallen in love with sixteen-year-old Fanchon, and her older and far more experienced cousin Susanne. The first part of the book consists of a conversation between Fanchon and Susanne. It begins with some basic anatomical and linguistic sexual facts, including a fairly clinical description of orgasm.

The boy thrusts to and fro with his rump to insert the yard, while the girl clings to him, feeling the friction and movement of his organ inside her.... [T]he excitement which is provoked by the gentle irritation and rubbing along the length of their passages... overwhelms them to such an extent that you see them almost swoon with ecstasy giving little thrusts towards each other as they discharge the substance which has excited them so much.

Fanchon follows Susanne’s advice, and in the second half of the book relates her sexual activities with Fanchon in great detail. Susanne praises her student for learning so well and proclaims that she is truly “a mistress in the fine art of love.” Evidence suggests that many readers felt that this was a depraved and corrupting work. Samuel Pepys’ diary commented that it was “the most bawdy, lewd book that I ever saw.”

Such works continued to appear in print, however, despite periodical attempts at censorship. Booksellers who stocked foreign imports could be fined and shut down, while publishers in England were often prosecuted by the authorities. In 1662 parliament passed a detailed licensing bill that heralded the beginning of a new period of censorship:

An Act for preventing the frequent Abuses in printing seditious, treasonable, and unlicensed Books and Pamphlets, and for regulating of Printing and printing Presses... [due to] the general licentiousness of the late times, many evil disposed persons have been encouraged to print and sell heretical, schismatical, blasphemous, seditious and treasonable books, pamphlets and papers.



Possibly the best-known author of erotic writings during this period was John Wilmot, the second earl of Rochester (1647–1680). Wilmot was one of the rowdiest rakes in the court of Charles II, where he wrote a range of highly misogynistic and aggressive satirical and erotic works, such as “The Wish” :

Oh! That I could by some new Chymick Art  
Convert to Sperm my Vital and my Heart;  
And, at one Thrust, my very soul translate  
Into her— and be degenerate.  
There steep'd in Lust nine Months I would remain,  
Then boldly fuck my Passage back again.

Rochester was also the author of *Sodom, or the Quintessence of Debauchery*, a play which was written and presented for Charles II and his courtiers. Peopled by characters named after the genitals and various sexual acts, the script covers topics ranging from pederasty through the various uses of dildos. Such writing was particularly popular with Charles II, who enjoyed the sexual guiltlessness and experimentation lauded in court verses written by men such as Buckingham, Butler, Dorset, and Roscommon. Many of these celebrated the virtues of the male organ, such as this poem by Lord Charles Buckhurst, Earl of Dorset and Middlesex:

Dreaming last night of Mistris Harley  
My Prick was up this morning Earley  
And I was fain without my gowne  
To rise i'th' Cold to gett him downe.{i}

Many translations of Continental works of erotic literature made their first appearances in England during the Restoration. One popular example was *Aloisïæ Sigæ Toletanæ Satyra sotadica de arcanis Amoris et Veneris* [*The Sotadic Satire on Secret Loves and Lusts*], which was attributed to the Spanish writer Luisa Sigée of Toledo. The work was not, in fact, written by this daughter of an expatriate Frenchman who lived in Toledo from around 1530 to 1560. Although actual authorship cannot be proved, it seems likely that Nicolas Chorier translated the first version of the Latin work sometime in the mid-17th century. The earliest surviving French edition, *L'Académie des dames*, dates from around 1680. Two English versions quickly followed, although it is not known whether they were translated from the Latin or the French text. The first, called *Tullia and Octavia*, appeared by or in 1684, followed by *A Dialogue Between a Married Lady and a Maid* in 1688.

*Tullia and Octavia* is based on a conversation between the nineteen-year-old Tullia, who is married and sexually experienced, and her fifteen-year-old cousin Octavia, who is about to be married. Their seven dialogues are divided into two parts, beginning with a discussion of petting, followed by a demonstration by the older girl. In the third and fourth episodes, Tullia describes her husband's penis and how he pleased her on their wedding night. By this time Octavia has been married to Pamphilius, and the final episodes cover a range of topics from flagellation, sodomy, and incest through to group sex.

Another contemporary Continental work which dates from around 1672 was *Vénus dans le cloître, ou la religieuse en chemise. Entretiens curieux...par l'abbé du Prat* [*Venus in the Cloyster, or the Nun in Her Smock. Curious Interviews by Father Prat*], usually attributed to Jean Barrin. The original text consists of three dialogues about sex, taking place in a convent between the nineteen-year-old Sister Angélique and the sixteen-year-old Sister Agnès. Although actual sexual encounters are glossed over, the book infers that many different types of sexual pleasure were allowable, provided that certain conditions were followed. In the earliest known English edition, from 1683, Sister Angelica and Agnes conduct five dialogues about sex, interspersed with passionate lesbian lovemaking. The two young nuns also indulge in reading dirty books brought in by confessors and coupling with priest, monks, friars, and gardeners.

*The Whores Rhetorick* was another English translation that first appeared in 1683, claiming to be based on the previously mentioned *La puttana errant* of Ferrante Pallavicino. An anonymous author referred to as “Philo-Puttanus” produced this edition in London for English readers. This version focuses on Dorothea, the daughter of a once-prosperous but now ruined cavalier. Advised by the old bawd Mother Creswell to become a prostitute to relieve her poverty, the text contains two dialogues between the two women. These consist mainly of instructions about the whore's arts of lovemaking, combined with general rules on treating customers. Philo-Puttanus also used his work to broadcast his anti-Puritan views, attacking conventicles and the self-righteous lechery of many of its members.

Another well-known Continental work, by Nicolas Venette, was *Tableau de l'amour conjugal*, originally written in French but translated into several languages. The English version of 1681 claimed to be a handbook of sexual advice, although it actually contained a range of material, from bawdiness through to explicit sexual practices. It also contained a mixture of folk wisdom about sexual behavior, recipes for herbal aphrodisiacs and prophylactics, and remedies for sexually linked diseases.

The production of such works undoubtedly fulfilled a variety of purposes for contemporaries. As in any period, English society and culture had an enormous impact on 17th-century erotic literature. It appears that the purpose of many works was to cause erotic excitement and gratification, regardless of the realities of life and art. On the other hand, others were clearly used as vehicles for political, religious, and social discourses. If erotic literature does offer an escape from the harsh realities of life, then it is easy to see why it emerged as a major force during this period.

LOUISE HILL CURTH

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## ENGLISH: UNITED KINGDOM, EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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The English 18th century provides an especially fertile field for the study of the development of erotic literature. Beginning as it does with "libertine literature," ending with the emergence of

"pornography" proper, and fueled in between by the meteoric rise of the novel, erotica disentangled itself from its many generic tributaries and assumed its modern identity as the more

artistically inclined category of sexually explicit representation.

Libertine literature at the end of the 17th century appeared in England as “whore dialogues,” as various other kinds of irreverent and anti-ecclesiastical satire, and as scandal fiction. Although they can be very different in tone and subject matter, whore dialogues feature dramatic conversations between an older, experienced woman and a younger, inexperienced maid. Direct descendants of Pietro Aretino’s *Ragionamenti* (1536), these dialogues were imported into England by way of France. Chief among them were Michel Millot’s *L’Ecole des filles* (1655), Nicolas Chorier’s *Satyra sotadica* (1660), and Jean Barrin’s *Vénus dans le cloître* (1683). The first became *The School of Venus* (1680), the second *A Married Lady and a Maid* (1740), and the third *Venus in the Cloister* (1725). England’s foremost libertine poet at the end of the 17th century was John Wilmot, second earl of Rochester (1647–80). His poetic invectives employed sexual obscenity in the service of social and political satire. Circulated at court in manuscript form, Rochester’s poetry was first published after his death and went on to become a staple of the 18th-century “curious” book trade. Less obscene, more erotic, and much better known was Aphra Behn’s scandal fiction. *Love-Letters Between a Nobleman and His Sister* (1684), for example, like scandal fiction generally, retold a well-known political scandal of the day. Written as a series of letters, it experimented with language’s ability to re-create sexual passion. It too, along with Behn’s plays and short fiction, was readily available in early-18th-century England.

During the first decades of the century, however, neither Rochester’s poetry nor Behn’s fiction dominated the market: they took their places alongside bawdy street ballads, sensational medical manuals, obscene travelogues, trial proceedings, and criminal biographies—as well as the infamous and often reprinted whore dialogues. Libertine literature, in other words, assumed myriad forms. Satirical, rationalist, anti-ecclesiastical, it delighted in the ease with which the indisputable realities of the body could be used to mock the pious ideals of church and state.

After the novel moved to center stage, however, which coincided with the unprecedented popularity of Samuel Richardson’s *Pamela* (1740), libertine literature gradually receded from

the cultural marketplace. Its educated irreverence and quick wit gave way before the novel’s ability to create sexual passion for character and reader alike. John Cleland’s *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1749), or *Fanny Hill*, as it is better known, provides the case in point and a watershed moment for English erotica. Before *Fanny Hill*, erotic and/or obscene literature was intermixed and intermingled with other genres and subgenres. Whore dialogues combined lascivious passages with sex education, anti-ecclesiastical diatribes, and radical philosophy. Medical treatises vacillated between sound advice about sexual disorders and lurid tales from pseudo-science. Travelogues figured distant lands as female genitalia and punned their way shamelessly through the allegory. Trial proceedings re-created the sensational events of notorious criminals and captured all of the unspeakable details from high-profile divorces. Bawdy poetry kept the seventeenth-century ballad alive and well. After *Fanny Hill*, the novel slowly pushed aside its competitors and assumed its place as the genre of choice.

The undisputed champion of unscrupulous booksellers in early-18th-century London was Edmund Curll, and for almost half a century—from roughly 1705 to 1745—he dominated the “curious book” trade. Alongside his more legitimate offerings, one could have found an impressive selection of bawdy works—Rochester’s poetry and Behn’s fiction certainly. John Marten, who wrote *Gonosologium novum* (1709), a salacious treatise on venereal disease, was in Curll’s employ. So was Robert Samber, who translated the infamous whore dialogue *Venus in the Cloister* (1725). Thomas Stretzer, who wrote the obscene travelogue *A New Description of Merryland* (1741), produced that and numerous other books for Curll’s shop. In the literary world of the early 18th century, before *Fanny Hill* and pornography proper, in a world where all sorts of very different books experimented with the representation of human sexuality, Edmund Curll was a central figure, and his bookshop serves as an apt emblem for a terrain vastly different from the literary landscape of today.

Street ballads were a common feature of 18th-century London, and many dealt with risqué subjects. *The Pleasures of a Single Life* (1701), *The Fifteen Comforts of Cuckoldom* (1706), and *The Fifteen Plagues of a Maiden-Head*

(1707) are typical of the genre. *The Pleasures of a Single Life* enjoyed a short-lived popularity and spawned numerous imitations. It relates how one man's imprudent marriage destroys the peace and tranquillity of his solitary life. After the joys of bachelor paradise are enumerated, the villain is introduced, and it is obvious that her adulterous behavior is not long to follow:

But the curs'd Fiend from Hell's dire Regions sent,  
Ranging the World to Man's destruction bent,  
Who with an Envious Pride beholding me,  
Advanc'd by Vertue to felicitie,  
Resolv'd his own Eternal wretched State  
Should be in part reveng'd by my sad Fate;  
And to at once my happy Life betray,  
Flung Woman, faithless Woman, in my Way:  
Beauty she had, a seeming modest Mein,  
All Charms without, but Devil all within,  
Which did not yet appear, but lurk'd, alas, unseen.

In *The Fifteen Plagues of a Maiden-Head* (1707), a woman laments her continued virginity and complains of what the early 18th century termed "green sickness":

Of late I wonder what's with me the Matter,  
For I look like Death, and am as weak as Water,  
For several Days I loath the sight of Meat,  
And every Night I chew the upper Sheet;  
I've such Obstructions, that I'm almost moap'd,  
And breath as if my Vitals all were stop'd.  
I told a Friend how strange with me it was,  
She, an experienc'd Bawd, soon grop'd the Cause,  
Saying, for this Disease, take what you can,  
You'll ne'er be well, till you have taken Man.

Cheaply produced and cheaply consumed, poems like these were most likely read aloud in pubs and coffeehouses.

Medical manuals were also an important source of sexual information, alternatively objective and scientific and prurient. John Marten's medical treatise *Gonosologium novum, or a New System of the Secret Infirmities and Diseases, Natural, Accidental, and Venereal in Men and Women* was prosecuted for obscenity in 1709. It was the first time that the author—rather than the printer or publisher—was named in the case; and it was also the first time that a medical treatise was charged with an offense against civic morals. Published as an appendix to the sixth edition of Marten's *A Treatise of all the Degrees and Symptoms of the Venereal Disease* (1708), the *Gonosologium novum* represents a long line of medical works that combine some

knowledge of anatomy with folklore, fable, and prurient curiosity. Other popular works of the period include *Aristotle's Master-piece* (1690), which was not by Aristotle, and *Onania, or, The Heinous Sin of Self-Pollution, and All its Frightful Consequences in Both Sexes* (1708). Both went through numerous editions throughout the course of the century. Marten's prose is typical of the genre:

*Platerus* tells us he saw a *Clitoris* once in a Woman, as big and as long as the neck of a Goose. Indeed the *Clitoris* in a Woman is very like a Man's *Yard*, its end is like the *Glans* or *Nut* of a Man's, and erects and falls as a Man's does, and as in Men the seat of the greatest Pleasure is in the *Glans* or *Nut*, so is this in Women, for therein is the rage and fury of Love, and there has Nature plac'd the peculiar seat of Pleasure and Lust, from whence 'tis call'd *Amoris Dulcedo* and *Aestrum Veneris*; for the Man's *Yard* rubbing in Copulation against the Womans *Clitoris*, causes those excessive Ticklings, delightful Itchings, and transporting Pleasures to both Sexes; and the more of that Serous Matter (before spoken of) the Woman sheds in the Act, the greater still is the Pleasure in both, for as the Man's *Yard*, and principally the *Nut* of it, fills with Spirits in the Actions of Love, so also does the Womans *Clitoris* at the same time, which conjunctly together, gives that charming Delight to those Parts, and the whole Animal Functions, which, as to relate is inexpressible, so in the Act sometimes it is almost unbearable, especially where both Parties meet with equal Desire and Freedom; for if we love Persons whose Inclinations are answerable to ours, and whole Parts are proportionable, our Flame is happy, and nothing but Pleasure, Delight, and Tenderness, is the consequence of our lawful Love; for the Enjoyments which attend the Actions for the continuance of our kind, are the highest gratifications of our Senses that can be.

Marten enthusiastically supports the physical pleasures of procreation, but unlike the street ballads—which seem resolutely misogynistic—*Gonosologium novum* is careful to make men and women equal partners in the experience.

*Venus in the Cloister* (1725) was the most important whore dialogue of the early 18th century. translated by Robert Samber, *Venus* was published by Edmund Curll and, like *Gonosologium novum*, incurred prosecution. Expanded from the original three dialogues into five, the 1725 edition included strongly worded anti-ecclesiastical sentiments and several graphic scenes involving flagellation. The story of Curll's trial was told first by Ralph Straus in *The Unspeakable Curll* (1927)

and then repeated by David Foxon in 1965, only to be revised recently by Alexander Pettit. Curll's trial is important first because the bookseller was the foremost purveyor of libertine literature in the early 18th century, and second because the prosecution set the standard for English obscene libel law for the next two hundred years.

Another important subgenre of libertine literature was the obscene travelogue. *A New Description of Merryland* (1741) figures female genitalia as a distant and exotic land. *Merryland* traces its roots to Charles Cotton's *Erotopolis. The Present State of Betty-land* (1684). Thomas Stretzer, the author of *A New Description*, was also responsible for both *The Natural History of the Arbor Vitae, or Tree of Life* (1732), which combines botany and erotica in an effort to satirize the scientific enthusiasms of the day, and *Merryland Display'd: or plagiarism, ignorance, and impudence, detected. Being observations, on a pamphlet intitled A new description of Merryland* (1741), which purports to refute the earlier work. Edmund Curll, in a characteristic attempt to corner the market, was responsible for printing both *A New Description* and *Merryland Display'd*. The former went through seven editions in 1741 alone. Similar titles of the same type include *The Natural History of the Frutex Vulvaria or the Flowering Shrub* (1732) and *Teague-root Display'd: Being Some Useful and Important Discoveries Tending to Illustrate the Doctrine of Electricity, in a Letter from Paddy Strong-Cock to W- W———N* (1746).

Also popular throughout the 18th century, and readily available in Curll's bookshop, was criminal literature: biographies of famous rapists, murderers, and thieves, or sensational accounts of their trials. Even so respectable an author as Henry Fielding (1707–54) tried his hand. In 1746 he published *The Female Husband: or, The Surprising History of Mrs. Mary, alias Mr. George Hamilton*, a cross-dressing Methodist lesbian who seduced unsuspecting women for financial gain. Related in kind to the *Old Bailey Session Papers* and the *Accounts from Tyburn*, Fielding in *The Female Husband* is at once horrified by and fascinated with lesbian transgressions. Particularly interesting is his association of lesbian lust with Methodist "enthusiasm."

After Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* appeared in 1749, Edmund Curll's world of obscene travelogues and pseudo-medical

manuals slowly disappeared. The confusing genre mishmash sorted itself out according to rules more acceptable to a modern audience. Medical treatises would continue their preoccupation with venereal disease and masturbation but would eventually learn to stick with fact and leave the longer imaginative flights to the novelists. Bawdy poetry and obscene travelogue writing would move into periodicals, where prose fiction would slowly gain the upper hand. Criminal accounts and trial proceedings would remain popular, but with less pressure on writers to re-create the crime with fictionalized immediacy. After *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, in other words, the novel becomes the genre of choice for those wishing to arouse an audience. Curll's deceptions and depravities—his bawdy poetry, his books on flogging and venereal disease, his treatises on hermaphrodites, his extended parodies of contemporary botany, his editions of Behn and Rochester, his trial accounts and proceedings—would all lose their appeal, and in hindsight appear a bit silly, adolescent even. By 1789, the year the Bastille fell, sexual obscenity and the novel were joined at the hip.

The novel, of course, played a crucial role in the cultural life of the 18th century, and scholars have made much of its unique influence upon the modern state. The industrial revolution moved people into cities, increased available goods and services, and expanded the middle classes. With more leisure time and increasing literacy, more and more people turned to novels for entertainment.

Interestingly, the novel began the century in disgrace: it was an illegitimate, subliterate form dominated by both women writers and women readers. Delarivier Manley (1663–1724) and Eliza Haywood (1693–1756) were two early novelists who, along with Aphra Behn (1640–89), borrowed freely from restoration drama and were unembarrassed to foreground sexual intrigue in their fiction. Popular and impassioned, these novels captured the attention of critics, who deplored what they saw as their cheap sensationalism and pleaded for the refined pleasures of high literature. Before long, male authors, attracted by profit and aware of other options for prose fiction, sought to reform the genre. Samuel Richardson (1689–1761), among others, made the case for the novel as a didactic form capable of educating young readers. *Pamela* (1740) took London by storm and

replaced the scheming viragos of Behn, Manley, and Haywood with a virginal heroine capable of pushing all depraved souls to the moral high ground. Cynics, like Henry Fielding and John Cleland (1709–89), found Richardson’s sanctimonious preaching hard to take and responded in kind, Fielding with *Shamela* (1741) and *Joseph Andrews* (1742) and Cleland—arguably—with *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*. Cleland offered readers a novelistic “realism,” in which characters actively pursued a “real” sexual pleasure that was in turn vicariously accessible.

Following Cleland’s lead, British erotica at the end of the 18th century flourished in cheap serials like *The Bon Ton* (1791–95) and *The Bacchanalian Magazine* (1793), in novels like Matthew Lewis’s gothic fantasy *The Monk* (1796), and in French imports like the Marquis de Sade’s *Justine* (1791) and *Juliette* (1799).

Lewis’s revision of Ann Radcliffe’s gothic formula retained the mysterious landscapes of an unspecified past but exchanged the virginal heroine ever-anxious about sexual violation for a libidinous monk eager to pursue newfound pleasures. Whereas the former creeps around castles and graveyards perplexed by men whose status as hero or villain is never entirely clear, the latter yields to one temptation after another until he has raped and murdered his way to an unfortunate end. Radcliffe’s denouements, in which supernatural events are given rational explanations, yield to Lewis’s finale, in which the Devil appears in all his satanic splendor. Throughout *The Monk*, Lewis’s erotic imagination teases readers with titillating glimpses of forbidden pleasures.

The 18th century began with libertine literature—not only with the obscene poetry of Rochester and the scandal novels of Aphra Behn, but also with bawdy poetry, sensational medical manuals, whore dialogues, criminal literature, and obscene travelogues. Erotica as we know it hardly existed. It appeared briefly whenever authors found themselves describing a seduction or a conquest, only to disappear when the larger purpose—e.g., satiric, historical, medical—intervened. By the end of the century, however, both serious authors like Lewis and Radcliffe and unprincipled hacks who wanted to earn a few shillings had realized how beautifully the novel could represent sexual passion—for the enjoyment of character and reader alike. Although the modern pornography industry was

still decades away, the erotic imagination was alive and well.

BRADFORD K. MUDGE

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See also **Cleland, Cotton**.

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## EPIGRAMS AND JESTS

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Poggio Bracciolini's boast that his *Facetiae* flooded all of Europe was not an idle one (see the entry on Poggio). Variants of his jests appear in collections throughout Europe from 1450 onward; indeed, collections of jests and of epigrams, the other major form employed for rendering the bawdy or comic aspect of sexuality in a terse mode, were a staple in early modern Europe from the beginning of printing onward. G. Legman sees Poggio as the father of the modern dirty joke, and anyone interested in pursuing the modern joke, as it developed from the jest, would be well served to read through the two hefty tomes of Legman's *Rationale of the Dirty Joke*. The jest vogue in England was

particularly long-lived, dating from the appearance of several of Poggio's tales at the end of Caxton's edition of Aesop's *Fables* (instructive in and of itself in terms of transmission of texts from the German collector and translator Heinrich Steinhöwel in the 1470s to the French translation by Julien Macho in 1480 and so on to Caxton in 1484) and *A C. Mery Talys* in 1525 well into the 17th century and beyond. It should be noted that the collections of Poggio and many others were essentially the work of humanists, so that while the material has always been of interest to folklorists and more recently scholars engaged in cultural studies, these works are hardly representative of folk culture or "lower class"

literature. Riddles and paradoxical encomia are even more learned modes in which bawdy humor plays a significant part. Jests are continuously recycled in these collections, often without attribution, whether in detached collections or in collections that purport to be about a single figure (e.g., Scoggin or Tarlton). While many of the jests included in these collections have nothing to do with matters sexual (they often are nothing more than the supposed witty remark of a particular personage or a very short tale with a moral appended), a goodly number are what we (and readers at the time) would term bawdy. The humor in this material is particularly revealing with regard to societal norms and values, as Keith Thomas has pointed out in his commentary on the early modern jest. If the jest often turns on witty verbal ripostes or comments, the players and narrative actions are stock and formulaic. Thus shrews and scolds, wives who will not be controlled, are held up to ridicule, but so are foreigners, members of the clergy, peasants, and the most despised and comic figure of all, the impotent, stupid cuckold. Wives who deceive deserving cuckolds or brag-gart husbands are rarely ridiculed, but rather are admired. Thus the husband who brags to his wife about having had sexual relations before marriage with another woman who was then foolish enough to confess her sin gets his come-uppance when his wife allows that she did the same, and with the family servant, for years before marriage and never said a word. Lubricious clergymen are proverbial from Poggio on, of course, and venal papist clerics are given new life in England's most ardently protestant collections. Farts are let in the most public of places (and foisted on others in ways that prove doubly embarrassing to the perpetrator). Doctors are quacks who make wildly inappropriate diagnoses that sometimes actually work because sexual intercourse is touted as the best remedy for all female disorders.

Jest material also found its way into another form in English literature in the early modern period, the epigram. From John Heywood's collection of epigrams (numbering 600 in the 1562 edition) on into the 17th century, the art of the epigram was practiced by such notables as Sir John Davies, John Donne, Everard Guilpin, Sir John Harington, and Ben Jonson, as well as such lesser lights as Henry Parrot and Samuel Pick. As Guilpin noted in one of his epigrams

addressed to the reader, it is expected that an epigram will be bawdy; readers should not "some wanton words to blame, / They are the language of an Epigramme." The players in these verses are many of the same who hold the scene in jests; witty wives, clever courtesans, sycophantic courtiers, sexually voracious widows, and stupid cuckolds are the stock figures. Often the epigrammatists work from classical models (Martial being the favorite, of course); bawdy puns are critical to the humor of many of these poems, as well as a traditional use of metaphors from the musical and military realms. Two examples should suffice, the first from Everard Guilpin (1598):

The world finds fault with *Gellia*, for she loues  
A skip-iack fidler, I hold her excus'd,  
For louing him, sith she her selfe so proues:  
What, she a fidler? Tut she is abus'd?  
No in good faith; what fidle hath she vs'd?  
The *Viole Digambo* is her best content,  
For twixt her legs she holds her instrument.

The second example comes from Henry Parrot (1613):

A Souldier once a Widdow would haue woo'd,  
But being poore and loath to be deni'd,  
Durst not impart how he affected stood,  
Which she as soone thus censur'd as espi'd:  
*You may be valiant (sir) but seeme vnlusty,*  
*That either haue no weapon, or tis rusty.*

Even more than the jests, the epigrams depend upon the economical setting of the scene, an understanding of stock figures (with regard to sexuality, social standing, and intelligence), and language that is manipulated in a witty fashion.

Taken together, jests and epigrams give an especially good picture of the humor in matters sexual in the early modern period and help us understand the movement to the dirty joke.

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# ERNAUX, ANNIE

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1940–  
French writer

Although Annie Ernaux cannot be classified as a writer of erotic literature, sexuality, particularly in relation to social class, gender, and writing, is an important theme in several of her texts. In the early works *Les armoires vides* (1974) and *Ce qu'ils disent ou rien* (1977), the narrative traces the female protagonist's adolescent discovery of sexual pleasure. These texts contain strikingly vivid descriptions of an active desiring female subject and of the intense physical pleasure she experiences in her first sexual encounters. In *Les armoires vides*, this capacity for physical pleasure pre-dates adolescence, and the narrator describes a childhood delight in the pleasures of all of the senses: "But the world was mine, made up of a thousand pieces to hunger after, to thirst after, to touch and to tear" (*Les armoires vides*, trans., 31). There is a clear connection between these depictions and the representation of adolescent sexual pleasure, which is marked by a generalized sensuality. Despite strong social and religious constraints and controls, Ernaux's young heroines pursue their pleasures with determination and even recklessness: "My body is alive in a thousand places and I know that they have not all yet been revealed" (*Les armoires vides*, trans., 94).

In *Passion simple* (1992), Ernaux turns to the depiction of adult desire. In an overtly autobiographical text, Ernaux describes a liaison with a

Soviet diplomat. The book opens with the evocation of images from a pornographic film, which are scarcely visible because Ernaux does not own a decoder for the encrypted channel. After this point, although the physical nature of the relationship is made clear, the details are mostly absent from the text—the images of the opening in some ways standing in for this absence. Almost ten years later, in 2001, Ernaux published the *journal intime* she had kept during the period of this relationship, under the title *Se perdre*. The title implies total abandonment to desire, loss of self in the experience of passion. In this text, sexual pleasure is depicted more overtly, and the narrator, unlike her adolescent predecessor, is sexually experienced and dominant. The Russian lover undergoes a kind of sexual apprenticeship and is transformed, becoming a flexible and responsive lover, physically if not emotionally: "A thought: in Leningrad he was very clumsy (shyness? or relative inexperience?). He is becoming less awkward, so am I a kind of initiator? I am delighted with this role, but it is fragile, ambiguous. There is no promise that the relationship will last (he might reject me as a whore)" (*Se perdre*, 28).

As this quotation suggests, the narrator's sexual dominance is undermined by emotional insecurity. In *Passion simple* and *Se perdre*, the narrator is at the same time dominant in terms of sexual savoir faire, fame, and beauty, and is subjugated to her desire. The strength of her passion is such that it dominates her thoughts,

and as we learn from the dreams recounted in *Se perdre*, even her unconscious. Although the lover is passionately involved on a physical level, there is no sense of an equivalent obsession. Furthermore, with less time and leisure to devote to the liaison, he dictates the terms of when and how often the lovers will meet. However, this is not merely a sado-masochistic game designed to increase erotic pleasure. The lover thus takes on the power of the mother who determines when the infant will be nurtured, and in his absence, the female narrator becomes an abandoned child, suffering a form of terror in this abandonment. In both texts, but particularly in the *journal intime*, Ernaux constantly underlines her own association of passion with death, grief, and mourning. In a characteristic moment of self-analysis, she herself points to the parallels between her relationship with her lover and the mother–daughter fusion which is a theme of *Une femme* and “*Je ne suis pas sortie de ma nuit*”: “I read in a psychoanalytical article that the ‘terror beyond words’—how I love that phrase—experienced by babies, the terror of separation from the mother, is gradually overcome. A crucial stage is achieved when the child is able to retain an image of the mother in her absence” (*Se perdre*, 224). My analysis, which is presented in Thomas 1999 and 2005, and broadly based on object relations theory, is that Ernaux’s narrators, like the other mainly white Western women discussed by the object relations theorists, never fully reach that stage of development. In this sense, total abandonment of self to the Other and resulting feelings of terror and panic, a kind of emotional freefall, are a feature of certain occidental femininities. From this perspective, erotic passion is inevitably linked to emotional suffering. For Ernaux, writing provides the only way out of this impasse and is sometimes seen as having the potential of filling a profound emotional void.

However, there is another side of the coin in Ernaux’s writing. In a short text entitled “Fragments autour de Philippe V.,” the narrator seems able to retain both the image of her lover and her sense of her own power. It is she who initiates the sexual relationship: “I kept going back to this gesture, my hand in his hair, without which nothing else would have happened. The memory of this gesture, more than anything else, filled me with intense, almost orgasmic pleasure. It occurred to me that it was of the same nature

as the act of writing the opening sentence of a book” (Ernaux in Thomas 1999, 178). The lovers also literally preserve the moment of their sexual encounter. They make love lying on a piece of paper and keep the image created by the mix of sperm and menstrual blood which results: “We did the same thing in the following two or three months. It had become an added pleasure. The impression that the orgasm was not the end of everything, that a trace of it would remain” (ibid.). Here we perhaps find the realization of Ernaux’s tentative indications of the potential of writing in *Passion simple* and *Se perdre*. We also find an evocation of Barthesian *jouissance* and a clear association of the domains of writing and of the erotic.

In *L’Usage de la photo*, jointly written with Marc Marie and published in 2005, Ernaux returns to the association of passion with loss and death. The text includes fourteen photographs of “landscapes after love”—the lovers’ clothes, abandoned while making love. As Ernaux and Marie wrote their texts separately and in relation to these images, an intertwining narrative of the relationship develops. However, alongside the love story is “the other scene,” the scene of the battle which was being played out in my body—a blind, stupefying—is this really happening to *me*?—struggle between life and death,” for during the relationship and the writing, Ernaux was being treated for breast cancer (*L’Usage de la photo*, 12). In this text, the struggle to “preserve a trace of our moments of passion,” through the photographs and the writing, is constantly accompanied by the presence of the threat of death and a sense of the transience of human relationships. Nonetheless, here, as in “Philippe V.,” Ernaux transgresses a number of taboos—she depicts the male body as object of her desire, she is both vulnerable and powerful, and perhaps most tellingly of all, she seems to escape from the cycle of physical pleasure followed by emotional pain. The lover is present in the text both as writing subject and object of desire, and illness and treatment become the sites for eroticism and emotional intimacy: “My stay at the Curie Institute for my operation was the sweetest of times. The tumour and ganglions had been removed. The analysis of the tissues would tell us whether a complete mastectomy would be necessary. M. spent hours in my embrace. The smiles of the nurses and auxiliaries indicated their approval” (*L’Usage*

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*de la photo*, 12). This writing of the female body in illness as actively desiring and desirable fully justifies the claim that Ernaux's writing of the erotic is profoundly feminist.

### Biography

Born in Lillebonne in 1940, Annie Ernaux grew up in Yvetot and studied literature at the University of Rouen. She taught in secondary schools in Annecy and Cergy-Pontoise (Paris region), where she still lives. Subsequently, and until her retirement in 2000, she prepared students for the CAPES teaching qualification by distance education. She is the author of fourteen books published by Gallimard and one work on writing authored jointly with Frédéric-Yves Jeannet and published by Editions Stock. Her first three works are autobiographical novels, whereas in all the other works, which include diaries, Ernaux refuses the novel as form and makes a clear autobiographical pact with the reader.

LYN THOMAS

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# EROS

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In the ancient Greek tradition, the word *érōs* expressed and paradoxically unified the psychosomatic and metaphysical modes of human desire. The former can be satisfied, though temporarily; the latter is insatiable.

In the Homeric epics (8th century BCE), which provide examples of satisfiable desire, *eros* commonly denotes a craving for food and drink. *Eros* as sexual desire is controlled by the goddess Aphrodite. After she has saved Paris from the sword of Menelaus, Aphrodite relieves his stress by causing him to desire Helen more than when he first saw her and snatched her

from Sparta (3.442). The goddess forces Helen, whose passion has now cooled, to satisfy Paris' burning *eros* (3.414–417). Similarly, with the help of Aphrodite's magical girdle that can fulfill any sexual wish (14.223), Hera makes Zeus feel a stronger *eros* for her than he has ever felt for another woman, even for Hera herself (14.294, 315). Covered by a golden cloud, they make love on Mount Ida, from which the battlefield can be seen. Exhausted, Zeus falls sound asleep, while one of the fiercest battles of the Trojan War, involving men and gods, is taking place. These two scenes show that sexual gratification defines

Aphrodite's patronage. In the *Odyssey*, in turn, the goddess Athena controls eros by leaving it unfulfilled. She awakens young Nausicaa's sexuality and uses her strong attraction to Odysseus to help him earn the Phaeacians' sympathy, which is crucial for his survival (6, 1–245). She inflames the hearts of Penelope's suitors with eros (18.212–13) without any intention of satisfying it. On the contrary, Athena's goal is to weaken the suitors and justify their punishment. Thus, in the story of the *Odyssey*, almost entirely directed by the virginal goddess of wisdom, war, and handicraft, Athena, the power of eros is for the first time redirected toward goals beyond the sexual or even against it. In Virgil's *Aeneid* (1st century BCE), Aphrodite/Venus, who plays Athena's guiding role in Aeneas' journey, uses the power of eros, now personified as her son, Cupid, to kindle erotic passion in Queen Dido and assure a warm reception for Aeneas at Carthage (1.907–940). True to her nature, however, and risking the anger of the marriage goddess, Juno, Venus makes sure that Dido's sexual desire for Aeneas is fulfilled, at the price of Dido's suicide later, when Aeneas abandons her.

Hesiod's *Theogony* (late 8 century BCE) introduces two personifications of desire. As a creative and procreative principle, Eros is a primeval cosmic deity, a limb-melter, who overpowers the mind of gods and humans (120–1). As Aphrodite's aspect, Eros appears, without a genealogy, on the day of the goddess's birth and becomes her attendant (221).

A fragment by Parmenides (5th century BCE), "she devised Eros first of all the gods," suggests that desire as a cosmic principle occupied the minds of some pre-Socratic philosophers. The Orphic religious movement, which took shape in the 6th century BCE, personified eros as Phanes, who, being both "female and father," initiates all creation (Guthrie, 80, 100–102). In an Orphic account of the beginning, given by Aristophanes (5th century BCE) in his comedy *Birds*, Eros hatches from a "wind-sown" egg, born by Night. He mingles all things together, from which Heaven, Ocean, Earth, and the gods are born. In all accounts, the origin of the cosmic eros as a principle of creation remains obscure, but it is omnipresent. Consequently, any epistemic interest in the universe must involve eros. Thus the metaphysical concept of eros is conceived.

The physical eros, in its turn, personified as Aphrodite's attendant in the *Theogony*, gradually becomes a fully developed, multifaceted mythological character. Greek lyric poetry gives a strong impact to this development by capturing eros's paradoxical character. Sappho (7th century BCE) expresses eros oxymoronically: sweet–bitter, pleasure–pain, love–hate. Initially represented as a young man, Eros progressively rejuvenates to become a mischievous winged baby-boy with a bow and arrows, the Roman Cupid, and is said to be a son of Venus by Mercury or Mars, or of Iris by Zephyr. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* (early 1st century CE), a work about desire as a creative force, Cupid's dark side is shown. He makes the god Apollo burn with passion for Daphne but hits her with an arrow that causes hate. After a long chase, Daphne turns into a laurel tree, thus leaving Apollo's desire forever unsatisfied (1.452–567). For the first time, sexual gratification is withdrawn by Cupid himself, and at that from a god as powerful and desirable as Apollo. Ovid's Cupid also assists in the abduction and rape of Prosepine by Pluto, the god of the underworld (5.346–571). Although he denies it, Cupid probably caused the incestuous love of Myrrha for her father (10.298–502).

On the whole, Greek lyric poetry and Ovid's *Metamorphoses* demonstrate how sexual desire, though in principle satisfiable, can be a source of uncertainty and torment for both humans and gods. It is irrational and unpredictable, like baby Cupid's behavior. Along with the Orphic vision of eros as a universal principle, the awareness of the inherent complexity of eros's psychosomatic mode prepared the grounds for a merger with its metaphysical mode. It first occurred in Plato's dialogue *Symposium* (385–378 BCE).

In the *Symposium*, several prominent Athenians, gathered at a male drinking party, deliver speeches in praise of the god Eros. By ethical, religious, scientific, mythological, and aesthetic arguments, employed in accordance with the speaker's particular occupation, each eulogy justifies pederasty. Gratification of his lover's sexual desire will make the beloved boy a better citizen, the speakers imply. To Socrates, however, desire is insatiable by nature. His eulogy, relating the teaching of Diotima, a priestess who instructed young Socrates in the art of eros, shows erotic experience as climbing from

## EROS

one form of partial fulfillment of desire for the beautiful to another. Sexual desire for a particular youth is only the first step in one's eros-driven journey toward the "absolute, pure, unpolluted by human flesh" (211e) metaphysical idea of the Beautiful. Sigmund Freud, who insisted that "the enlarged sexuality of psychoanalysis coincides with Eros in the divine Plato" (*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*, 1920), would have qualified Socrates' eulogy as a praise of the successful sublimation of sexual desire into desire for other forms of creativity, with education and absolute knowledge at the top. As the speech of the uninvited guest Alcibiades at the end of the *Symposium* reveals, however, Plato must have realized that redirecting physical eros toward a metaphysical object could work for Socrates and a handful of virtuous philosophers, but not for everyone. Years ago, the older and unattractive Socrates had rejected the sexual advances of the famously handsome young Alcibiades but was willing to share with him his eros for knowledge. Now a prominent politician and a general, Alcibiades still feels wounded by the unsatisfied physical desire of his youth. He loves and hates Socrates, who, like Eros, is able to kindle uncontrollable desire in others but appears to be in full control of his own desire. In his *Confessions* (397–400), St. Augustine tells about his ordeal of climbing the ladder of eros.

Apuleius (2nd century CE) shows the ambivalence of the Platonic understanding of eros in the tale of Cupid and Psyche, inserted in his novel *Golden Ass*. The tale can be read as an allegory of the soul's disastrous desire to know the physical eros instead of just experiencing it in the darkness. Knowing eros means losing it. After much hardship, the two lovers marry in heaven. Psyche becomes immortal and gives birth to a daughter, Pleasure. Only in the abstract realm of eternity could the curious, reflective soul truly unite with eros's immediacy. This changes after courtly love is invented and glorified by the French troubadours in the 11th–13th centuries and after the term "platonic love" (coined in the 15th century by Marsilio Ficino to describe Socrates' relationship with his followers) begins to be applied to an intimate, affectionate relationship without sex. The impossibility of satisfying sexual desire is converted into a source of poetic inspiration. Dante's *Divine Comedy* (early 14th century) is perhaps the most fascinating example of unfulfilled, sublimated physical eros.

Modern romantic love seems to be a continuation of the ancient non-Platonic eros, exemplified in Aristophanes' speech in Plato's *Symposium*. Aristophanes explains the origin of sexual desire and its insatiability by telling a myth according to which Zeus cut humans into two halves as a punishment for their hubris. Consequently, everyone is longing for his or her other half, although after the first generation of those divided creatures, such a "half" simply does not exist. Hence eros is a longing for physical completeness that can never be fully satisfied. Since the ideal physical union is not possible, romantic lovers are looking for "soul mates." Thus, romantic love endorses the earthly marriage of Cupid and Psyche, or of physical and spiritual desire. This combination of immediacy and reflectivity makes for an inexhaustible literary theme.

Pure physical eros, however, has found its own niche in literature. The best examples of Western erotic literature explore the tension between the psychosomatic and the metaphysical modes of desire and tend to engage in the centuries-long dialogue on the ambivalent, paradoxical nature of eros. For example, Thomas Mann's novella *Death in Venice* (1912) epitomizes the Platonic chase of eros's meaning: its protagonist frantically pursues a beautiful young boy, described as the god Eros himself. In *Ulysses* (1922), through Molly Bloom's character, James Joyce gives voice to what may be heard as repressed sexual desire in Homer's Penelope. Vladimir Nabokov, in *Lolita* (1955), creates the concept of the nymphet, symbolic of the immediacy and transience of eros. The namesake character of the novel is both realistic and, through numerous literary allusions (from Plato and Ovid to Proust and Poe), symbolic of the writer's enchantment with eros.

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## EROTIC ASPHYXIATION

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The term *erotic asphyxiation* describes sexual practices in which pleasure is gained by depriving the brain of oxygen, resulting in temporary euphoria. This can be achieved by means of strangulation, suffocation, or hanging. It is most usually practiced by men as an accompaniment to masturbation. Depriving the brain of oxygen prolongs the erection and intensifies orgasm. When practiced alone, as part of onanism, it is termed auto-erotic asphyxiation. Recreational asphyxia can also occur between sexual partners as an accompaniment to intercourse, and is a frequent feature of (particularly gay male) pornography and sadomasochistic sexual iconography.

Contemporary detective narratives and erotic thrillers, on both page and screen, are the most popular representational loci of this sexual practice. Erotic asphyxiation allows for a handy twist in the traditional epistemology of detective fiction. The conventional understanding of motive is turned on its head, as the burden of blame and guilt is taken off the perpetrator and placed instead on the victim, who literally died of pleasure. A highly misogynistic example of this conceit is seen in Michael Crichton's political thriller *Rising Sun* (1992). The frequency of this motif in works of popular culture is attested to ironically in Thomas Harris's thriller *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988), when Dr. Hannibal Lecter tells Clarice Starling that a patient who boasted of murdering his lover was more likely to have killed him accidentally during "some banal erotic asphyxia transaction."

The somewhat bizarre nature of this practice means that it provides a source of dark humor in some high-culture literary texts. In his poem

"Bohème de chic" in the collection *Les Amours jaunes* (1873), the proto-Symbolist French poet Tristan Corbière uses the simile "roide comme un pendu" [stiff as a hanged man], in a pun which plays on the associations of rigor mortis and erection, drawing ribald attention to the effect of hanging on the male physiognomy. Similarly, in Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1948), when considering suicide, Vladimir and Estragon joke pruriently about the beneficial side effects of being hanged.

Owing to its erection-enhancing properties, erotic asphyxiation is usually associated with male sexuality. However, a favored trope of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century novels is the eroticized constriction of the female form by the wearing of corsets. The archetypal figure of the swooning woman, overcome by desire and shortness of breath combined, is embodied in eponymous heroines Moll Flanders (Daniel Defoe, 1722), *Clarissa* (Samuel Richardson, 1747–48), and *Madame Bovary* (Gustave Flaubert, 1857). Thus, a disguised form of erotic asphyxiation is linked, by means of heavily codified cultural-historical stereotypes and practices of femininity, to women's sexuality.

One rare example of erotic asphyxiation featured in female-authored erotic writing as a conscious and explicit part of female sexual fantasy is found in the French novella *Le Boucher* [The Butcher] (1988) by Alina Reyes. *The Butcher* contains a short description of what appears to be a mild form of erotic asphyxiation, where the protagonist's lover applies pressure to her neck during a session of lovemaking: "[T]u t'asseyais sur moi, mettais tes mains autour de mon cou,

doucement tu serrais, et le plafond tournait” [You sat on top of me, put your hands around my neck, softly you squeezed and the ceiling swam before my eyes]. Here, the act is described in terms that reflect its heady and sensuous effects. However, the neutral, detached tone that characterizes the narrative means that the significance of this episode is hard to interpret and the narrator’s pleasure is not described in any detail.

The flip-side of the desire to be deprived of oxygen for sexual pleasure would be the desire to strangle the other in the interests of inflicting simultaneous torture and arousal. The constriction of the throat during sexual intercourse also causes the vagina or anus to tighten, heightening the pleasure for the penetrator. In de Sade’s *Justine* (1787, 1791, and 1797/1799), one of the many sadistic libertines into whose hands Justine falls has a particular penchant for deathly games. The cellars of Roland’s chateau contain the paraphernalia of the gothic aesthetic: skeletons, severed heads and bones, as well as a wax effigy of a naked woman and a collection of coffins. It is in this atmospheric chamber that Roland will play with Justine’s mortality—buggering and strangling her and then forcing her to stand on a stool while a noose is placed around her neck. If she is to evade death, she must cut the cord in the nick of time when the masturbating libertine kicks the stool from under her feet. Erotic asphyxiation here shades into the necrophilic imagination, as Roland’s thrill is achieved by engineering an encounter between life and death. In *Juliette* (1797), the giant Minski takes the erotic conceit a step further, when he strangles a young girl to death while raping her.

These tableaux from de Sade doubtless influenced many scenes in English Gothic and French Decadent writing, nineteenth-century aesthetic schools which privilege the most extreme and morbid features of the human imagination. One good example is Joris-Karl Huysmans’s Decadent masterpiece of Satanism, sadism, and madness, *Là-Bas* (1891), which dwells on lurid descriptions of Gilles de Rais’s habit of half-hanging victims before cutting their throats.

Probably the most striking literary example of this phenomenon is found in Georges Bataille’s celebrated pornographic novel *Histoire de l’œil* [*The Story of the Eye*] (1928). In one episode

involving blasphemy and torture, the female protagonist Simone strangles an aging priest until his penis is erect. She then straddles his erection and continues to squeeze his throat while having intercourse with him. On the point of death, he ejaculates into her, uniting *la mort* and *la petite mort* in the most literal way. Bataille’s philosophical writing on pornography holds that sexuality is inevitably equated with death in the human imaginary. This is because sex effects the psychological transgression and dissolution of the boundaries between self and other, doing violence to our sense of integrity and separateness. This phenomenon is referred to by psychoanalysts as “ego annihilation.” In light of Bataille’s philosophy of sexuality, erotic asphyxiation (alongside vampirism, bloodletting, and sadomasochistic torture) becomes a privileged trope with which to express literally the liminal nature of sexual experience, the collusion of Eros and Thanatos.

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# ESQUIVEL, LAURA

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1950–  
Mexican novelist, screenwriter

Laura Esquivel is the author of novels, short stories, film scripts, children's books, and journal articles. Esquivel's writings are infused with eroticism and carry a message of love, harmony, and the satisfaction of sexual desire in female–male relationships. In her novels—*Like Water for Chocolate*, *The Law of Love*, *Swift as Desire*—Esquivel expresses her refusal to categorize masculinity and femininity. Instead, she unifies them in one sphere of masculine-feminine understanding, sensuality, and pleasure which is reached through the wisdom of erotic energies connected by external elements such as food or music. In her works, Esquivel also explores the existence of true love based on strong emotions and erotic electricity. A flow of positive energy and high sexual desire is established between twin souls. Their extreme voluptuousness translates into the deepest orgasms and such an intense level of mental and physical unity that twin souls blend seamlessly into one being.

Esquivel uses parody and humor to deconstruct the traditional values of patriarchal society, in which powerful and corrupted subjects, either sexually repressed or sexually abusive, exercise their power over other people's lives. Her works represent the demystification of obedience and passive sexuality in women, dismissing these notions as mere social constructions. She overturns Latin American feminine subordination, creating female characters that make their own decisions and are open to erotic experimentation. Esquivel's heroines enjoy masturbation, premarital sex, lustful thoughts, and casual sex—aspects of sexuality previously reserved for Latin American men and absolutely condemnable in women.

### *Like Water for Chocolate*

In her first novel, *Like Water for Chocolate* (1989), Esquivel blends highbrow as well as popular cultural values and narrative forms. In this

parodic novel the author subverts the principles of “feminine literature” (*folletín, culebrón*, magazines for women, cookbooks, etc.), rewriting and revalorizing them. Esquivel mixes a tragicomic love story with traditional culinary recipes from her own family. The novel illustrates the close relationship between cooking and loving, food and sex. Both the kitchen and the bedroom have traditionally been considered spheres of repression and prohibition for women. Esquivel states that these places are absolutely essential, redefining kitchen and bedroom as spheres of freedom, where gastronomic and sexual pleasure are activated thanks to feminine activeness and knowledge.

The story in *Like Water for Chocolate* is about the life of Tita De La Garza, who lives in northern Mexico during the early 1900s, a time of revolution. Being the youngest daughter, she is required by family tradition to remain single and to care for her tyrannical mother. When Tita is forbidden to marry Pedro, her true love, Pedro marries Rosaura, Tita's sister. Unlike Tita, Rosaura represents the sexually repressed and morally alienated woman. Her rotten body symbolizes her inability to enjoy both delicious food and voluptuous sex.

Tita has the magical power of expressing her desires and emotions through the food she prepares, provoking high sensual experiences in some and terrible digestive problems in others. Tita's quail in rose-petal sauce prompts such a powerful sexual ardor in Gertrudis, Tita's oldest sister, that Gertrudis is able to satisfy her impetuous internal desire only after working in a brothel for months. The connection between the culinary and the erotic is also established by the frequent comparisons between cooking food over a fire and Tita's body burning with passion. The intensity of Tita and Pedro's unsatisfied sexual desire is sublimated in voluptuous glances and the unbearable fire of passion that burns them alive. Forced to respect social conventions for many years, during their first and only uninhibited sexual encounter, Tita and



Pedro's all-consuming sexual power ignites every corner of the ranch.

In Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*, social and sexual feminine stereotypes are broken down, reasserting the notion that cooking and sex are realms that belong to a reevaluated feminine culture.

### *The Law of Love*

Esquivel's *The Law of Love* (1995), parodies science fiction, soap operas, and adventure novels. Although highly satirical, it can also be read as a romantic novel about the power of true love and the interconnection between mind, body, and soul. Breaking with literary conventions, the novel contains illustrations and comes with a CD.

In the 16th century, Cortés' Captain Rodrigo profanes the Pyramid of Love, thus opening a period of unrestrained lust, violent passions, unsatisfied love triangles, and crimes. Set in 23rd-century Mexico City, the mission of Azucena, the heroine of the novel, is to reinstate the law of love on Earth. She is a young Mexican "astroanalyst" who uses music to encourage her patients to regress to their previous lives in order to heal the damage they have endured. Azucena tries to find her twin soul Rodrigo, who disappeared after only one night of voluptuous lovemaking. Advanced future technology makes it possible to retain one's Self (soul) and transfer it into another body "container," thereby enabling one to change his or her gender, race, and age. Esquivel uses such liberation of the body's characteristics to humorously exemplify the sexual power of stereotypical blondes in Mexican society, the rejuvenating effects of sexual activity in elderly people, and the possibility of abused women seeking revenge against their rapists.

The ability to inhabit another gender's body reaffirms the author's rejection of the feminine/masculine dichotomy. This idea is also illustrated in the passages where twin souls engage in sexual intercourse, reaching a complete fusion of mind, body, and soul. Regardless of the body's gender, every single atom penetrates and is penetrated, while dancing in harmony and experiencing an intense and continuous orgasm.

### *Swift as Desire*

Published in 2001, Esquivel wrote this novel as a tribute to her father, who worked as a telegraph

operator. Unlike her previous novels, the main character is a man. Júbilo is a telegraph operator gifted with the power of "hearing" other people's emotions. The waves of sensuality flowing between Júbilo and his wife Lucha allow Esquivel to establish a comparison between the telegraph and erotic pleasure. Júbilo's fingers transmit electrical impulses through Lucha's body. He sends her messages in Morse code using her clitoris. The contact of her vagina with his penis recharges their sexual batteries. The exchange of energies and thoughts during their lovemaking is similar to the transmission of electrical currents in telegraphic messages. As in her other novels, Esquivel represents an ideal of harmonious and reciprocal erotic desire that grows between true lovers, while rejecting the cult of violence and sexual aggressions inflicted on women as characterized by the hated figure of don Pedro and his rape of Lolita.

In her novels Esquivel subverts social and literary conventions in an attempt to liberate women from social and sexual repression. Nevertheless, her liberation of the feminine body takes place within the limits of "regulated" heterosexual relationships, and she does not go further by creating any erotic fantasies or sexual excesses that transgress these limits.

### Biography

Laura Esquivel was born in Mexico City, where she attended Escuela Normal de Maestros and worked as a teacher for eight years. She married and later divorced Mexican actor and film director Alfonso Arau, with whom she has a daughter, Sandra, then married Javier Valdés. Esquivel's success rests on her acclaimed first novel, *Like Water for Chocolate* (1989), which quickly became a best seller, then a movie, for which Esquivel wrote the script and which won numerous Ariel Academy Awards in Mexico in 1992. Esquivel was named 1992 Woman of the Year in Mexico and received the 1994 ABBY award from the American Booksellers Association of the United States, a first for a foreign writer.

CRISTINA RUIZ SERRANO

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## ESSAYS: NONFICTION

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Essays have played an important part in the history of erotic writing, not least as it was in this format that many of the important new ideas about sexuality were first expressed. It should, however, be remembered that these essays followed on from earlier erotic nonfiction writing, viz., the nonfictional autobiography and the religious confession. One of the first places to look for erotic nonfiction is the autobiographies of the Roman Catholic saints, such as St. Augustine, who candidly wrote about masturbation, and St. Teresa of Avila, in whose *Life* is included a subtle discussion of lesbianism in her early life. Such religious *memoires*, while fruitful up to a point, should also be read conjunction with secular *memoires*, such as those by Jacques Cassanova and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. These sources often became the bases of later essays on erotic topics, as did the writings of the Marquis de Sade and others who described their sexual theories through the medium of fiction.

The essay is more closely related to the medical writing about sexuality that appeared more

and more frequently. Medical works began to problematize sexuality in a different but comparable way as had the former religious tracts: by challenging commonsense approaches to sexual issues based on ideas about health and illness. An important text in this sense was Samuel Tissot's (1728–1797) *On Onania: or a Treatise upon the Disorders Produced by Masturbation* (1760), which reformulated the way that doctors addressed masturbation until the late nineteenth century. Tissot's impact on writing about masturbation was extreme. French author François Lallemand picked up on Tissot's proscription of masturbation and included many case histories about the problems associated with it, including a detailed description of the consequent illness, spermatorrhoea. The same could be said of the many other doctors who wrote about masturbation and the associated medical problems, such as William Acton (1814–1875). Acton and others also wrote about other aspects of sexuality, including venereal disease and male sexual development. Some doctors even went so far as to write about birth control, although this topic

was not considered appropriate until the early twentieth century, and even then was suspect.

Erotic essays were not always associated with the medicalization of sexuality. The essay was a form utilized by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, the German homosexual law reformer, who wrote numerous works which justified the existence of homosexuality, influenced important thinkers with his theory of homosexuality (i.e., a female soul in a male body, and vice versa), and attempted to repeal the notorious Paragraph 175 from the Prussian legal code, which criminalized homosexual behaviors. Ulrichs' impact was major. Homosexuals supported his attempts to repeal the anti-homosexual laws, and sexologists such as Richard von Krafft-Ebing adopted some of his thought on the topic. Ulrichs' writing had the effect of stimulating many other works on homosexuality.

Other responses to sexuality and the law also came in the form of essays. In the summer of 1885, the British journalist W.T. Stead wrote a series of articles for the *Pall Mall Gazette* about the white slave trade, entitled "The Maiden Tribute to Modern Babylon." These pieces decried the state of prostitution, and in particular childhood prostitution. He provided the reader with descriptions of the screams of virgins when being deflowered, and also explained how he had procured a young girl for the low sum of £5. The effect of Stead's campaign was to raise the age of consent from 13 to 16 and to further criminalize homosexuality to not only include sodomy, but also extend to "indecent acts" committed in public or private. This was realized by the 1885 Law Amendment Act, proposed by Henry Labouchere. It should be added that Stead's unscrupulous journalistic techniques landed him in prison for child abduction.

The discipline of sexology is an important one to consider in connection with erotic essays. It developed after the 1870s as a response to the lack of understanding about sexuality, not only in the forensic sciences, where explanations were sought by medical jurists for specific sex acts, but as a response to some of the significant developments in psychiatric theory, including the somaticism championed by Wilhelm Griesinger and others, and the psychological turn brought about by those interested in hypnotism. Attempts were made by sexologists to explain sexual perversions and normal sexual desires in terms of these theories.

An important early sexologist was the aforementioned Richard von Krafft-Ebing, who is most famous for his book *Psychopathia Sexualis*, first published in 1886. In this text, Krafft-Ebing categorized many different sexual "perversions" under the basic categories of homosexuality, sadism and masochism, and the fetishes. The book was itself a best seller, going through many updated editions. One of the reasons for its success was the vast number of case histories within the text which depicted so-called perverse sexual acts. These were read not only by doctors and lawyers, but also by the general public, some of whom enthusiastically wrote their own cases down for Krafft-Ebing and sent them in for his benefit.

The Berlin psychiatrist Albert Moll also made significant contributions to writing about sex. Apart from Moll's further investigations into homosexuality and child sexuality, he contributed a model of sexual desire that involved a general description of the two phases of (1) being aroused and (2) achieving orgasm. For Moll, these two phases were able to explain all individual sexual responses, regardless of the specificities of the arousal and the methods of attaining orgasm.

Other contributors of erotic essays included the English classicist John Addington Symonds, who emphasized the historical practices of homosexuality in two privately printed pamphlets in order to argue that it was not a perverse activity but a normal and natural phenomenon that had existed in some of the noblest cultures in the world, such as ancient Greece. Likewise Edward Carpenter, the sandal-wearing feminist vegetarian from Sheffield who advocated homosexual rights, used ethnological and historical evidence to argue that homosexuality was not perverse and that it should be acceptable to society at large.

The premier English sexologist, Havelock Ellis (1859–1939), contributed significantly to debates about sexuality in his vast *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1897–1928), in which Ellis gathers together as much historical, literary, and scientific evidence as possible to explain different sexual behaviors and to push a political agenda that involved sexual liberation and wider understanding of the sexuality of women and other sexual minorities. In this he was rather like his German counterpart, Magnus Hirschfeld. Both Ellis and Hirschfeld were interested in changing

the world with regard to sexuality. In this they were a part of the longer sexological tradition of liberation.

There was significant contribution toward aspects of this sexual liberation by feminists in England, such as Stella Browne and Marie Stopes, both of whom utilized the findings of sexual science in their arguments for birth control and women's rights in sexual pleasure. Browne, Stopes, and the American Margaret Sanger thought that women should be erotically satisfied and that they should not live in fear of unwanted childbirth. Some of the feminist aspirations of other writers will be examined below.

The vision of sexuality that most captured the modern world was the psychoanalysis of Sigmund Freud (1856–1939). Although Freud adopted many ideas from sexology, he also contributed to the wider acceptance of ideas about childhood sexuality and about people's individual sexual development. Central to Freud's work was the concept of the libido as a pleasure-seeking drive that serves as the basis for dreams, desires, and actions. Freud has been criticized, however, for the attitudes toward female sexuality that he promulgated. In this respect, the work of some later psychoanalysts, such as Karen Horney and Clara Thompson, has been useful in treating women more like individuals and challenging some of Freud's more sexist assumptions. Other psychoanalytical work that should be mentioned has involved more detailed attention to the young child, which has in some instances been corrected, challenged, or elaborated by Melanie Klein, Anna Freud, Wilfred Bion, and others. Sexuality has played a varied role in the theories of these different analysts.

Apart from the diaspora of sexologists and analysts caused by World War II, including Otto Rank, Wilhelm Reich, and Max Marcuse, which led to a greater volume of work about sexuality and a wider readership interest, there were local interests in writing about sexuality that should be taken into account. As the majority of sexological texts were written in German, it is useful to address some of the other European traditions. One country that has often been associated with erotic writing has been France, although this is far more because of the reputation of French fiction throughout the nineteenth century. Apart from significant contributions to

psychoanalytic theory, by Jacques Lacan and others, there has been a philosophical tradition that has written about the erotic. Georges Bataille, author of the erotic fiction classic *Histoire de l'oeil* [*The Story of the Eye*] (1928), argued in a series of essays that sexual union causes a momentary indistinguishability between otherwise distinct objects, particularly love and death. These two themes of erotism and death were the major ones with which Bataille engaged, showing how they blend around agony and ecstasy. Bataille's approach was a development of some of the later writings of Sigmund Freud on Eros and Thanatos, the sex and death instincts, as well as engaging with de Sade's conception of pleasure.

In *The Double Flame: Love and Eroticism* (1993), Mexican Octavio Paz furthers Bataille's (and de Sade's) elucidation of the erotic by demonstrating how it surpasses the functional goal of sex. The erotic is treated by Paz as an integral fact of being human. But rather than taking the reader toward the violence through which both death and the erotic are welded together (for Bataille and de Sade), Paz emphasizes the outcome of this eroticism: love, which for Paz was considered a reason to exist.

Other French authors explored the violent aspects of eroticism through the writings of the Marquis de Sade. Important contributions to the reevaluation of de Sade's writing came from Pierre Klossowski, Simone de Beauvoir, and Roland Barthes, all of whom treated him as the point from which new thinking about sexual and social possibilities might be started. Not all of this attention was directed toward de Sade, however. A part of de Beauvoir's rethinking about the erotic was contained in her essay on the actress Brigitte Bardot, in which she considers the gender and erotic possibilities of films such as *And God Created Woman*.

Attention was also directed toward the erotic by the famed writer of erotica Anaïs Nin. In her essay "Eroticism in Women," Nin distinguishes between erotica and pornography: Pornography "bestializes sexuality" by bringing it "back to the animal level." Eroticism, on the other hand, "arouses sensuality without this need to animalize it." (*In Praise of the Sensitive Man*, 8). This eroticism is also seen in Roland Barthes, *Lover's Discourse*, which celebrates the erotic by focusing on desire from a semiotic perspective without addressing sexual impulses,

giving us a text very different to earlier erotic essays about sex.

In America, the sexological tradition had been well established in the late nineteenth century, with authors like William Hammond, James Kiernan, and Harold Moyer contributing essays about sex to psychiatric journals. Beyond this early sexology which focused on the perversions, as had that of Europe, there was a push in American sexology to establish a normative sexual desire, meaning heterosexuality. This was done in the studies by Robert Latou Dickinson (1861–1950), Clelia Mosher (1863–1940), and Katherine Bement Davis (1860–1935). The most important example of such in the first part of the twentieth century came from Alfred Kinsey (1894–1956) and his coworkers, who published *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948) and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female* (1953). Both of these texts were detailed descriptions of the sexual practices of Americans, and put forward images about them as far more sexually active—in many different, nonheterosexual ways—than had previously been thought. Needless to say, the “Kinsey Reports” were best sellers, regardless of the rather dry tone and detailed statistics (which failed to satisfy statisticians, however).

The next best-selling American sexological work was William Masters and Virginia Johnson’s *Human Sexual Behavior* (1966), which concentrated on the physiological aspects of sex, rather than the social or psychological aspects (although these were touched on as well). The most important contribution of Masters and Johnson was their work on the female orgasm, which did much to challenge Freud’s conception of the clitoral orgasm being an immature precursor to the “proper” or sexually mature vaginal orgasm. Masters and Johnson claimed that there were no physiological differences between the two.

Not all American erotic essays were sexological. Important essays were written in the 1950s and 60s which embodied the new spirit of postwar American sexual liberation, such as Norman Mailer’s famous “The White Negro: Superficial Reflections on the Hipster.” Mailer argued that the “hipster,” the young white male who listened to jazz, embodied by Jack Kerouac and others, approached sex with a “negro” sensibility: that is, a brashness that Mailer did not see in white culture. A different response to

American sexuality was presented by Norman O. Brown, in *Loves Body* (1966). In this text, Brown explores what he saw as the human condition after the “fall from grace,” based on the writings of Freud, Friedrich Nietzsche, D. H. Lawrence and others, through the use of aphorisms which had a certain resonance with his mid-sixties audience after a spiritualized sexuality.

Another significant resonance that was felt throughout America and the rest of the world in the 1960s was feminism. Not only was there interest in Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* and Germaine Greer’s *The Female Eunuch*, but also widely published were texts which explored sexual and erotic possibilities from a feminist standpoint, such as Helen Gurley Brown’s *Sex and the Single Girl* (1962) and *Sex and the Office* (1964). Not only did Brown in these two texts cause a sensation—celebrating female sexuality outside of marriage—but she also began writing a newspaper column, *Woman Alone*. In 1965 she became editor of *Cosmopolitan* magazine, which she redesigned as *the* publication for young women, by focusing on female sexuality. The circulation of *Cosmo* skyrocketed as a result, and Brown remained editor of the magazine until 1996.

Less subtle responses to the new sexual attitudes of the 1960s, and specifically to the erotic industry, came from the magazine *Suck*, a British publication that subverted male-focused erotic magazines such as *Screw*, *Mayfair*, and *Playboy*. The chief intellectual contributor to this magazine was Australian feminist Germaine Greer, who first published her justifiably famous essay “Lady Love Your Cunt” in *Suck* in 1971. This essay called for the acceptance of the female body by women and challenged the male-centered eroticization of the vagina apparent in male-focused erotica.

The body became both a site for feminist struggle and a site of eroticism in some of the more sophisticated feminist texts. Monique Wittig’s *The Lesbian Body* (1973) insisted that a reinvented language was needed to better understand the experiences of women. She describes in graphic detail the bonding of two women lovers, their viscera entwining and disentangling as their relationship ebbs and flows between them. This new, embodied language was not necessary for many of the women contributing their fantasies to Nancy Friday’s huge-selling discussion of female sexual desires and

fantasies, *My Secret Garden* (1973). Friday's text is an analysis of different women's sexual dreams, which lends itself to erotic reading in the same way as does the sexological texts of the nineteenth century: through personalized accounts from real individuals, rather than heady prescriptions from theoretically savvy authors. Further feminist attention to sexuality, which also sold very well, came from Shere Hite, whose *The Hite Report on Female Sexuality* (1976) and *The Hite Report on Male Sexuality* (1981) both describe what men and women want in bed, how they are sexually satisfied, and what they communicate to their partners about their desires.

In her article "This Sex Which Is Not One," French psychoanalyst and philosopher Luce Irigaray questioned the assumption that female sexuality was dependent upon male sexuality, as is assumed in the Freudian canon. Employing a revised version of psychoanalysis that extended the implications of Karen Horney's work, Irigaray asked, "Where is female sexuality located if it always refers back to the penis? Where does female pleasure reside?" Underlying these questions is the criticism of Freud's insistence that the penis is the only true sex organ. Further, Irigaray posited female pleasure as auto-erotic, because a female is always touching herself:

A women "touches herself" constantly without anyone being able to forbid her to do so, for her sex is composed of two lips which embrace continually. Thus, with herself she is already two—but not divisible into ones—which stimulate each other. (100)

Other feminist reformulations of female sexuality are myriad. They stretch from Gayle Rubin's feminist reappropriation of BDSM (bondage-discipline-sadomasochism) sexuality to the hardly erotic reactionary works of Sheila Jeffreys and other anti-sensualist feminists who oppose these feminist reworkings of the erotic with comments relating feminist reappropriations of desire to buying into male-centric fantasies about child pornography and universal rape.

To say that essays themselves are erotic is somewhat strange. They are, however, one of the key sites for the multiple engagements with eroticism, from sexological prescription to feminist resistance. People have read these essays for multiple reasons: as erotic stimulation, as information about sex, as political criticisms of sexual issues, and as documents by practitioners within specific fields of discourse about sex (such as sexologists). This survey has illustrated the breadth of discussion of eroticism within the essay form, although it is by its very nature a difficult task to give such an overview. What people take from the essays they read is always personal.

IVAN CROZIER

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## ÉTIEMBLE, RENÉ

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1909–2002

French essayist and novelist

René Étiemble wrote only one overtly erotic novel, *Blason d'un corps* (1961), which was published as a  *récit* . Eroticism however, is a constant theme throughout the diverse domains of his oeuvre. His first novel, *L'Enfant de chœur* (1937), deals with the sexual education of a young boy and was deemed by critics as being outrageously erotic. His work as an editor, translator, and writer of prefaces made him an important purveyor of Eastern eroticism in France, the masterpieces of which he edited amongst nonerotic works in his collection *Connaissance de l'Orient*. In a later essay, *L'Érotisme et l'amour* (1987), he explained his position on eroticism as a school of tolerance and as a manner of opposing tyrannies, emphasizing eroticism's essential difference from pornography. The encyclopedist Étiemble, who authored the entry on "Littérature érotique" in the *Encyclopaedia Universalis*, advocated the humanism of eroticism. Eroticism is the proof that "man everywhere is the same in the flesh" and that provided that religion does not oppress his delights, "he can invent similar ingenious pleasures everywhere."

Both of the novels *L'Enfant de chœur* and *Blason d'un corps* are characterized by the fastidious observation of the flesh, in particular of physical scents and secretions. Disease and the desire of the sick body play an important part in both stories, haunted by the specter of syphilis in the first and tuberculosis in the second. Scientific precision in the description of the body is common to both novels. This links them to the rest of Étiemble's work, which is conceived as a pedagogical enterprise of demystification. In *L'Enfant de chœur*, situated in a puritan Catholic western province of France, the main character, the young André Steindel, fatherless, like the author himself, describes in intimate detail his relationship to his mother, whose naked and diseased body haunts him and whose stench "hypnotizes" him. After experimenting with

"the necessary homosexuality of boarding schools," but "lacking a vocation" and encountering a schoolgirl aged only thirteen, he completes his sexual apprenticeship with a visit to a brothel, which ends not in satisfaction, but in shame and distress. The novel tells of the disarray in discovering the body, and the boy's visit is an introduction not so much to pleasure as to the suffering induced by the loss of innocence.

Written more than twenty years later, *Blason d'un corps* is, as the title suggests, a seemingly more pacified vision of the sexualized body. It deals with an eroticism of remembrance, since it is a posthumous elegy to shared pleasure in the form of a letter a man writes to his recently deceased lover. Eroticism appears not simply as a therapy for the body, but as a quest for otherness, as well as an instrument of knowledge. Yet it is at the same time damaging, as the now isolated narrative voice remembers, through its counting of the numerous wounds inflicted, awaited, and received. It is also associated with an attempted suicide, and the last wound it leaves in the void created by the disappearance of the lover is unhealable.

As an Orientalist editor, Étiemble's role in diffusing a refined eroticism, as opposed to "an Occidental sexual barbarity," in France was on the one hand the result of a humanist concern with transcending cultural specificities (culminating even in the idea of an anti-religion of eroticism as a means of accessing the cosmic order), and on the other hand a view of Sinology as a way of purifying eroticism through a renewal of its overfreighted lexicon, leading to the project of constituting a universal treasure of the fundamental images of love.

Defining eroticism as the physical act of love, Étiemble recommends reading texts such as the *Kama Sutra* in order to free eroticism from the pornographic industry. Refusing at the same time "the metaphysical obscenity of Georges Bataille," he shows that his views on eroticism are not immune to moralism, castigating transgressions as deviances and perversions aimed at

“satisfying strange and sad errors in human behavior: incest, bestiality and sadism.”

### Biography

René Étiemble was born January 26, 1909, in Mayenne, France, and obtained his baccalaureate degree at the Lycée de Laval before attending the Lycée Louis-le-Grand and later L'École Normale Supérieure (1929–32) in Paris. After completing his Agrégation in grammar (1932), he studied Chinese at the School of Eastern Languages, where he founded an association in support of Mao Zedong (1934) and joined the Thiers Foundation (1933–36), where he took part in the movements of writers against fascism. Invited to the Writer's Congress in Moscow, 1934, he met Yassu Gauclère, who was to become his first wife.

*L'Enfant de cœur*, his first novel, was published in 1937 by Gallimard. The same year, he was invited to teach at the University of Chicago, where he lectured until 1943 before joining the Office of War Information in New York. He then taught in Egypt at the University of Alexandria, where he founded the literary review *Valeurs* in 1945. Back in France in 1948, he continued publishing articles of literary criticism in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* and also in *Les Temps Modernes*. He received the Prix Sainte-Beuve in 1952. The same year, he had a disagreement with Sartre and also presented his doctoral thesis on *The Myth of Rimbaud*. He was elected professor of comparative literature at the Sorbonne in 1955, a post he would occupy until 1978. He published an anthology of the French novelists of the eighteenth century in the series *La Pléiade* and founded in 1956 (also through Gallimard) the collection *Connaissance de l'Orient*, which was supported by UNESCO and devoted to the promotion of non-European cultures.

His novel *Blason d'un corps* (1961) met with some scandal, whereas his essay on the decline of the French language, *Parlez-vous français?* (1964) earned him fame. He married Jeannine Kohn in 1963. Amongst his many and varied fields of interest, Chinese civilization was one of the most enduring, alongside his struggles against prejudice and racism and his major contribution to comparative literature. He died in Vigny (Eure-et-Loir) on January 7, 2002.

DOMINIQUE JEANNEROD

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# EXETER BOOK RIDDLES, THE

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The author(s) and compilers of the Exeter Book will never be definitively known, but it is possible to hazard opinions about the nature and period of its composition. The manuscript was donated to the library of Exeter Cathedral (where it still remains) by Leofric, the first Bishop of Exeter, who died in 1072. Most scholars are generally agreed that some of the poetry and riddles could date back to the eighth century, although most of the work contained in the Exeter Book suggests a composition date of around 975. The Exeter Book comprises some of the most important poems written in Anglo-Saxon that survive from the period: "Christ," "The Seafarer," "The Wanderer," "Deor," "Juliana," "The Phoenix," "Widsith," "The Whale," "Wulf and Eadwager," "The Husband's Message," and "The Wife's Complaint," together with a collection of Anglo-Saxon riddles. It is these riddles, particularly those classified as "obscene" by some editors, that prove most interesting in terms of the erotic.

It could be argued that riddles by their very nature are erotic works of literature. Constantly offering readers, by definition, alternative and unsettled answers, riddles flirtatiously defer their own meanings, leaving the imagination to propose its own solution. The small number of so-called obscene riddles to be found in the manuscript are far from subtle in their use of double entendres, but the fact remains that many editors of the Exeter Book are at pains to reproduce more salubrious meanings or answers to them. The Exeter Book does pose problems for the modern reader not only because of the general difficulties of reading the original Anglo-Saxon, but also because of the specific and precise nature of the language in

which the riddles were composed. No modern translation can offer readers the same suggestiveness, the same clues to the riddles' answers in an identical manner to those offered in the original. The difficulties are greatly increased by the need to make the riddles both soluble and enigmatic, something that cannot always be achieved. Any translator of Riddle 77 (answers: churn / a woman / sexual intercourse) must face the difficulty of making the riddle suggestive enough to allow its secondary meaning to be apparent while acknowledging that "churn" in Anglo-Saxon is *cyren*, a feminine noun. The translator therefore has to face the difficulty that "she" is too obvious, and "it" is so misleading it might leave the answer far too obscured.

In an attempt to defer some of the more eroticized elements of these riddles, some editors have even gone so far as to suggest that the solution of the riddle is not even the chief purpose of the genre. Riddle 74, for example, has the answers "onion" and "penis," depending on how prudish the reader might or might not be. The fact that both of these answers can be argued points to the presence of a subtler humor in Anglo-Saxon literature than some might suppose. The riddle that produces such diverse answers is able to do so only through the cleverly ambiguous nature of its phraseology. With the opening words "I am a wonderful thing, a joy to women," and references to "I stand up high and steep over the bed," "She seizes me, red, plunders my head," and a conclusion that is translatable as "Wet is that eye," the answer "penis" might appear fairly sure, but in frustrating the reader's certainty over the solution, the riddle itself acts as an eroticized form.

Like all riddles, those found in the Exeter Book function upon the principle of metaphor and resemblance. Part of the process of reading them depends upon a certain willingness to be open to the “calculated deception” of the form. This “deception” is evident in the continual plausibility of the alternative sexual meaning that works in parallel to the more acceptable answer. Riddle 79, for example, reads:

I am hard and sharp, strong in entering,  
bold in coming out, good and true to my lord.  
I go in underneath and myself open up  
the proper way. The warrior is in haste  
who pushes me from behind a hero with his dress.  
Sometimes he draws me out, hot from the hole.  
Sometimes I go back in the narrow place—  
I know not where. A southern man  
drives me hard. Say what my name is.

The tame answer is a gimlet or poker; the obscene answer is obvious. As a riddle, however, the piece functions on three levels. First, it is a description of the functional object it claims to have as its answer—the poker. On a secondary level it is also simultaneously the description of the penis that provides its alternative answer. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, it is a piece that reflects back upon the reader something of his or her own assumptions about the description. In other words, part of the interest within these riddles must depend upon which of the two answers one reaches first. In this respect the riddles that deal with sex or the genitals are not innocent at all because the meaning is often all too clear from very early on. Riddle 75 supposedly offers the possibility of “key” as one answer, but the answer of penis or cock is apparent from the opening few words, “splendidly it hangs by a man’s thigh.” These pieces, in which the sexual imagery is crude and the riddle’s only purpose is to be indecent, fail because

they deny the erotic possibilities that riddles and riddle solving can offer. The more successful riddles sustain the erotic element that is intrinsic to the form.

MARK LLEWELLYN

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# EXOTICISM

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The near homophony of *exoticism* and *eroticism* has often led to a conflation of the two terms, with this purported synonymy fueled by the nineteenth-century idea, popularized by Sigmund Freud, that sexuality itself is somehow “exotic.” Moreover, there is a tendency to classify certain erotic practices (regardless of the geographical location in which they take place or from which they originate) as “exotic,” a categorization epitomized by the adoption of the French adjective *Exotique* for the title of a well-known 1950s American fetish magazine. Etymologically, however, the words remain entirely distinct. Exoticism is a highly complex term, describing processes that range from the domestication of radical difference (geographical, cultural, sexual, or otherwise) to the attempted perpetuation of this difference in contrast to the context in which it is represented or into which it is received (see Célestin 1996, Forsdick 2001, Moura 1998). The principal commentator on the exotic, the early-twentieth-century French traveler and author Victor Segalen, describes “sexual exoticism” in his *Essay on Exoticism* (1904–18) but uses this phrase to highlight the differences between the sexes and to avoid the overt eroticization of the exotic implicit in the work of his contemporaries, such as Pierre Loti and Pierre Louÿs. Segalen’s own novels, in particular *Les Immémoriaux* (1907, set in Tahiti) and *René Leys* (1922, set in Beijing), point nevertheless to the central role played by exoticism in erotic literature: i.e., the imaginary potential of “elsewhere”—and its often stereotyped inhabitants—to provide an outlet for a range of sexual desires, fears, and fantasies repressed or carefully policed at home (see Gay 1984).

Any exploration of this close kinship of the exotic and the erotic fully begins with a consideration of travel and colonial expansion, two practices whose often sexual motives are regularly occluded (see Gill 1995, Hyam 1990, Littlewood 2001, Stewart 2000). Travel to cultures deemed exotic takes individuals from their

everyday surroundings, allowing escape not only from the social and moral codes of home, but also from its moral absolutes. Moreover, the practical circumstances of travel often provide a context and opportunity for sexual encounters—the hermetic environment of various means of transport provides a common frame for works of erotic literature (e.g., *Pleasure Bound: Afloat and Ashore*, 1908, 1909), just as detached encounters with a series of strangers allow sequential, varied, and instructive contact with a range of sexual partners and practices (e.g., the *Emmanuelle* series).

Exotico-erotic literature, relating a range of different journeys and experiences abroad, took a variety of forms: conventional novels and travel narratives were supplemented by alternative tourist guide books (e.g., *The Pretty Women of Paris, Being a Complete Directory or Guide to Pleasure for Visitors to the Gay City*, 1883) and a number of foreign sex manuals, as well as other translated texts that disseminated common perceptions of the inherent eroticism of the East (e.g. Sheikh Nefzaoui’s *The Perfumed Garden*, Li Yu’s *The Carnal Prayer Mat*, and the *Kama Sutra*). By the late nineteenth century, translation of Eastern erotica had also become a major contribution to the genre, especially in Britain and France, where fake translations of exotic works, provided with the trappings of scholarly authenticity, were common and very popular.

In erotic literature, an exotic decor is often seen as little more than a scene-setting device to permit the display of sexual activity (see Marcus 1966)—e.g., the anonymous *Pleasures of Cruelty* (c. 1880) is set in Turkey, but contains no Turkish characters and very few references to the country in which its action takes place. However, it must be recognized that the use of radically different cultures in erotic literature is often part of wider, preestablished processes of representation, appropriation, and domestication of hazily defined geographical areas such as the

Orient (see Said 1979; Schick 1999). Spaces such as the harem, public baths, and the slave market, characters such as the eunuch or concubine, or practices such as polygamy and bestiality are more than tropes or themes of erotic literature: they are aspects central to any exploration of the ways in which Europe has understood, represented, and controlled other cultures. Elsewhere is customarily sexualized as much as sex itself is exoticized. Regions viewed by Western readers as both exotic and marginal are presented as deregulated spaces in which travelers can behave, often in active sex tourism, in ways that would be deemed inappropriate at home (e.g., *Venus in India, or Love Adventures in Hindustan*, 1889). Consequently, it is frequently difficult to distinguish between fictional erotic literature and travel writing, as Western travelers have tended actively to identify other geographical areas in terms of their inhabitants' sexual behavior (see *Flaubert in Egypt*, 1972). Male travelers, for instance, experience the extraordinary sexual techniques of Oriental women, but exotic locales also allow women and gay travelers an erotic license that would be prohibited at home (e.g., *The Adventures of Lady Harpur*, 1894).

Such association of exoticism and eroticism creates an ethno-erotic literature of passive voyeurism in which the geographical margin serves not only as a space where the indigenous population behaves in a way that would be deemed grotesque at home (accordingly marking off the accepted borders of civility), but also where (often naive) women travelers are subjected to the attentions of lascivious indigenous males (e.g. *The Lustful Turk*, 1828, a clear illustration of the fantasies of "white slavery"). Accordingly, fear is complemented by both fantasy and vicarious pleasure, as sexual practices undesirable at home are projected onto the inhabitants of other countries. Islam, for instance, characterized by polygamy and divorce, is commonly presented as a sensual religion, with its male adherents granted unbounded sexual license, while its women are portrayed as both submissive and yet sexually ravenous.

The geographical evolution of erotic literature's exotic themes reflects to some extent travel literature's interest in shifting tropological zones. Seventeenth-century interest in the Ottoman seraglio gave way to an Enlightenment focus on Polynesia (see Porter 1990); and the

nineteenth-century interest in what was perceived as Parisian permissiveness has been replaced, as global diversity (and with it exoticism) is seen to decline, by sexual encounters with aliens (see Heldreth 1986). There remain, however, recurrent locations with privileged status, principal of which is the harem (see Grosrichard 1979, Huart and Tazi 1980, Pucci 1990). For example, *A Night in a Moorish Harem* (c. 1902) describes a night spent in a Moroccan harem by the shipwrecked protagonist with nine concubines of different nationalities. The harem becomes an erotic utopia whose international inhabitants possess exaggerated sexual desires and where sexual encounters are both plural and sequential, seemingly always different yet in reality always the same. In tending to repeat these exotic motifs and stereotypes, such literature becomes a self-sufficient and self-referential archive that ultimately says much more about the European erotic imagination than the countries it purports to represent.

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## FABERT, GUILLAUME

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c. 1940–  
French author

### *Autoportrait en érection*

Contrary to what is stated in its subtitle, *Autoportrait en érection* [*An Erectile Self-Portrait*] (1989) is not really a novel. Of course, the way Fabert Guillaume (a pseudonym) narrates his various sexual adventures produces a coherent whole, but the work's genre leans more toward a peculiar form of thematic autobiography or that of the practical handbook. Gifted with a tongue-in-cheek humor and well served by a style both ornamented and precise, yet never stilted or vulgar, Fabert addresses in more or less chronological order each and every element that constitutes the spectrum of his past and present sexuality.

Having drawn up in a pseudo-objective tone the “specification sheet” of his penis (length, shape, peculiarities, pros and cons, etc.) in the first chapter (“On Vanity”), Fabert then describes his sexual awakening, the first wet dream he had at the age of fourteen, as well as the education

he received from his mother, who was a relatively liberated woman for her time. Although she had but good intentions regarding sexuality, she also passed down two deep-rooted prejudices: the penis is repulsive, while the female body is beautiful in all its parts (which includes the genitals, adds Fabert). He then writes that his experience proved both to be inaccurate. Hence, from the age of eighteen, he considers his penis to be a genuine object of beauty, while he must admit he first thought the whole artistic tradition, including Praxiteles and Ronsard, had lied about the ambiguous charms of female genitals. Fortunately, he writes, he has come to appreciate a number of nuances over the years.

To ensure an efficient coverage of the multifaceted sexual life he shared with exactly 20 female partners, among whom 6 were profoundly loved and cherished, Fabert proceeds to a thematic classification. Thus, every brief chapter of the book either gives an account of a specific sexual practice or position (whether he fancies it or not), addresses more abstract emotional concepts directly related to the sexual act, or narrates a unique moment of his early experience with sex (“On Juvenile Flirting”).

Although he began his exploration of the female body with the mouth (“On Kissing”), he soon discovered that neither hard work nor virtuosity would change the fact that kissing alone rarely causes overwhelming sensations. But since a passionate kiss often announces something far more fulfilling, he always complies with this compulsory ritual. In the chapter entitled “On Gymnastics,” Fabert passes in review various key positions, some comfortable, some precarious, reminding the reader that Casanova claimed he once did it through the grating of a convent parlor. First, in spite of all disadvantages of the “missionary” position (an “archaic curiosity”), he must admit that this basic position cannot be totally dismissed. Fortunately, thanks to innovative partners, he gradually discovered some creative variations, one of them involving a solid table and the woman’s legs pointing upward. Of course, he says, this position prevents any embrace, which is unfortunate for the emotional reasons. Fabert also likes the “Amazon” position, especially when he feels like letting his partner do most of the work, and the “69,” as long as it remains but an “hors-d’œuvre.” Yet, the position he describes with the most details and wit, thus clearly showing his preference for the female buttocks, is the “dorsal-ventral,” commonly known as “doggy-style,” along with its almost infinite variations, including sodomy, which he discovered by accident during a passionate teenage relationship. Finally, he provides a handbook for those interested in achieving an all-too-seldom perfect fellatio, and later confesses his penchant for onanism, which he practices solely out of pleasure, never as a substitute.

In other chapters Fabert instead focuses on emotional “side effects” of sexuality. For example, he evokes with humor the frustration he suffered as a young man desperately trying to become a lover without any theoretical knowledge, normally gained by reading erotic literature, or imagination. In order to prevent the mutual disappointment inevitably caused by such ignorance, he coyly concludes by saying that “one never reads enough.” He also addresses the complex notion of desire, which can fade away as fast as it grows for reasons sometimes unrelated to physical attraction, as well as the importance of natural lubrication,

which indicates the partner’s pleasure level, and the power of the female orgasm. Regarding the male climax, Fabert makes a clear distinction between ejaculation and orgasm (*jouissance*). While far too many ejaculations fail to fulfill one’s expectations, he claims the orgasm is the exception everybody longs for. Accordingly, the most powerful orgasm he ever experienced remained a unique moment, yet still very vivid in his memory. Fabert does not, however, consider himself to be a Don Juan, whose goal is to collect sex affairs in a catalogue of female conquests. On the contrary, he rather sees himself as a gourmet lover who finds pleasure in a patiently elaborated sex ritual, in which gentleness, spontaneity, complicity, and authoritarianism are tightly intermingled.

*Autoportrait en érection* is a witty and enjoyable account of the sexual experiences of a middle-aged male heterosexual from the Parisian bourgeois class, fully aware of his (constructed) macho attitude. Perhaps that is why Fabert concludes his self-portrait with an apology to all women, especially his former partners, reminding them that he is only human.

### Biography

Given that *Autoportrait en érection* was written under a pseudonym, there is little to say about Guillaume Fabert or, at least, about the person who hid behind this name. But since he thinks that every autobiography, even a fictive one, must begin with a portrait of the hero, Fabert dedicates a paragraph to a factual, almost medical depiction of his anatomy. In this straightforward presentation, whose apparent sincerity might recall the opening pages of Michel Leiris’s *L’âge d’homme* [*Manhood*], one learns that the book is the story of a forty-four-year-old European man who is 1.80 meters tall (5’11”) and weighs 83 kilos (183 pounds). Fabert also tells of the banality of his face, the heaviness of his jaw, and the catastrophic look of his teeth, all of which do not prevent him from being perceived as virile by women. But as the book’s title suggests, the only thing that really matters to him in *Autoportrait en érection* is his penis: “My penis constitutes, without any doubt, the most magnificent part of my anatomy.”

SÉBASTIEN CÔTÉ

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## FABLIAUX

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Fabliaux (pronounced “fabli-ōz”) are short comic narratives composed between the late twelfth and mid-fourteenth centuries. Although related to the fable (*fabulellum* [“little narrative”], diminutive of the Latin *fabula*), the fabliau (singular, pronounced “fabli-ō”) also owes much to other narrative forms—the exemplum, the lay, the *dit*, and even romance. Some fabliaux are known in English (e.g., *Dame Sirith*, a number of Chaucer’s *Canterbury Tales*), and others influenced later writers such as Boccaccio; but this is principally a northern French tradition. Authors of certain fabliaux are well-known figures of French medieval literature—Jean Bodel, Rutebeuf, Jean de Condé—but for most we have just a name or an alias (Garin, Courtebarbe, Haiseau), or not even that. Equally, it is rarely possible to assign a precise date to a particular fabliau. The authors of fabliaux took much subject matter from the oral culture dominant in early medieval Europe, and they would have expected their stories to be reworked, performed, and/or read aloud. It could be argued that it is the centrality of this oral culture to the fabliau tradition that makes these texts so lively. Fabliaux tend to be short, usually comprising just a few hundred lines. Although there are a number of texts which lack any great literary merit, others are surprisingly sophisticated, subtly developing their theme and tone. But all share a common goal: to make the audience laugh.

It is generally acknowledged today that these tales—of which there are about 150 conserved in some 40 manuscripts—were destined for the same audience which enjoyed courtly literature. Composed in the vernacular and in octosyllabic rhyming couplets, these often bawdy tales are the product of an increasingly important urban society and frequently contain what first appears

to be a moral teaching. However, this, as does every other aspect of the genre, needs to be taken with a huge pinch of salt, for the fabliaux subvert reality and depict, often hilariously, the world turned upside-down. So, the “moral” or “example” at the end of a fabliau is almost always ironic, cynical, or irreverent. The *dramatis personae* is fairly broad: townsfolk, clerks, widows, peasants, priests, monks, farmers, thugs, rich and poor middle classes, wandering knights, thieves. In addition to this, the down-to-earth situations (gambling, begging, buying and selling, the conjugal and extraconjugal bed, solving disputes, practical jokes) and the variety of locales (farms, shops, streets, mills, towns and villages, taverns) have led some scholars to see in the fabliaux a reflection of the real world; but however tempting this may be, it is vital to bear in mind that a mirror distorts and that all is not as it first appears in the fabliau world.

The classic fabliau scenario is that of the duper duped. There is always a victim—frequently a priest or a peasant or a cuckolded husband—and the plots often depend on misunderstandings and lively dialogue. The language can be coarse and the action vulgar, cruel, and tasteless. Grotesque sexual intrigue abounds, but it could be argued that there is little that is truly “erotic” here if the term is understood to mean “titillating”: the reader encounters often obscene descriptions of sexuality, but these are almost always designed to stimulate laughter, not arousal. In defying the linguistic etiquette of courtly literature, and in their regular and explicit descriptions of sexual desire, the fabliaux both parody and subvert courtly conventions. In particular, the devious, nagging, and lecherous women of the fabliaux offer a vivid contrast to their idealized portrayal in courtly texts. The role



## FABLIAUX

of fabliaux women has given rise to much scholarly debate on the anitfeminism of the genre; nevertheless, it must be noted that female characters, although physically abused and depicted as unscrupulous and sexually voracious, often end up on top (both metaphorically and physically). What is more, the pure and idealized ladies of courtly texts and the lustful women of the fabliaux are just two sides of the same coin: both portraits—the “realistic” and the “idealized”—reveal to some degree an obsession with eroticism.

The eroticism of the fabliaux is generally hedonistic and uncomplicated. Fabliau sex has almost always been viewed by scholars as “normal,” excluding practices such as sodomy, incest, fellatio, and homosexuality. Indeed, R. Howard Bloch, in the “postface” to Rossi’s *Fabliaux érotiques*, notes that even the sexual positions of the fabliaux comply with the rules imposed by the Church (any position other than the missionary being proscribed). However, this view has recently been challenged by Brian J. Levy (“Le Dernier tabou?”), who identifies a number of descriptions of sexual activity which is clearly *contra naturam*. Furthermore, although descriptions of genitals, libido, and desire can be extremely detailed, the sex act itself tends to be passed over quickly, often in a matter of only a line or two. There are, of course, exceptions (such as *L’Esquiritiel*, see below); but in general, sexual intrigue is more important to authors of fabliaux than detailed descriptions of coitus. This has led Philippe Ménard (*Fabliaux français*, p. 69) to question to what extent the fabliaux can be labeled “erotic” at all: “If the sexual pleasure of the lovers seems so ‘normal’ that it defies prolonged description, where is the eroticism to be found?”

The best way to get a flavor of the fabliaux is to read one or two of the stories they tell. *Les quatre souhaits saint Martin* [*Saint Martin’s Four Wishes*] is the story of a peasant who is granted four wishes by Saint Martin. The peasant’s overbearing wife manages to persuade him to grant her the first wish, and she wishes for the peasant’s body to be covered in penises, for his small member has never been able fully to satisfy her. Taken aback to find himself covered in genitals, he uses the second wish to return the compliment, and so his wife finds her body covered with vaginas. Realizing that they have wasted two wishes, the couple agree to wish for

all of these genitals to disappear, intending to use the fourth wish to make themselves rich. However, removing all of the genitals in the third wish caused even the original genitals to vanish—so, the fourth wish simply restores them to their former state. The moral is not to trust your wife.

In *La borgoise d’Orliens* [*The Wife of Orleans*], a husband, suspecting his wife of adultery with an itinerant clerk-entertainer, hatches a plot to catch her *in flagrante delicto*. He pretends that he has to travel away on business and then takes the place of the lover at the couple’s nocturnal rendezvous; but his wife recognizes him and plans to deceive him. Calling him “my lover,” she locks him in a room, promising to release him and take him into her bed when the household is asleep. She then returns to the rendezvous point and meets her real lover. After having sex with the clerk, she signals to the household that she has managed to lock “that clerk who keeps bothering me” in a room, and offers a reward to those who will teach him a lesson. And so the husband, mistaken for the wife’s lover, is badly beaten with clubs and bludgeons and is thrown out of the house. His wife enjoys a night with her lover, and the husband returns the following day in a pitiful state but happy, having been duped into believing that he has a faithful wife.

In *La saineresse* [*The Leech-Woman*], a husband who boasts that he can never be cuckolded is taught a lesson by his wife: she has herself bled in private by her lover disguised as a woman. Once alone they waste no time in having passionate sex, and she then recounts all, in detailed but flowery euphemisms, to her stupid husband; the latter believes that her words—“I have been bent over this way and that,” “I have been treated by a delicious ointment which the healer kept in a small sack and applied with a tube”—describe a medical treatment.

*La damoisele qui ne pooit oïr parler de foutre* [*The Girl Who Could Not Bear to Hear About Fucking*] tells of a girl who is duped into having sex with a man who pretends to be equally prudish and to have the same linguistic qualms as she. Using metaphors to describe their genitals, the man succeeds in “watering his colt at the fountain.” Similarly, in *L’Esquiritiel* [*The Squirrel*], a half-witted girl is told by her mother never to say the name of the thing men have between their legs. A man who overhears this presents

the girl with his erect penis, calling it a squirrel which has just laid two eggs. It is hungry and, luckily, the girl has just eaten a handful of nuts: by inserting it into her vagina the squirrel can feed on the nuts in her stomach.

*Le Prestre ki abevete* [*The Priest Who Spied*] tells of a peasant whose beautiful wife has a priest for her lover. One day the priest decides to pay her a visit but finds the peasant sitting at dinner with his wife. The priest spies through a hole in the locked door and yells: "What are you good people doing?" When the peasant replies, "We are eating," the priest calls him a liar: "It seems to me that you are fucking!" The peasant swaps places with the priest, suspecting a trick: he wants to see for himself. Once inside the house, the priest locks the door and immediately begins having sex with the peasant's wife. The peasant peeks through the hole in the door and accuses the priest of screwing his wife; but the priest insists that he is eating, and the peasant believes him. The moral is that one hole satisfies many fools.

Not all fabliaux deal with sex, but a mere glance at some of the titles shows how popular the subject is for their authors: *Le chevalier qui fist parler les cons* [*The Knight Who Made Cunts Speak*], *Cele qui se fist foutre sur la fosse de son mari* [*The Woman Who Was Fucked on Her Husband's Grave*], *Cele qui fu foutue et desfoutue* [*The Woman Who Was Fucked and Unfucked*]; *La Coille noire* [*The Black Bollock*]; *Les putains et les lecheurs* [*The Whores and the Perverts*], *L'Evesque qui beneï le con* [*The Priest Who Blessed the Cunt*], *L'Anel qui faisoit les vis grans et roides* [*The Ring That Made Pricks Big and Stiff*], etc. However, it must be reiterated that these stories are not really meant to arouse, but rather to provoke laughter: the medieval titles seem to make this quite plain. Sex is a fruitful theme for authors wanting to shock, to depict a reverse image of what is acceptable, or to mock contemporary attitudes of various parts of society.

A number of fabliaux give brilliant vignettes offering ironic and sophisticated commentary on some aspect of contemporary life; others are little more than extended (and not universally subtle or successful) puns. Black humor abounds: there is violence, sex, adultery, scatology, illness, death, unjust punishment, and humiliation. The general coarseness and "low" style of the fabliaux led early scholars, in particular Joseph

Bédier, to believe that these texts were intended for the lower, urban classes. But in manuscripts, the fabliaux are found copied alongside poems of courtly love; and indeed, the literary tradition of *fin'amor* can be considered a faithful reflection of the coarse fabliaux, if once again it is remembered that reflections distort. Most scholars today follow Per Nykrog, to some degree at least, in viewing the fabliaux as another string in the minstrel's bow and a testament to the (naturally) varied tastes of an audience of nobles and/or middle-class townsfolk. It is also generally agreed that along with the smutty and not always very funny extended jokes, the corpus of fabliaux offers some of the very best examples of storytelling in Old French literature.

ADRIAN TUDOR

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## FÁBULAS FUTROSÓFICAS, O LA FILOSOFÍA DE VENUS EN FÁBULAS

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*Fábulas futrosóficas, o la filosofía de Venus en fábulas* is the title of a collection of anonymous poems published by an unnamed compiler and printed, according to the title page, in London in 1821. Whereas the date has not been questioned, it is commonly supposed that the original slim volume of 40 poems was printed in the south of France, possibly in Bordeaux, though no detailed typographical analysis has been carried out to support this claim. A subsequent edition,

dated 1824, adds a sonnet and an "Oda a Priapo" to the original 40 fables. The date of composition could be as early as the 1780s–90s to judge by references in the footnotes and the preliminary listing of moral lessons. The original compiler implies they are by a single poet, and the editors of the 1984 limited edition (*Dos arcades futrosóficos y un libertino a la violeta*) propose the authorship of Leandro Fernández de Moratín, though adducing no stylistic or

ideological support for their claim, and Moratín scholars have not supported his authorship. The attribution to Moratín had previously been proposed by Camilo José Cela in 1974, dismissing the manuscript attribution to the more credible Bartolomé José Gallardo added to his copy of the 1821 edition. Moratín's authorship is acquiesced in by Cerezo, while admitting the absence of hard evidence.

As was common with nearly all Spanish texts of an erotic nature in the period up to the mid-nineteenth century, the volume was condemned by the Church; an edict of the Cardinal Archbishop of Toledo prohibited the work in 1827, and it was included in Carbonero's subsequent *Índice de libros prohibidos* (1873), even though the Spanish Inquisition had been officially abolished in 1834. Because of the rarity of copies of the original editions and the limited circulation of the 1984 printing, the poems have not attracted the attention of literary critics, in spite of their interest for the history of ideas and in particular late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-century views of sexuality.

The 40 compositions in the 1821 edition (to which all subsequent references will be made) form a curious grouping. Like many eighteenth-century fable series, most of the poems concern animals, though 6 mix animals and humans, and 9 deal with humans alone. More curious is the fact that one composition features two satyrs, another animals and Priapus, and the two most curious poems contain, respectively, dialogues between the male and female sexual organs, and between "sarna" (scurvy) and "gálico" (sexually transmitted disease). The array of animal protagonists is wide (numbers in parentheses indicate the number of the poem): cats (2 and 16), monkeys (3, 19, and 29), foxes (4 and 22), dogs (5, 8, 14, 21, and 23), lions (5, 10, and 16), hares (6), sparrows (11), donkeys (13, 16, and 25), mice (15), horses (17), chickens (18), wolves (20), deer (26), pigs (28), flies (32), and cows (40). Sometimes the reasons for choosing the particular animal seem to correspond to popular characterizations of their behavior, usually from a sexual perspective. In some poems the portrayal of the animals suggests they are merely humans in disguise, while in others the comparison between human and animal behavior is consistently suggested. One poem (5) might be interpreted as portraying animals as representatives of ecclesiastical figures, in an obvious

suggestion of satire. However, the author is adept at creating ambiguity in this respect.

The sense of the poems forming a collection is not easy to determine. The first poem invokes Venus and seems prefatory in intent, yet though the label of "fables" is given the collection as a whole, some compositions (e.g., 24) do not emphasize a moralizing or didactic purpose, and some concerning humans relate to the other poems only because of the prevailing exploration of sexuality. Yet, notwithstanding the predominant sexual themes, the poems are not erotically provocative. They explore sexuality, pointing at hypocrisy or anomalies of behavior, but the aim seems not to arouse, and the assertion of a *philosophical* standpoint, underlined in the title, is uppermost. One notable incongruity derives from the preliminary listing of moral lessons, ostensibly illustrated by the individual poems. Some hardly seem to relate to the composition indicated, suggesting that they might have been added by another hand, possibly the anonymous editor's. This is especially striking when the poem itself ends with an explicit moral that diverges somewhat from the one stated earlier.

If the preliminary list of moral points provides one, albeit dubious, framing device, another derives from footnotes to individual poems, which sometimes take the form of editorial clarifications of intellectual points. So the first poem refers to the Spanish Academy Dictionary's inclusions and exclusions of sexual vocabulary. Another (12) provides the Latin original of an allusion to Martial. A note to poem 19 claims that a reference to what might be a clitoris or penis in a monkey refers to a recent scientific finding. Another (20), underlining the scientific context of many of the poems, refers, somewhat oddly, to articles in the defunct periodical *El corresponsal del censor* (1786–8), which dealt with the consumption of fish and the influence of the physical on the moral realms. Yet another (38) touches on the varied explanations of the geographical origins of sexually transmitted diseases.

As to poetic forms, 22 of the compositions prefer rhyme, with assonance for the remainder. Long (hendecasyllabic) lines are used in 14 poems, the usual alternative heptasyllabic form in 10, a mixture of both in another 6, while the remainder comprise octosyllables (8 poems) and hexasyllables (3 poems). The choices are characteristic of Spanish eighteenth-century

## FAIRY TALES AND EROTICISM

neoclassical poetry. After making a point concerning the avoidance of earthy language in the first poem, the remainder show no reticence about vulgar terminology for sexual descriptions; yet *joder* (to fuck) appears in only 9 poems, and *carajo* (prick) in 11. As is usual in works that adopt a contemporary popular style, a range of figurative phrases for sexual behavior, often euphemistic, is employed, introducing changes of register and thus variety and interest. Language is direct and clear, avoiding obscurity of metaphor, as is customary in neoclassical poetic expression in Spain.

In contrast to the sexually related fables of Félix María Samaniego, the author of the *Fábulas futrosóficas* shows less concern to entertain as storyteller. The story element, which forms the focus of each poem, is not conveyed with the concision and refined feeling for suspense or structure which Samaniego exhibits; the author prefers instead to provoke in the reader a questioning of moral positions or links between biological and material phenomena, or sometimes the relation between the moral and the physical. And though the initial list of moral points sometimes seems to be assertive and dogmatic, the poems themselves frequently leave issues in the air and even explicitly ask the reader to draw conclusions.

The range of thematic concerns is wide: the human wish to regulate sexual behavior contrasted with the apparent anarchy of natural impulses; the contrast between male and female attitudes to sex, both in its physical aspects (impotence, uncertainty as to parenthood) and in its moral ones (possessiveness, jealousy); differences

between animal and human perspectives (sexual availability); the material, physical component of desire and the contribution of mental and cultural conditioning; the role of prejudice (“the prohibited attracts”) in sexual behavior; the irrational in sexual relationships; varieties of sexual practice (masturbation, castration); aspects of the sexual organs (size, anomalies); techniques of seduction; and female devices used to deceive men. When ecclesiastics figure in the poems, they are invariably portrayed as officially wishing to repress sexual behavior while negating their own advice in practice. While some of the concerns illustrated—for instance, ecclesiastical repression and social privilege—seem characteristic of the moment of composition, other issues seem modern, prefiguring subsequent debates on the differences between the sexes, inherited and learned characteristics, and the nature of the relation between the mental and the physical.

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# FAIRY TALES AND EROTICISM

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At first sight, the association of fairy tales with eroticism might seem surprising and somewhat puzzling. As a genre, fairy tales are considered to be aimed mostly at children, while eroticism in general, and erotic literature in particular, would be more appropriately characterized as a typically

adult genre. Yet, because of their formulaic nature and of the stereotypes they convey, fairy tales have been constantly rewritten, in different modes and registers, for adults and for children, in naive (or pseudo-naive), or erotic texts.

Many literary fairy tale rewritings in the erotic mode can be characterized by two complementary tendencies. Some erotic fairy tales aim at denouncing the naively simplistic world of the fairy tale by reinscribing sexuality within the fairy tale genre (see, for example, Jean-Pierre Enard's *Contes à faire rougir les petits chaperons* [*Tales to Make Little Red Riding Hoods Blush*], 1987). Other recent fairy tale rewritings aim not only at denouncing the stereotypically asexual and artificially cleansed world of traditional fairy tales, but also at critiquing their (implicit) sexual and (explicit) gender ideology. In this instance, the presence of sexual motifs serves as a subversion of conventional marital closures and their consequent compulsory felicity, and of the double principle on which such an ideology is based: female passivity and male agency. These erotic fairy tales thus rephrase the mandatory inscription of sexual practices in fixed and predictable gender roles by refusing to abide by the exclusive recognition of heterosexuality as the sole ideological and narrative contract.

In erotic rewritings, some fairy tales and heroines have led to a more vibrant, and erotically charged, corpus than others. Among the most popular heroines, one who is famous for her 100-year sleep has struck the imagination of many writers. Denounced as the very negation of female agency by many critics (including Simone de Beauvoir), Sleeping Beauty was finally brought back to life in a famous trilogy: *The Claiming of Sleeping Beauty*, *Beauty's Punishment*, and *Beauty's Release* (1983–1985, reprinted 1990). First presented as having been written by an unknown “A.N. Roquelaure,” the trilogy was then revealed to be the work of popular novelist Anne Rice. As the editorial paratext suggests, this trilogy, written as a “hypnotic and seductive adult fairy tale” beckons the reader “into a sensuous world of forbidden dreams and dark-edged desires.” The *Beauty* trilogy thus expands the wanderings of the formerly passive heroine, taking her, and the reader, into an erotic underworld. Acting as a foil to sugary renditions of fairy tales cleansed of all desire other than that of being overtly romantic, the trilogy aims at giving an explicit account of various impulses (dominance and submission), as well as sexual orientation and practices.

Edited collections of erotic fairy tales prefer to rewrite not one but various stories from our childhood and to allow popular heroes and

heroines to enter a new world of erotic adventures. Acknowledging that “everywhere we turn in fairyland, the libido is running rampant,” Michael Ford asked male writers to rewrite old stories in his collection of erotic fairy tales, *Happily Ever After: Erotic Fairy Tales for Men* (1996, p. 2). In this edited volume, 28 fairy tales are revisited within the context of sexual orientation, gay identity, and queer politics—among others, *Pinocchio* (Bruce Benderson), *The Three Bears* (Michael Lassell), and *Jack and the Beanstalk* (William J. Mann), as well as the inevitable *Beauty and the Beast* (Thomas Roche).

While the practice of erotic rewritings of fairy tales as a critique of ideological and literary practices (as opposed to the mere presence of sexual motifs in earlier versions) seems to be a rather contemporary phenomenon, such a practice in fact goes back to the very origin of the literary fairy tale, and to an important ideological turning point, a time when religious, philosophical, and literary practices came under heavy attack: the Enlightenment. Following the translation of erotically charged oriental tales, *The Arabian Nights*, into French by Antoine Galland (*Les Mille et une nuits*, 12 vols, 1704–1717), many writers used the fairy tale to criticize various forms of authority in libertine and erotic fairy tales. Among those many writers, one in particular is remembered today for his libertine novels and tales set in a highly encoded (and whimsical) Orient, which allows him both to describe erotically charged stories about an erotic “other” and to criticize the French legal, literary, and religious establishment: Claude Crébillon (known as Crébillon fils, 1707–1777). One of his oriental fairy tales, *L'Écumoire* [*The Skimming Ladle*] (1734), features among others an enchantment of a rather dubious nature. Instead of a penis, a Prince is endowed with a skimming ladle (hence the title) because he refuses to wait until he is 20 before marrying, and because he fails to have an old woman and a venerable priest swallow the handle of the ladle (which incidentally was immediately interpreted as featuring the *Bulle Unigenitus*, an important religious document).

The erotic and iconoclastic nature of this sexual tale attacking religion caused its author's temporary exile. Crébillon's later production was as erotically charged, though not as polemic. His *Le Sopha* [*The Sofa*] (1742) is the story of a sofa that could enter many boudoirs and later

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tell erotic tales of failed and successful love stories. Such an invisibility employed to titillate voyeuristic readers is also at the center of another marvelous tale, Diderot's *Bijoux indiscrets* [*Indiscreet Jewels*] (1748), in which a bored and curious sultan is given a magical ring which allows him to extract confessions from every woman's "jewel," as "every woman toward whom [he turns] the stone will recount her intrigues in a loud, clear, and intelligible voice. But do not imagine that they shall speak through their mouths" (354). As Michel Foucault was later to postulate in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality* (especially Part IV), Western modern sexuality and its desire less to repress than to know begins with this erotic tale of "enforced confession" and could be considered as a transcription of Diderot's novel and its emblem of the "talking sex" (p. 101). Ironically, this erotic tale of, and by, "Indiscreet Jewels" acts as a foil to so many other universally known and loved traditional fairy tales which, of course, enforce less a desire to know and say than to hide and silence erotic practices.

JEAN MAINIL

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## FAULKNER, WILLIAM

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1897–1962

American novelist

Between 1868 and 1933, the legal standard for obscenity changed in the United States: the 1868 standard, taken from the British case *Queen v. Hicklin*, was "whether the tendency of the matter charged as obscenity is to deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences." The 1933 *Ulysses* case, *U.S. v. One Book called "Ulysses"*, redefined this standard, establishing instead that a text would be obscene if it might "arouse" a "person of average sex instincts." The move from *Hicklin* to *One Book* was the legal expression of a broader cultural sense that the Victorian standards regarding the representation of sexuality

were prudish. During roughly the same period, American literary modernists, like their contemporaries in other parts of the globe, began to write about explicitly sexual topics. In the first few decades of the twentieth century, these authors faced an acute conflict: how might they represent sexuality without also inviting the legal charge of obscenity? William Faulkner, the infamously rude Mississippi modernist, explored the cultural meanings of this problem perhaps more thoroughly than any of his American contemporaries.

Faulkner was interested in illicit forms of sexuality in particular, and indeed, Jean-Paul Sartre described Faulkner's 1925 masterpiece *The Sound and the Fury* as obscene: the action of the novel, he observed, is "under each word,

like an obscene and obstructing presence” (79). Although Faulkner is best known for his literary contribution to American letters, Sartre’s comments about this social aspect of *The Sound and the Fury* might be applied of Faulkner’s work more generally. As even a glancing review of his major novels attests, Faulkner also examined the new freedom to represent sexual themes explicitly. His representations of sexuality, moreover, flirt with the outrageous: for him, it was rape and incest, for example, that most directly conveyed the historical problems in the American South.

Obscenity, it seems, provided Faulkner with a neat figure for the reconsideration of several familiar American tropes in the context of modernism. In his hands, tamer nineteenth-century representations of relations between young white girls and slaves, for example, gave way to explicit accounts of the illicit acts that lead to mixed blood—“miscegenation.” For Faulkner, that is, the representation of obscenity entails a look at the pervasive and paralyzing fear of interracial sex. Over the course of *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), to take the most obvious example of this, it is gradually revealed that the alluring and enigmatic Charles Bon is both part black and part Sutpen. His black, Sutpen blood renders the fact that Bon has been courting Judith Sutpen, his half-sister—doubly transgressive, since he seeks to commit both incest and miscegenation. Bon makes this frequently cited declaration to Judith’s brother Henry: “I’m the nigger that’s going to sleep with your sister.” Henry, whose own ties to Judith are erotically charged, would rather the problem be that Bon and Judith are related. As several critics have argued, the possibility that his sister might engage in interracial sex is more disturbing to Henry than the potential incest, and indeed it is this that leads Henry to shoot Bon. This instance of fratricide emerges in the novel as a futile gesture. Whether or not Judith and Charles consummate their erotic tie, miscegenation—clearly obscene—has already, in the broad historical context of Southern history, transpired. Here as elsewhere in Faulkner, obscenity comes to signify an inevitable deterioration of social life itself. Where social life rests upon clear racial stratification, miscegenation is, as Faulkner’s novel portrays it, devastating.

Although Faulkner is clearly concerned with social issues like miscegenation, he is certainly as

interested in formal experimentation. His representation of obscenity, accordingly, examines both its thematic and formal elements. *The Sound and the Fury* is a case in point. That quintessentially modernist novel depicts the censure of Caddy Compson, a promiscuous young girl who has become pregnant. As punishment for contributing to the ruin of her family’s name, she is banished from the Compson household. In particular, her mother forbids her name from being spoken in the house, and Caddy is also, quite literally, *ob-scene* in *The Sound and the Fury*. That is, she is blocked from the scene—offstage as it were—a dominating character, but one whose force seems to come from the very fact of her absence. Her status outside of narration seems to hinge on her status outside of the social world within the novel, and the empty center she does not quite occupy defines the formal structure of the novel. This structural absence, the novel suggests, is a formal expression of Caddy’s thematic ties with the obscene.

This overlapping of obscene themes with formal structure emerges again and again in Faulkner’s work. All of Faulkner’s representations of sexual young women are marked by an absence that resembles Caddy’s. In *Sanctuary* (1931), for example, Temple Drake is raped with a corn cob. Although this gruesome act is quite clearly at the center of *Sanctuary*’s action, it is also conspicuously absent from the narrative, depicted only obscurely in a moment when “sound and silence” have become “inverted.” Like Caddy, Temple too seems to be an “obscene and obstructing presence.” Lena Grove in *Light in August* (1932) becomes pregnant out of wedlock, and her journey to find the father, who has fled, provides the basis for the story. But the illicit nature of Lena’s seminal act is elided: she speaks only according to the dictates of a respectability she has already conspicuously violated. Miss Rosa in *Absalom, Absalom!*, repetitively blocked by doors throughout the novel, seems a perfect figure for Faulkner’s reader: aware of pervasive illicit activity but not quite able to see it. In Faulkner, then, violations of the social order are shown to entail exclusions.

It should be observed that although Faulkner made frequent use of the concept of obscenity in his work, none of his novels was ever actually deemed obscene by any U.S. court. This might at first seem surprising, given that several tamer novels—James Joyce’s *Ulysses* most



## FAULKNER, WILLIAM

famously—were in fact considered legally obscene during Faulkner's career. But censorship in general is contingent on somewhat random circumstances, including, most obviously, whether or not anyone brings an illicit text to the attention of a court. What this suggests is that a text might well be illicit without being illegal. *Sanctuary*, for example, is indisputably Faulkner's most outrageous novel, and it is arguably one of the more outrageous novels written by anyone in his era. But it was never under the ban. Almost 20 years after the novel was published, it was cited in *Commonwealth v. Gordon* (1949), a Pennsylvania obscenity case. But the charge did not stick, and it was determined that *Sanctuary*, along with a number of novels, including Faulkner's *Wild Palms* (1939) and Erskine Caldwell's *God's Little Acre* (1933), were not obscene.

Faulkner's examination of obscenity is not, therefore, a result of any direct experience with the law. His contributions to American letters, however, must be understood in terms of his explication of prevailing cultural views toward illicit expression. His publisher is reputed to have responded to his first reading of *Sanctuary* by saying, "Good God, I can't publish this. We'd both be in jail." Surely this came as no surprise to Faulkner: after all, he wrote his most acclaimed novels in the midst of the most widely publicized debates about obscenity in the history of the United States. The author himself claimed that with *Sanctuary*, he had written "the most horrific tale" he could "imagine." Whether or not Faulkner experienced censorship directly, then, his work needs to be understood in relation to the obscene. His novels suggest, in particular, that the loosening of obscenity standards brought with it an anxiety about the loss of previously protected cultural mores. Faulkner seems to suggest that the loss of these protections posed a threat to American cultural identity. This is a somewhat surprising conclusion for a renegade author like Faulkner to draw. This Faulknerian discrepancy regarding censorship speaks volumes, it seems, about American letters, obscenity, and modernism more generally.

### Biography

Born William *Falkner* in New Albany, Mississippi, on September 25, the eldest child of Maud and Murray Falkner. Just before Faulkner turned five, the family moved to Oxford,

Mississippi. Faulkner lived in Canada, New Orleans, Hollywood, and Virginia, but spent most of his life in Oxford. Because his work is so clearly rooted in this region of Mississippi, acclaimed biographer David Minter describes Faulkner as "our great provincial." Joined the British Royal Air Force in Canada because he did not meet U.S. Army physical requirements, but World War I ended before he served. Sherwood Anderson helped him publish his first novel, *Soldier's Pay* (1926). Won the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1949. Won the Pulitzer Prize in 1954 for *A Fable*, and again in 1962 for *The Reivers*, published just before his death. Faulkner died near Oxford on July 6, 1962.

FLORENCE DORE

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# FEMINISM: ANTI-PORN MOVEMENT AND PRO-PORN MOVEMENT

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Few questions have divided feminist thinkers and activists more sharply than the pornography issue. This article attempts to chart opposing feminist views on pornography and their implications for women's lives and writing rather than chronicle the history of pro- and anti-pornography feminist activism, though it is impossible to entirely separate the two. The question is relevant for this book because the feminist debate around pornography (and also around classics of literary erotica) has led many women artists to develop new forms of sexual self-expression, thereby changing the face of erotic literature. At stake here are complex issues of sex, power, gender relations, speech and representation, bound up as well with questions of race, sexual orientation, and social class.

In fact, there are three camps involved in the feminist pornography debate (the expression "sex wars" is often used to describe the way questions of sexuality polarized feminists in the 1980s): anti-pornography feminists, anti-censorship feminists, and pro-pornography feminists. The latter two categories partially overlap, but there is an important distinction: many anti-censorship feminists condemn pornography but suggest other ways to fight it besides suppression, while pro-pornography feminists defend their right to consume and/or make it. (In addition, a number of academic feminists have applied literary, psychoanalytic, political, and

cultural-studies approaches to the study of pornography.)

### Pornography and Anger

The feminist anti-pornography movement came to prominence in the mid- to late 1970s in the context of the so-called sexual revolution (one consequence of which was an explosion of pornographic magazines and films) and of rising feminist activism. An influential anthology, *Take Back the Night: Women on Pornography* (1980), gave previously published articles wider exposure. In this book and elsewhere, pornography came under fire not because it was sexually explicit, immoral, or anti-marriage, as conservatives—from whom most anti-pornography feminists are careful to distance themselves—had long objected, but because, by portraying women as mindless sex objects and willing victims, it promoted misogyny and eroticized violence. In this view, pornography is vicious anti-female propaganda, even a form of "sexual terrorism" (Kathleen Barry). "Pornography is about slavery," says Adrienne Rich.

Many anti-pornography feminists, including Susan Brownmiller in her 1975 book about rape, blame pornography for sharply rising rape and domestic-violence rates. According to this argument, pornography "teaches" that women long to be raped, abused, and even killed; many men

learn the lesson all too well, moving from spectatorship to enactment. Some feminists, like Diana E. H. Russell, argue that even nonviolent pornography encourages men to rape. In Robin Morgan's often-quoted phrase, "Pornography is the theory and rape the practice." Pornography is also harmful, these feminists argue, because by depriving women of their full humanity, it allows men to deny them political equality and exploit them sexually and economically, while undermining their sense of self-worth and making them less likely to fight back.

Pornography, anti-pornography activists claim, is a lie told by men about all women. In addition, lesbian women and women of color, among others, have taken pornography to task for its homophobia (for example, portraying lesbian sex as a pale copy of heterosexual sex or "using" it to stimulate male voyeurs) and racism (treating women of color as monsters, animals, etc.). Finally, anti-pornography feminists have drawn attention to the abuse, intimidation, and coercion experienced by some women in the the multibillion-dollar porn industry. (In this view, women who say they enjoy doing porn films are victims or sell-outs). Because it is profoundly anti-woman, pornography, many activists argue, is a form of hate speech and should be banned as such. In response to opponents of censorship, these feminists say that freedom of speech is simply a diversionary tactic: only men—and the huge companies that produce pornography—have freedom of speech today; women have already been silenced. From this perspective, pornography censors women rather than the other way around, preventing them from attaining their full potential; in fact, endangering their very existence.

In *Only Words* and elsewhere, Catharine A. MacKinnon argues that rather than a form of speech worthy of First Amendment protection, pornography is an act of violence against women, both the real woman in the picture and others who might later be harmed because of it; legal action is the best way to defend victims of sex discrimination. Working with Andrea Dworkin, MacKinnon proposed a definition which reads, in part: "Pornography is the sexually explicit subordination of women, graphically depicted, whether in pictures or in words"; a list of unacceptable types of representations follows. Dworkin and MacKinnon fought to have ordinances (which would have allowed

women harmed by pornography to sue producers) enacted in several American cities, but these ordinances were subsequently declared unconstitutional.

While concentrating on mainstream pornography, anti-pornography feminism also tackled canonical erotic literature. As early as 1969, Kate Millett denounced D.H. Lawrence, Henry Miller, and Norman Mailer as advocates of male supremacy. Given that during the 1970s, French erotic literature acquired a kind of worldwide chic, it is not surprising to find it being attacked from without—in her 1974 *Woman Hating*, Andrea Dworkin devotes chapters to Pauline Réage's *Histoire d'O* and to Jean de Berg's *L'image*—as well as from within. *Les châteaux d'Éros*, by Anne-Marie Dardigna, takes on de Sade, Bataille, Pierre Klossowski, and other darlings of the French literary establishment. Far from being the harbingers of a new and radical sexuality, Dardigna says, these authors simply rehash the traditional vision of male domination and female inferiority. Nancy Huston arrived at similar conclusions in her *Mosaïque de la pornographie*, as had Xavière Gauthier in her earlier book on literary surrealism. Condemning both literary erotica and mainstream pornography, which they say deliver the same sexist messages, these writers call for women to develop their own erotic imaginations, but consider the task to be almost impossible given their patriarchal conditioning.

### Censorship Under Attack

The anti-censorship camp emerged mainly in reaction to anti-pornography feminists' work, criticizing not only their calls for censorship but also their view of women and of heterosexual sex. Many Canadian feminists in this camp articulated their views in the 1985 work *Women Against Censorship*. According to these writers and others, anti-pornography feminism attracted many women because it offered a clear target (pornography) and promised a quick fix (censorship). Anti-censorship feminists criticized some anti-pornography activists for portraying women as helpless but pure creatures in need of protection (Andrea Dworkin also says that all intercourse is akin to rape), a point which connects their views to those of the Christian right despite obvious differences (indeed,

conservative leaders fought alongside Dworkin and MacKinnon in some states to pass anti-pornography legislation, a point made much of by anti-censorship feminists). Gayle Rubin compares what she calls feminism's increasing preoccupation with moral—rather than political or economic—issues to the politically disastrous shift in 19th-century feminism from a radical critique of women's role and status to a defense of women based on their alleged moral superiority. From this perspective, anti-pornography feminism prevents women from embracing their sexuality, flooding them with guilt, fear, and shame.

Anti-pornography activists see pornography as the root cause of women's oppression, or at least its clearest expression; in the view of anti-censorship feminists, however, it is merely a symptom. Marcia Pally points out that male domination long predated mass pornography and reigns supreme in many modern societies where pornography is outlawed; countries like Japan and Denmark have legal pornography industries without marked increases in sexual crimes. (Anti-censorship feminists also point out that only about 6% of pornography, according to most estimates, is violent.) Following extensive literature reviews, a number of observers have independently concluded that there is no credible evidence demonstrating a causal link between consumption of pornography and violent behavior. Those who feel it is important to discuss, critique, and, if necessary, condemn sexual representations (without censoring them) generally locate pornography within a continuum which includes sexist advertising, films, and music videos, among others, all of which may be equally harmful, if only because they circulate more widely.

Anti-censorship feminists also point out that the distinction between (unacceptable) pornography and (acceptable) eroticism varies widely from one person to the next: for conservatives, any sexually explicit material, such as a sex education textbook, would be pornographic. Conversely, since to outlaw certain productions one must clearly define them, anti-pornography feminists tend to claim that the distinction is easily made. Yet even within feminism, many competing definitions exist. One difficulty is intentionality: if representations of violent sexuality were outlawed, for example, what would be the status of a feminist documentary denouncing rape? What about consensual lesbian or gay

sadomasochistic (S/M) sex? And how can the ambiguities, the ironies, the subtleties of art be weighed and judged?

Censorship is a double-edged sword, these feminists warn: our male-dominated court system is far more likely to target lesbian and gay erotica (generally published by small presses unable to afford legal fees) and feminist explorations than it is to ban *Playboy* or *Penthouse*. In fact, as often noted, most 1990s attacks on the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) were aimed at explicit sexual images created by gay men or feminist women; under anti-pornography laws, Canadian customs officers have refused to allow books by Kathy Acker, Oscar Wilde, and Marguerite Duras, among others, into the country, and lesbian bookstores have been charged and convicted for selling magazines such as *Bad Attitude*.

More generally, anti-censorship feminists argue, censorship curtails women's freedom while claiming to protect them: censorship is an attempt to dictate what sexual behavior is acceptable, an attempt to control women themselves. Many fear that censorship will silence and disempower women interested in exploring the complexities of their sexual lives. Nadine Strossen sums up the classic First Amendment position: "Big Sister is as unwelcome in our lives as Big Brother" (15).

What then, if anything, should be done about pornography? Anti-censorship feminists who also oppose pornography have advocated or practiced other courses of action, including consumer boycotts, "Take Back the Night" marches, targeting the distribution chain, restricting public display of pornographic materials, working for better salaries for women so they are not tempted to do sex work, improving sex education in the schools, etc. But the best solution, some say, is woman-centered alternatives to standard pornography.

During the 1980s and 1990s, many feminists shifted the focus of debate toward the benefits for women of sexually explicit material. Women who practiced socially stigmatized sexuality, including lesbians, proclaimed their right to explore their sexuality from within the feminist movement. The editors of an early collective work, *Coming to Power: Writings and Graphics on Lesbian S/M* (first edition 1981), insist that writing about their S/M sexuality—against claims that all lesbian relationships are inherently

tender and free from power dynamics—is a form of feminist inquiry. The book is a mixture of erotic fiction, political analysis, definitions, and safety tips; its authors, often under pseudonyms, speak of lesbian S/M sex as creative, spiritual, playful, loving, and empowering. This book is only one example of women redefining sexuality as a source of feminist energy and a positive self-image.

*Coming to Power*, with its punning double focus on pleasure and empowerment, captures the spirit of exploration and consensuality behind most pro-pornography writing. The focus is on reclaiming sexuality for women, thereby violating age-old taboos (symptomatic titles include *Whores and Other Feminists*, *Bad Girls and Dirty Pictures*, and *Talk Dirty to Me*). Much of this writing is by women directly involved in the sex industry, most of whom say they enjoy their work and chose it freely. Carol Queen and others have chided anti-pornography feminists for being anti-sex and anti-desire, inviting feminists to listen to sex-trade workers on issues like the body, sex, and female agency, as well as supporting them in their struggle to improve their working conditions.

### Celebrating Pornography

While anti-pornography feminists have emphasized the links between pornography and real-life violence, pro-pornography feminists counter that pornography is fantasy and not reality. (For a nuanced view of pornography as both reality and fantasy, see Jane Ussher's *Fantasies of Femininity*; Drucilla Cornell's anthology *Feminism and Pornography* brings together a variety of feminist responses). Marcia Pally writes that fantasy provides catharsis, allowing desires and fears to play out harmlessly in words and images: "The idea that what happens in fantasy happens in life is neither science nor feminism but voodoo." Laura Kipnis defends various types of pornography—from images using obese people to *Hustler*—as both subversions of the reigning political order and defiant explorations of fantasies with deep personal and cultural resonance; pornography is about pleasure and freedom rather than violence and hatred, she says. Sallie Tisdale, in *Talk Dirty to Me*, attempts to destigmatize both sex and the act of watching it. Wendy McElroy calls pornography and

feminism natural allies because both challenge institutions such as the family and traditional assumptions about sexuality. Many observers list ways in which pornography benefits women as well as men: on a personal level, in addition to providing entertainment and sexual release, it destigmatizes, educates, and serves as sexual therapy; on a political level, it pushes back the borders of acceptable thought, speech, and behavior, therefore providing more freedom for everyone.

Anti-pornography feminists often claim that women are not interested in pornography or that they are forced by their mates to consume it. But clearly, pornography is no longer a male-only preserve. By 1990, in the United States, close to half of all adult videotapes were rented by women in couples or women alone. In *At Home with Pornography: Women, Sex, and Everyday Life*, Jane Juffner focuses on women's consumption of pornography and erotica, including literary anthologies, cyberporn, and adult cable channels, resources which sometimes challenge and sometimes reinforce traditional values.

If women are dissatisfied with traditional pornography, some feminists say, they should make their own. And many have done just that. Whatever their sexual orientation and preferences, these women share the desire to reconcile their feminism and their sexuality while refusing to practice "politically correct" sex or downplay the sexual dimension of their lives. Before the 1960s, few women wrote erotica, although many, from Sappho to Gertrude Stein and Colette, included descriptions of desire and physical pleasure in their writing. One of the first works of female erotica, *Histoire d'O* (1954), published by the French woman Dominique Aury under the pseudonym Pauline Réage, was an international best seller and inspired a feature film. The tragic story of O, a career woman turned into a sexual slave, also aroused widespread feminist ire.

Since the 1980s, as taboos around women's and alternative sexualities have weakened (political backlash notwithstanding), many more women have begun producing erotica/pornography. Although the focus of this article is on written work, the women's erotic film industry deserves mention: for instance, 1984 saw the creation of Femme Productions (founded by Candida Royalle) and Fatale Video (launched by Debi Sundahl), nonsexist adult video production companies. That same year, Debi Sundahl

and Susie Bright created *On Our Backs*, a lesbian sex magazine whose title is an irreverent response to *off our backs*, a feminist anti-porn newspaper. Susie Bright has also been involved with literary anthologies such as *Herotica* and the annual *Best American Erotica*. Specialized collections like the British “Black Lace” series are also widely read.

Capitalizing on the success of earlier works such as Nancy Friday’s *My Secret Garden*, while filling in the gaps in them, many specialized anthologies have appeared: collections of heterosexual, lesbian, and bisexual erotica, as well as African American, Latina, and Asian American erotic collections are all available in mass-market editions. Whether they feature established writers (as do the *Penguin Book of Erotic Stories by Women* and *Pleasure in the Word: Erotic Writing by Latin American Women*) or “ordinary” women, anthologies of literary erotica have provided a safe space for many women to explore sexual desires, realities, and fantasies. According to some observers, distinctions between men’s and women’s erotic writing do exist: women writers develop plots and characters more fully and tend to locate sexual practices within real-life situations such as work and relationships. However, women’s erotica is not limited to gentle “vanilla” sex: violence, S/M, and aggressive impulses are all frequent themes. Pornogothic, for example, relies on bondage, vampire imagery, black magic, fetishism, leather and latex, dungeons, and body modifications. Many texts, especially lesbian short fiction published in magazines and fanzines, play with the borders between genders, featuring consensual bondage, sex with gay men, strap-on dildoes, etc. A number of magazines, including *Lezzie Smut*, *Lickerish*, and *Quim*, to mention only a few, explore various facets of lesbian sexuality. As Judith Butler has shown, lesbian sexual power games (butch/femme, whips, leather) parody heterosexual practices and expose traditional male/female roles as cultural masquerade.

Throughout the Western world at least, women’s erotic writing is thriving. A very partial list of contemporary women’s erotic and/or sexually explicit writing, literary or not—much of which, like Andrea Dworkin’s graphic *Mercy*, deals with women’s sexual ills rather than attempting to arouse the reader—would have to include Angela Carter, Joan Nestle, Ann Oakley, and Jeannette Winterson (U.K.), Christine

Angot, Catherine Breillat, Virginie Despentes, Annie Ernaux, Claire Legenre, Alina Reyes, and Françoise Rey (France), Joanna Russ, Pat Califia, Kathryn Harrison, and Anne Rice (United States), Isabel Allende, Laura Esquivel, Cristina Peri Rossi, and Silvana Ocampo (Latin America), Nelly Arcan, Dionne Brand, Nicole Brossard, Anne Dandurand, Claire Dé, Lili Gulliver, Evelyn Lau, and Daphne Marlatt (Québec/Canada), Elfriede Jelinek (Austria), and many others. In fact, in some countries, more women than men are writing about sex, a situation few would have predicted 20 years ago. Themes and approaches vary widely: some writers celebrate sex, others explore painful topics such as incest, rape, violence, and sexual rivalry. Stereotypes of women as naturally modest, gentle, and asexual have been widely challenged; explicit sex and violence, like crude language, are no longer a male preserve. While not all of this material is innovative or challenging, and some women’s writing reinforces the sexual status quo rather than questioning it, its sheer abundance is a sign of change. Despite taboos and censure, women’s explorations of sexuality would seem to be here to stay.

LORI SAINT-MARTIN

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**See also Women's Writing in French; Women's Writing in Spanish; Women's Writing in English; Réage, Pauline**

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## FERRATER, GABRIEL

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1922–1972

Spanish poet

In the mid-1950s, Gabriel Ferrater made the acquaintance of important Spanish and Catalan poets such as Jaime Gil de Biedma, Carlos Barral, and Joan Vinyoli. As a result of this friendship he also started to write poetry, although only for a few years, until 1963. Ferrater published only three books of poetry: *Da nuces pueris* (1960), *Menja't una cama* (1962), and *Teoria dels cossos* (1966). In 1968 he collected

all his 114 poems in the volume *Les dones i els dies* [*Women and Days*] and decided to stop writing poetry. His work was quite different from Catalan poetry of the time, so it was some time before it gained recognition. However, after his death many contemporary Catalan poets have declared him a master, and now he has a pivotal position in contemporary Catalan literature.

*Les dones i els dies*, written over a short span of five years, contains all of his poems. It is not, however, a mere collection of his previous

books, since Ferrater corrected and reorganized his poetry. The result, then, is a new work that conveys Ferrater's collected concerns. The title already shows the interests of the poet: the flow of time and his relationships with women. These are the axis of his work, which is very unitary. In Ferrater's poetry there are three main thematic groups: poems dealing with literature, poems devoted to describing the social situation of the time, and poems about his personal experience, which can be divided into two groups: those that focus on the flow of time and those that narrate erotic experiences. Ferrater's poetry is generally based on the moral reflection of a specific experience, but with a chronological detachment that allows the poet to analyze the lived experience. For Ferrater, moral life consists of exploring the space between the lived experience and the subsequent reflection in which this experience takes form. Furthermore, in his poetry the notion of passion acts as a central force. The energy produced by this force is interpreted by the poet as capable of taking man beyond love, morality, social observation, or sentimental frustration.

The poet often idealizes a teenager full of life who is aware and makes use of her body. Since Ferrater describes this young person when he is already a mature man, poetry also becomes a way to relive and explain adolescence.

In many of his poems, such as "Temps enrere," "Dits," "Ídols," and "Cambra de la tardor," Ferrater reflects in the present time about a past erotic experience by describing the place where it took place, usually a room with a view. The experience usually involved sexual intercourse, and the poet provides a brief and subtle description of his lover. Sometimes the poems also contain erotic moments without sexual intercourse, such as "El distret," where the poet, on a roof, observes a young woman who is combing her hair, or "Jocs," where the poet watches the sensual movements of a woman playing basketball. In many compositions, such as "Oci" and "Xifra," the poet observes and depicts his young lover when she is sleeping next to him. Other poems, such as "Joc," offer a direct, rejoicing, and jovial view of pleasure. Ferrater proposes an egoistical pursuit of the small pleasures of life as the only way to reach happiness. Ferrater's erotic descriptions are usually subtle. The poet is attracted to certain parts of the female

body: thighs, feet, knees, and bellies. These are central to the poet's exploration of eroticism and sexual desire, and they often appear in his discourse. On a few occasions, however, he explicitly refers to the crotch area of his lover, such as in "Mädchen" and "Cançó idiota." There are even more explicit poems such as "Úter," a tribute to the uterus, in which the poet describes himself embracing the crotch of his lover, and "Mudances," in which the female lover is touching the erected penis of her partner.

The various topics that appear in Ferrater's poems reflect, in general, the incidence of time in his relationships. He feels especially attracted to youth, and in his poems it is easy to find feelings such as possession, unfaithfulness, and love. Ferrater's suicide at the age of 50 has been interpreted by Montserrat Roser as an answer to the physical decadence that menaced the way of existence explored in his poems. The sense of death is intrinsically linked to eroticism, because in life the only possible source of pleasure, the body, is being progressively destroyed. The poet has only the short relief of the sporadic erotic experiences.

It is also important to take into account the moral concerns of contemporary Catalan society, which are evoked in Ferrater's social poems. In the "Poema inacabat," for instance, the poet claims that he is not the perverse. Clearly he is referring to the Franco dictatorship, which promoted a sinful view of sexual relationships.

In *Les dones i els dies* the poet tries to reconstruct his identity through feelings. For Ferrater, this experience becomes inextricably linked with hedonism and eroticism, so he advocates a down-to-earth approach to poetry, and his own poems display a fairly comprehensive description of erotic encounters. In spite of the complexity of his work, his poems are easy to understand, because they offer a realistic portrayal of everyday life written in a more colloquial language.

### Biography

Born in Reus, Spain. In 1954 he started to read in mathematics but did not finish this degree. Later on he obtained a degree in romance philology. Ferrater was a poet, art and literary critic, translator, linguist, and lecturer at the Universitat Autònoma of Barcelona. A man of



## FERRÉ, ROSARIO

vast culture and many interests, he translated works from German, English, Polish, and Swedish. Ferrater died in Sant Cugat del Vallès, Spain.

JORDI CORNELLÀ-DETRELL

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See also **Catalan Literature**

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# FERRÉ, ROSARIO

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1938–

Puerto Rican novelist, essayist, poet, and short story writer

Rosario Ferré is known for her literary and political essays and poetry, but her greatest renown is as a writer of fiction. Since the publication of her first book of short stories in 1976, she has achieved fame as a keen observer of the history and culture of her native Puerto Rico. Her work centers on the balances and imbalances of power that are in conflict in all relationships, be they political, sexual, romantic, or familial.

Ferré was born into an established and influential Puerto Rican family. Her father, Luis Ferré, was a pro-statehood governor of Puerto Rico (1968–1972). Ferré's fiction often centers on the fading aristocracy of Puerto Rico and the divisive legacies of the plantation system. Though her own position is one of privilege, she is openly critical of the class system and racial discrimination in Puerto Rican society, and works like *The Youngest Doll* and *Sweet Diamond Dust* clearly portray the hypocrisy of the island's aristocracy.

Ferré's first collection of stories, *Papeles de Pandora* [*The Youngest Doll*], was published in 1976 and laid the foundation for many of the themes of her later works: the connection of the personal (and specifically, the sexual) with the political, the demystification of sexuality and

eroticism, and the inherent power imbalances of most heterosexual couplings. In terms of erotic content, the most discussed story of the collection is "When Women Love Men," which employs one of Ferré's preferred literary devices, the double, or doppelgänger, to highlight the virgin/whore dichotomy imposed on women in Latin culture. Two women, one the wife and the other the lover of a dead man, meet years after the death of the man who linked them. Both women are named Isabel, and though their external differences are emphasized (one is black, the other white; one a prostitute, the other a society wife), as they take turns narrating each other's story, it becomes clear that they are two sides of the same coin, or two halves of a whole: "[E]very lady hides a prostitute under her skin. This is obvious from the way a lady slowly crosses her legs, rubbing the insides of her thighs against each other.... A prostitute, on the other hand, will go to similar extremes to hide the lady under her skin" (134). Isabel Luberza's life as a comfortable, asexual wife is made possible only through the heightened sexuality of Isabel la Negra, who satisfies the husband's sexual needs but also serves as a symbol of the physicality denied to "good" women. As Ferré makes clear, through the denial of women's sexuality, both the virgin and the whore have been "shortchanged both sexually and economically."

The publication of *Papeles de Pandora*, and particularly of "When Women Love Men," led

to Ferré's work being labeled "pornographic" due to her frank use of sexual terminology. In "The Writer's Kitchen," an essay included in *Sitio a Eros* (1980), Ferré herself responds to such a categorization, stating that language considered sexually obscene has for too long been the exclusive domain of male writers and that women have both the right and the obligation to reclaim such language. She laments the absence of discussion of obscenity in women's literature and feminist literary criticism, and lays claim to the sexual insult as a tool to be hurled back in the face of the oppressors.

Other pieces in *Sitio a Eros* examine the role of eros in women's writing and lives. Ferré draws on Simone de Beauvoir in calling for an active, transcendental love that would free women from the constraints of passivity and dependence. She analyzes the works of women writers that she admires for their expression of this sort of self-assertive eros, such as Virginia Woolf, Mary Shelley, Julia de Burgos, and Alexandra Kollontai. In Ferré's view, these writers challenged the patriarchal system through their expressions of active feminine love. She calls for other women to allow their subjective, irrational, and distinctly feminine passion to come forth in their writing.

Ferré's later fictional and critical works continue to explore the topics laid out in *Papeles de Pandora* and *Sitio a Eros*. The collection of stories *Maldito amor* [*Sweet Diamond Dust*], published in 1987, again investigates the ties between political power, sexual and romantic relations, and Puerto Rican identity. Perhaps the most erotic language of the collection is reserved for the island itself, as she describes its almost orgasmic profusion of smells, tastes, and colors: "the honeyed yam and the thick-lipped one that leaves you monstuck if you eat it at night, the mysteriously aphrodisiac gingerroot, with emerald swords unsheathed and blooming lips pursed in blood, which afforded us a profitable smuggling trade all through the nineteenth century; the golden ripe plantain and the green one with silver tips, quivering on the branches of Mafofo and Malango trees" (5). Rather than portray Puerto Rico as an untainted Eden, she draws attention to the political realities behind the sensual "paradise"—the exploitation of African slaves and the native Taíno Indians at the hands of first the Spanish, and later the Creole landowners. The human relations in the stories

mirror this exploitive dynamic, as complex networks of victimization and power supersede the possibility of romantic love.

Ferré made the somewhat politically controversial decision to begin writing in English in 1995, with the publication of *The House on the Lagoon*. This book, and her subsequent novel in English, *Eccentric Neighborhoods*, continue to explore the erotic in the context of multigenerational family sagas, but the broad historical sweep of the novels somewhat diminishes the focus on the erotic. Nevertheless, in these novels, as in her earlier works, sexuality is frequently presented as a tool too often employed in service of avarice, dominance, and betrayal.

### Biography

Born in Ponce, Puerto Rico in 1938. Earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Manhattanville College (1960), New York, a master's degree from the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras (1985), and a Ph.D. in Latin American literature from the University of Maryland, College Park (1987). Editor and publisher of *Zona de Carga y Descarga*, a journal of Puerto Rican literature. Taught Latin American literature at the University of California, Berkeley; Rutgers University; Harvard University; Johns Hopkins University; and the University of Puerto Rico, Río Piedras. Finalist for the National Book Award in 1995, for *House on the Lagoon*. Resides in Puerto Rico.

ALEXANDRA FITTS

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# FIELD, MICHEL

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1956–

French writer and journalist

### *Impasse de la Nuit*

Divided into 12 chapters, organized as a journey through the night, from "Dusk" (Chapter 2) to "Dawn" (Chapter 12), *Impasse de la Nuit* is structured in an elaborate and dynamic way. The *impasse* of the title is both a literal one-way cul-de-sac as a typical setting for casual sex encounters and the metaphorical realization that the Night (occasionally personalized) is an alternative universe not compatible with mainstream life, heteronormative sexuality, and conventional relationships. *Impasse de la Nuit* is set in a busy, urban, labyrinthic, decadent Paris, whose topology of erotic landmarks revolves mainly around places with strong sexual connotations (such as the Rue Saint Denis, its sex shops, its seedy night clubs with lesbian peep-shows, and its cafés where prostitutes meet and relax between clients) and places where people have sex in public (Bois de Boulogne, car parks, porn movie theatres, and men's public toilets).

The narrator is a writer working on a book about the night, with a special interest in some of those "night people" who tend to become

sexually active then: voyeurs, exhibitionists, prostitutes, and transvestites, all people who would otherwise be labeled as perverts or deviants. Doing research for his book, the narrator reflects on his surroundings and on his past experiences and adventures, and explores parts of his sexuality restrained so far. Such are the two dimensions of *Impasse de la Nuit*: the intellectual, if not philosophical, dimension, which makes the book a reflective essay on erotic literature, or at least a poetic treatise on voyeurism, and the embodied dimension, with the erotic narration of sexual scenarios, situations, and encounters.

Whereas the main part of the book appears as a journal in which the narrator records erotic stories (with limited linear narrative and no sense of chronology) and their analysis (like a flowing stream of consciousness), three chapters ("Correspondence I," "Correspondence II," and "Correspondence III") consist of extracts of letters exchanged between the narrator and a past female lover. These letters are directly reminiscent of *Les Liaisons dangereuses*, both because of the literary technique itself, not uncommon in erotic literature, and because of the sophisticated quality of the language and style, which could easily be read as a pastiche of Choderlos de

Laclos. The letters powerfully relate some of their staged erotic adventures, all taking place at night, which is presented as the liberating factor, typically with her stripping and masturbating in public places such as car parks, watched by several men who also masturbate, whilst her lover stands anonymously amongst them.

A leitmotiv of *Impasse de la Nuit*, voyeurism is illustrated in numerous ways: there is, for example, the enigmatic café in the Bois de Boulogne where regular patrons only go to see exhibitionist couples touching each other up under the tables, with the approval of the old, seemingly bigoted landlady, as long as there are no children around; there is the episode of the narrator observing his half-naked female neighbor through the window whilst his girlfriend goes down on him and asks him to describe the scene until he comes; there is also the story of a couple straightforwardly having sex in a car whilst other men stand around and masturbate, creating a sort of complicity, if not bonding, between all the men present. Yet voyeurism is not just illustrated but also conceptualized, if not justified, both culturally and philosophically. With due reference to history and literature, voyeurism is explained as a socially constructed male privilege; the voyeur is defined as the best theoretician of desire, whose playful gaze, innocently perverted, bridges a gap between men and women. Albeit possibly sexist and arguable, this analysis nevertheless gives the book its intellectual edge and original quality, differentiating it from a mere pornographic novel, a process reminiscent of de Sade developing philosophical issues and arguments even in his most sexually explicit texts. This is certainly due to Michel Field's background as a philosophy teacher (if not as a philosopher), which comes to the surface here, as in all the passages where the text suddenly shifts from graphic erotic evocations to metaphysical evaluations of pleasure, gender identity, or sexual desire. A related characteristic of the author is his love of the French language, coupled with remarkable stylistic skills: his prose is highly poetic, and several passages are pure

plays with puns, alliterations, and homonyms, exemplified in the first words of Chapter 2: "Nuitamment. Nuit, amant" [Nightly. Night, lover], which makes the translation of the book extremely difficult.

Eventually, it is worth noting that *Impasse de la Nuit* lends itself very well to queer reading and queer analysis, for three main reasons. Firstly, it presents and represents a vast array of culturally marginal forms of sexuality (such as leather fetishism and cross-dressing, exhibitionism, prostitution, casual homosexual and bisexual sex encounters), which perfectly fall under the umbrella term of "queer" as defined by queer theory. Secondly, the sexual scenes depicted and the accompanying comments repeatedly blur the male/female and straight/gay boundaries, a key tenet of queer theory with evident echoes of postmodernism. Thirdly, it problematizes notions of gender/sex/sexual identity, as in the last chapters, where the narrator (who used to wear leather clothes and flaunt his heterosexuality over gay men he would only have passive oral sex with) starts to dress up as a woman, carefully choosing female silk underwear ("Silk, my feminine identity.... Silk, my feminine double"), wearing a suspender belt, heavy makeup, high-heel shoes, and a sexy dress before courageously going out to sell his/her transvestite body to the night—the Night being again the liberating factor and the only way to gain a new identity, to achieve a metaphorical and metaphysical ascesis in an *impasse* from which it will not be possible to return.

### Biography

Michel Field is a well-known journalist and cultural commentator on French radio and television, yet in the 1980s he also wrote three novels: *Le Passeur de Lesbos* (1984), *Impasse de la Nuit* (1986), and *L'Homme aux Pâtes* (1989). Originally released by Bernard Barrault, they have been republished by Editions Robert Laffont.

LOYKIE LOÏC LOMINÉ

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# FIELDING, HENRY

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1707–1754

British playwright and novelist

**Works**

The sexual content of Fielding's works was evident in his own time, when he was excoriated for his "lowness" by Richardson, Johnson, and Hawkins, who said that Fielding's virtue "was that of a dog or a horse." His works are not erotic in the sense that *Fanny Hill* is, but they give sexual realities their force, generally with comic effect, against moral hypocrisy, especially in women.

His burlesque and farce plays depended on sexual humor as much as on political satire, and *Shamela*, his travesty of *Pamela*, focuses on the sexuality of Richardson's servant-girl heroine to portray her as a hypocrite working on the sexual responses of a gentleman so he will marry her for her profit and that of her lover. In *Joseph Andrews*, he portrays in Lady Booby, her servant Slipslop, and Betty the Chambermaid all the energy of female lust, directed at the young and handsome Joseph. A careful reading reveals even in the "pure" Fanny, who is in love with him, the same powerful drives at work. Indeed, Fanny is first introduced in a verbal picture that stresses her sexual attractiveness according to eighteenth-century criteria:

*Fanny* was now in the nineteenth Year of her Age; she was tall and delicately shaped; but not one of those slender young Women, who seem rather intended to hang up in the Hall of an Anatomist, than for any other Purpose. On the contrary, she was so plump that she seemed bursting through her tight Stays, especially in that Part which confined her swelling breasts. Nor did her Hips want the Assistance of a Hoop to extend them.

The long paragraph continues listing her physical delights. Throughout the subsequent adventures, only the continual presence of Parson Adams is what prevents Joseph and Fanny from consummating their desire for one another.

In *Tom Jones* the handsome hero does not remain even technically "pure." Women will not let him. Jones is first seduced by the sexually aggressive Molly Segrim, but then falls in love with Sophia Western, a beautiful young virgin who is the daughter of the owner of the estate adjoining the one on which he—a foundling—lives under the protection of Squire Allworthy. But the young Blifil, presumed heir to the estate and a cold sadist, hopes to marry Sophia himself, in spite of her detestation of him:

Now the Agonies which affected the Mind of *Sophia* rather augmented than impaired her Beauty; for her Tears added Brightness to her Eyes, and her Breasts rose higher with her Sighs.... *Blifil* therefore looked on this human Ortolan with greater desire than when he viewed her last; nor was his Desire at all lessened by the Aversion which he discovered in her to himself. On the contrary, this served rather to heighten the Pleasure he proposed in rifling her Charms, as it added Triumph to Lust; he had some further Views, from obtaining the absolute Possession of her Person, which we detest too much even to mention...

Jones, after Blifil has tricked Allworthy into expelling him, affirms his love for Sophia but nevertheless, after exciting himself thinking of her charms, goes off on a chance encounter with Molly into "the thickest Part of the Grove." Fielding tries to maintain that Jones's "imprudence" with women causes him all his subsequent troubles (and modern literary criticism, especially in the United States, has generally sided with Fielding's argument), but the circumstances in which Jones finds himself are always such that only a young man not homosexual—unless he is as cold as Blifil—could resist seduction. When she precedes him at an inn, even the "pure" Sophia gives Jones a trail to her by leaving a muff that has sexual significance for both of them. On his way to London, however, he is seduced by the naked breasts of Mrs. Waters, and in London is seduced by Lady Bellaston. But, out of desire for him, Sophia forgives him everything, and in the end the villainies of Blifil are exposed, Jones is to be Allworthy's heir, and

Sophia marries him. Then transpires “that happy Hour which... surrendered the charming *Sophia* to the eager Arms of her enraptured *Jones*.” The sexual feelings of the men and women in the novel are usually revealed to the reader, for they function as the novel’s sure index of their characterization. Indeed, *Tom Jones* can be seen as a penetrating study of people in a society where the power and significance of sexual motivation is not acknowledged.

Fielding’s last novel, *Amelia*, lacks the comic gusto of *Joseph Andrews* and *Tom Jones*, because the London world he portrays is so grim that the good-natured, sexually warm man and woman are barely saved from destruction. Captain Booth is a Tom Jones after marriage. The novel opens with him in a debtor’s prison, where, though he adores his wife, Amelia (modeled as was Sophia on Fielding’s beloved Charlotte), he nonetheless is seduced by a former lover whom he encounters there. He tries to hide this lapse from Amelia and does not realize till the end that she knew of it and long ago forgave him. Very interesting are the quiet but powerful erotic feelings of Amelia herself, most often overlooked by readers. Certainly she gratifies Booth. “Here ended all that is Material of their Discourse,” we are told at one point, “and a little Time afterwards they both fell asleep in each other’s Arms; from which time Booth had no more Restlessness, nor any further Perturbation of his Dreams.” And another time, after his jealous fears have been allayed, he “caught her in his Arms and tenderly embraced her. After which the Reconciliation soon became complete; and Booth in the Contemplation of his Happiness entirely buried all his jealous Thoughts.” But also she is gratified by him. She says that as long as she has “such a Husband to make life Delicious” she can easily accept poverty: “Am I of a superior Rank of being to the Wife of an honest Laborer? Am I not one of common Nature with her?” Thus, she affirms her sexual nature in common with all women, and it is just this kind of affirmation which is truly at the center of Fielding’s novels.

## Biography

Born April 22 at Sharpham Park, Somersetshire. Studied at Eton, 1719–1724. His first publication and first play appeared, 1728. Enrolled as student of letters, 1728, University of Leiden; ceased studies in 1729. Began career as dramatist, 1730. Marriage to Charlotte Cradock, 1734. Dramatic career ended by Licensing Act, 1737, brought on by his farces against Prime Minister Walpole. Edited the anti-Walpole *The Champion*, 1739. Called to bar, 1740. Death of Charlotte, 1744. Married Mary Daniel, 1747. Traveled to Lisbon, 1754, in hopes of restoring health. Died October 8 in Junqueria, near Lisbon.

GERALD J. BUTLER

## Selected Works

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# FLAUBERT, GUSTAVE

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1821–1880

French novelist

Precociously exposed to the sight of his surgeon-father dissecting a fresh young female corpse, Flaubert's erotic life was always deliriously complicated: a procession of the delicate and the brutal, a roaringly farcical quarrel between the romantic idealist and the cynical connoisseur of prostitution. An incident from the author's 25th year will serve to illustrate the achieved pattern of his imagination.

It was the summer of 1846 and Flaubert was walking across Brittany when he came upon an ancient fragment of Eros: "A few miles from the little village, hiding in the middle of a beech-wood, there stands a granite statue, six feet high, a naked woman, with her hands over her breasts. Seen in profile, with her fat thighs, her plump buttocks, her knees bent, she has a sensuality which is both barbaric and refined. At the foot of the pedestal there is a large basin, carved from the same granite, and it can hold sixteen barrels of water. The Breton peasants used to worship her as an idol: women who had just given birth came to bathe in the basin at her feet, and young people eager to marry would dive into the water. Then, under the eyes of the goddess, they would engage in the solitary entertainment available to the melancholy lover" (Wall 2002, 136–7). Flaubert was delighted with his peasant Venus. She was, he wrote, "the invigorating, exciting, healing idol, the incarnation of health, of the flesh, the very symbol of desire, the manifestation of that eternal religion rooted in the very bowels of man" (Wall 2002, 137). A century before surrealism, Flaubert had already understood, in the figure of this rough goddess, the secret harmony of the sexual and the sacred.

This would become the darkest and most potent theme of his work as a novelist. And Flaubert's refusal to sift the pure from the impure would soon land him in trouble. When *Madame Bovary* was prosecuted for offending against religious morality, it was specifically because

"voluptuous images are mixed up with things sacred," because Emma "murmurs to God the adulterous caresses she has given to her lover," because the book would fall into the hands of "young girls and married women" (Wall, 234). Answering his accusers, Flaubert offered a defense judiciously adjusted to the spirit of the age. He declared that his work was eminently moral because it was written for educated men, not young girls. "Sincere books may sometimes have a certain salutary pungency. Personally I deplore rather those sugary confections which readers swallow without realizing that they are quietly poisoning themselves.... Readers in search of lascivious material, readers who may take harm, will never progress beyond the third page of what I have written. The serious tone will not be to their taste. People do not go to watch surgical operations in a spirit of lubricity" (Wall 2002, 349).

The psychosexual subject of Flaubert's next novel, *Salammbô*, was even more perilously explicit. Only the exoticism of the setting, Carthage in the third century BCE, would preserve it from the official censors of the French Second Empire. Flaubert's artistic purpose was clear. Privately, he explained that "the most furious material appetites are expressed unknowingly by flights of idealism, just as the most sordidly extravagant sexual acts are engendered by a pure desire for the impossible, an ethereal aspiration after sovereign joy. I do not know (nobody knows) the meaning of the words *body* and *soul*, where the one ends and the other begins. We feel the play of energy and that is all" (Wall 2002, 249).

In the real world, the free play of psychic energy was, of course, subject to the cramping effects of censorship, actual or merely anticipated. Having been found not guilty in his trial for *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert did not relish the possibility of another prosecution. At the center of *Salammbô* he placed a scene of sumptuously perverse fancy-dress eroticism in which the naked priestess of the moon becomes entwined

with a large serpent. This image was remarkably congenial to the educated taste of the 1860s, raised on a rich diet of grand opera and history painting. Indeed, *Salammbô* resonated down through the collective fantasy life of a whole generation, producing a short-lived school of paintings and statues portraying women with snakes, still to be found in provincial museums and galleries (Dijkstra, 272).

In his next novel, *L'Éducation sentimentale*, Flaubert returned to his own day. This was to be a love story, but it was modern love, blighted, like the modern world, by a selfish, nervous habit of calculation. The hero is driven by an exalted, poetical, adolescent passion for an unattainable older woman. His sexual history is a tissue of perplexity, frustration, and betrayal. There is no climax, no release, no satisfaction: only a lingering finale of self-estrangement, intellectual exhaustion, emotional sterility, and a lugubriously ironic memory of a schoolboy escapade in a brothel. The chastened, greying protagonists agree emphatically that it was "the best time we ever had."

Ingeniously constrained in his fiction, Flaubert is gloriously unbuttoned in his letters. Here we catch the artist at play, turning the adventures of the flesh into words. Flaubert's surviving letters, their genitalia snipped away by a pious executor but restored by his twentieth-century editors, are exceptionally rich in the epistolary-erotic. Writing from Egypt to his stay-at-home friend Louis Bouilhet, Flaubert teased him with lingeringly detailed accounts of his experiments in the bathhouses and brothels of the East. "Out here it's quite the thing. People confess to their sodomy and talk about it over the dinner-table in the hotel. Sometimes you deny it mildly, then everyone gives you a rollicking and eventually you own up. Travelling for my own edification and entrusted with a government mission, we have considered it our duty to engage in this mode of ejaculation" (*Selected Letters*, 137).

Writing to his newfound mistress Louise Colet in the late summer of 1846 Flaubert combines amorous ingenuity, psychological refinement, and a murky ambivalence. The mix is typically both distressing and exciting. He stages the scene of his midnight rereading of her letters. In Flaubert's hands this becomes a comic-erotic ritual of great imaginative intensity, designed to

stir the memory and quicken the pulse of writer and reader alike. When the house is asleep he unlocks the drawer of the cabinet where he hides his treasures. On the writing table, he arranges his collection: a miniature portrait, a lock of blonde hair, and a handkerchief, evocatively stained. Folded in an embroidered bag, here are his letters from Louise, the pages faintly scented with musk. And here is the most precious relic of all, a pair of her slippers. He gazes at them and his hand trembles as he reaches out to touch them. He inhales their bouquet of verbena. He imagines the warm feel of her foot inside them. Endearingly ridiculous, he eventually confesses to her, "I think I love them as much as I love you" (Wall 2002, 104).

### Biography

Born in Rouen, France, December 12. Son of Achille Cleophas Flaubert, a wealthy surgeon and professor of medicine. Attended the Collège Royal, Rouen, 1831–1839; the École de Droit, Paris, 1841–1845. Abandoned legal studies because of ill health, 1845. Lived on private income. Traveled to Italy, 1845; Egypt, Palestine, and Greece, 1849–1851; Algeria and Tunisia, 1858. Maintained a sporadic relationship with the poet Louise Colet, 1846–1855. Published six novels, including *Madame Bovary* (1856), *Salammbô* (1862), *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1869), and *Trois contes* (1877). Died of a stroke at Croisset, near Rouen, May 8, 1880.

GEOFFREY WALL

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## FOUGERET DE MONBRON, LOUIS CHARLES

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1706–1760

French novelist, essayist, and satiric poet

### *Le canapé couleur de feu*

Very quickly, after his arrival in Paris, Fougeret de Monbron patronizes the backstage of the Comédie-Italienne, the whorehouses, and the cafés. With his satirical mind, he likes the company of the girls and of the “bad subjects.” He is also seen joining the Bout-du-Banc society (see Caylus). It is here, no doubt, that he becomes acquainted with Crébillon’s novel, *Le Sopha*, which circulates under the form of manuscript copies. Fougeret was thus inspired to write his *Canapé*, which was published in 1741, one year before Crébillon’s novel.

*Le canapé* (which would afterward take the title *Le canapé couleur de feu*) is presented at first as a burlesque parody of fashionable fairy tales. For not having responded to the lubricious desires of the fairy Crapaudine, the knight Commode is transformed into a couch. Condemned to be the witness of the pleasures that will be taken on him, he will only be disenchanted when a lover will fail with his partner. Thus the novel opens, after the failure of a ridiculous new husband to satisfy his young wife. His failure causes the couch to transform itself into the young knight Commode, who then begins the narrative of his misadventures.

It can be seen that to the elegance of Crébillon’s language, and the refined environment *Le sopha* offers, Fougeret opposes the rudeness and

the immediate vigor of the satire, as a challenge. The writer multiplies scenes ridiculing the nobility and revealing the vices of the clergy: the couch thus passes from one universe to another, in a comic rhapsody. Here, a “pious vagrant” deflowers a girl; there, a religious dressed up as a little boy who does not know his catechism is being whipped by a prostitute and then whips her in his turn; four monks have a rendezvous to meet the famed Fillon at her whorehouse; a pious bourgeois and her confessor are enema fans, leaving ill-smelling traces. Fougeret in *Le Canapé* denounces the hypocrisy of all religions, and in his depiction of the French Jansenists, the Convulsionaries appear as many “jesters,” skillful in misleading the world.

At the end of his adventures as a couch, after having suffered a thousand jogs and thrusts during sex between the lovers lying on him and celebrated his disenchantment with the young wife, Commode will be appointed by the fairy as Great Sarbacanier of the Crown.

### *Margot la ravaudeuse*

In *Margot la ravaudeuse: Histoire d’une prostituée*, Fougeret de Monbron goes on stripping away the layers of dubious respectability concealing the vices of his time. Margot, a girl of the streets, is the illegitimate fruit of the union of a soldier and a seamstress. Through her own work as a mender of torn stockings, her little hand discovers the vanities and lies behind the lustrous garments. Then she herself is drawn into

the world of pleasures. Very quickly, in the novel, the bodies tumble in fighting or in being carried away in pleasure. The beds cracking under the vigor of sexual intercourse and the screaming and whimpering of pleasure assure us that sex is a noisy and rowdy thing, which beautiful speeches seek to cover up in vain and which sets in motion the vast uproar of the world. Mender, prostitute, Opera dancer, maintained woman—thus does Margot tell of her tribulations.

The story of Margot's adventures fits in with the many novels giving the "girls of the world" (the expression dates from the Regency) the right to speak: *La belle allemande* by Antoine Bret (1745), *Panfiche* by Gimat de Bonneval (1748), *Histoire de Mlle Brion* (1754), and *Les egarements de Julie* by Jacques Perrin (1755). And all of these worldly belles share the same lucid and vigilant perspective on eighteenth-century European society—here and there the same temper flare-ups, the same taste for pleasure; the same reflections, bitter or violent, on social prejudice, on the miseries of the job; the same fear of the police and venereal disease; the same series of relocations; all marking the ups and downs of an existence submitted to the desire of men.

Fougeret (who translated *Fanny Hill* by Cleland) gives Margot a disillusionment in men, a sentiment he shares with her. However, his heroine is full of a conquering energy. Margot enjoys pleasure. She tears down facades. She launches a challenge to the world through her outspokenness. She is a woman who speaks and who does not allow herself to be duped. Hence, laughter runs throughout the novel. The

overwhelming power of the "histoires comiques" that *Margot la ravaudeuse* tells makes the reader recall that laughter has its part in pleasure, that the comic is always sexual.

### Biography

Fougeret de Monbron was born in Péronne on December 19. He arrives in Paris at the age of twenty. He sells back his office of a valet of the king's chamber, abandons all functions, and multiplies his trips across Europe, to Turkey, and to Russia. Watched by the police, imprisoned for his writings and satirical outspokenness, he appears to his contemporaries as a cynical and misanthropic writer. He dies in Paris on September 16.

PATRICK WALD LASOWSKI

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## FOWLES, JOHN

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1926–

English novelist, short story writer, and nonfiction writer

John Fowles's fiction consists of erotic quest romances in which sensitive, independent, and

enigmatic women are pursued and captured, lost and recovered, betrayed and deserted, defiled and even destroyed by intellectually inferior, emotionally insulated, and sexually inept men. These men desire absolute power and control and possession of what they cannot fully

understand, but they are also hypocritically self-punishing creatures who masochistically seek feminine correction of their masculine selfishness and ignorance. Their sibylline mistresses, whom they learn *from* but not *of*, set harsh tests from which some benefit nothing while the more discerning are given glimpses by their female *anima* of a superior intimacy of intelligence and desire, unfathomable by their own sex. The quest is never fulfilled, but the questors, freed from dependence on the objects of their passion, are educated into a difficult but more authentic freedom, learning from their losses and defeats about the mysterious nature of love, the impossibility of absolute knowledge, and the limitations of a left-lobe logic that categorizes and imprisons experience, whether in a locked cellar or on a pedestal.

In Fowles's England the Victorian age ends with the Second World War. The libidinal hang-ups of his questing anti-heroes are really hang-overs from the sexual manners and myths of an earlier, more repressed age and are exemplified in the narcissistic protagonist of *The Magus*, who rejects his nubile Australian girlfriend for an Edwardian wraith conjured from a magician's phantasmagoric masque. It is the secret wish and fear of the Fowlesian male, and of the surrogate author quarreling with his erotic muse in *Mantissa*, that his women should be simultaneously demure and provocative, virginal and promiscuous, tender and unforgiving. The conflicting pressures raging within the protagonal male psyche foist upon the female characters a mythic contradictoriness and unpredictability or, alternatively, polarize them into princesses and wantons, icons of magical unattainability debased by sexual access into seductresses and whores. Among these paired opposites are Charles's prim conventional fiancée Ernestina and the mysterious, dangerous Sarah in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*; the sensual and spiritual sisters Nell and Jane, and their alter egos Miriam and Marjory, with whom the hero of *Daniel Martin* enjoys parallel sexual relations; and, in the title story of *The Ebony Tower*, the septuagenarian painter's two young female acolytes, the mystic "Mouse" and the vampish "Freak," who arouse harem fantasies in the mind of a visiting art critic.

This pernicious sexual idealism is given its crudest form in Frederick Clegg, the lowly

government clerk of *The Collector* who spends his lottery winnings kidnapping an upper-class art student. For the obsequious, depraved Clegg there are two kinds of women—those you respect and those you abuse—and Miranda, the captive object of his fixation, descends in his eyes from one to "the other sort" in the sadomasochistic drama of power and abasement, class guilt, and revenge which is played out in his secret cellar. When Miranda's failure to communicate with her captor drives her, in desperation, to sexual advances that reveal his impotence, he pruriently punishes her forfeiture of his "respect" by roping her naked to the bed and taking obscene photographs, to which he then masturbates, "taking" the woman in the only way he knows—through a camera lens. A butterfly collector, Clegg stalks, captures, chloroforms, photographically exhibits, and finally kills Miranda as if she were one of his specimens.

Nicholas Urfe, the hapless victim of an occult theatrical extravaganza, or "godgame," staged by the island mage Conchis in *The Magus*, is a more sophisticated, educated Clegg. An ogler of photographed female breasts, Nicholas also prefers the onanistic fantasy to the real thing (the actress who acts out whatever he wants the mysterious Edwardian Lily to be tells him, "The real me's a lot less exciting than the imaginary one"), and, as with Clegg, his self-abasement has its obverse side. When, during the degrading and humiliating ordeals of his "disintoxication," the virginal "Lily" metamorphoses into actress, schizophrenic god-daughter, and sadistic psychiatrist, Nicholas's darker desires—to flog her, to watch her perform in a pornographic film and copulate with a black lover—are brought into play and meta-theatrically enacted in the psychodrama of the masque.

In *The French Lieutenant's Woman* this schizophrenic sexual psychopathology is traced to its origins in the Victorian era, an age of sanctified womanhood and child prostitutes, bowdlerized literature and massive pornography, which was neurotically in "two minds" about women and sex. Mirroring the crisis of his age, Charles Smithson by turns douses and fuels the flames of his forbidden passion for Sarah Woodruff, the self-styled "scarlet woman of Lyme." When she offers him her love at the Undercliff and then herself at an Exeter hotel, he seizes both and then runs away (respectively, to

his angelic betrothed and the nearest church). Sarah's story of her seduction by the French man Varguennes is a deliberate lie intended to seduce Charles, first vicariously, by making him a voyeur of the event who identifies with her seducer, and later in person, when she concocts a sprained ankle to set up the book's single, explosive sexual encounter in the hotel. A "pure" woman acting the role of a fallen one, Sarah, with knowing irony, fulfills the contradictory male desire for a virginal seductress (only at the moment when she ceases to be a virgin is she revealed, for the first time, to have been one). The trick is played so that Charles may remain, Victorianly, in two minds, unable to decide or even distinguish between his two figmentary Sarahs—the "innocent victim" and "wild abandoned woman," the *femme fatale* and melancholic hysteric—and he is kept in his confusion by the alternative endings which counterweight reconciliation with mutual rejection and abandonment.

The novel's narrator is also caught in two minds, waxing nostalgic for an age when sexual pleasure was sharpened by denial and recognizing fiction's complicity with repression. Mystery, says Fowles in *The Aristos*, energizes desire and fuels imagination; frustration nourishes fantasy, and this is equally true for writer, reader, and character. Fowles, who as French graduate, ex-naval lieutenant, and amateur naturalist combines features of Sarah's two lovers, has confessed to being ignorantly in love with and seduced by his heroine, and, as in *The Magus*, he places both the reader and himself in the position of the bewildered protagonist. Conchis, whom Fowles originally conceived as a woman, and the unknowable Sarah perform a conjuring striptease in which layer after layer of illusion is whisked away to reveal only another disguise; gratification is delayed, and denouements are deferred and dissolved to give the reader an unconsummated pleasure of the text. Even in *A Maggot*, where it is transcended by celestial history, the erotic plot is a powerful engine of narrative suspense and intrigue, driven by the prostitute's titillating tales of satanic orgies and her lord's voyeuristic threesomes (similar fantasies keep imagination alive in the dessicated Hollywood of *Daniel Martin*).

In *The Ebony Tower* the erotic origins of composition are indicated by the painter's

nickname for his amanuensis, "Mouse," formed by inserting an O-shaped vulva into the word "Muse," but in the metafictional *Mantissa* the writer's muse is a figmentary creature of *his* will, not he of hers, so her costume-changes from sex therapist and punk dominatrix to pert nymph and geisha occur auto-erotically, in the grey cells of his brain, making this both the most explicitly erotic and aridly cerebral of Fowles's works.

### Biography

Born John Robert Fowles in Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, March 31. Educated at Bedford School, 1940–44; Edinburgh University, 1944; New College, Oxford University, 1947–50: B.A. (honors) French, 1950. Lieutenant in Royal Marines, 1945–46; *Lecteur* in English, University of Poitiers, France, 1950–51; English teacher at Anargyrios College, Spetsai, Greece, 1951–52; various teaching posts in London, 1953–63, including Head of English, St. Godric's College, Hampstead. Married Elizabeth Whitton 1956 (died 1990). Received Silver Pen Award, 1969, and W. H. Smith Literary Award, 1970, for *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and Christopher Award, 1981.

DEREK WRIGHT

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# FRANKLIN, BENJAMIN

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1706–1790

American essayist, journalist, and memoirist

### “Letter of Advice to a Young Man on Choosing a Mistress”

Written in 1745, a period that biographer Carl Van Doren calls Franklin’s “salty year,” “Letter of Advice to a Young Man on Choosing a Mistress”—published during its interesting history under a variety of titles, including “Old Mistresses’ Apologue”—may initially shock readers familiar primarily with the sage, staid voice the author employed in other writings. After it languished in obscurity for many years, several people who could have effected its publication in the 19th century saw it as too frank and indecorous for public consumption. In the 1880s, when Franklin’s papers were owned by the United States government, Secretary of State Thomas Bayard denied a request by John Bigelow to include it in a collection of Franklin’s papers. In 1895, Franklin scholar John Back McMaster, who deemed the piece “too indecent to print,” could not bring himself even to mention its name, but did offer this allusion: “Nothing in his whole career is more to be lamented than that a man of parts so great should, long after he had passed middle life, continue to write pieces so filthy that no editor has ever had the hardihood to print them” (Granger, 266, 278).

Even as “Choosing a Mistress” was judged too prurient for publication, however, it was surreptitiously printed and circulated among a small group of gentlemen. Secretary of State Bayard evidently shared it with a friend, and soon after several copies were produced and

distributed via a private printing press owned by Paul Leicester Ford. Apparently, for a time in the late 19th century Franklin’s bagatelle was a guilty pleasure for the elite to enjoy out of earshot of decent society. By the time it was finally published in unexpurgated form in the 1920s and 1930s, the pleasure was no longer a secret. In 1938, Franklin enthusiast Abraham Rosenbach displayed it as part of his Free Library of Philadelphia exhibit “The All-Embracing Doctor Franklin.” His judgment of “Choosing a Mistress” as “[t]he most famous and the wittiest essay ever written by Franklin” indicates the degree to which standards of public taste had changed.

Perhaps the piece became more acceptable because, in addition to being less squeamish about matters of sex and the body, 20th-century readers had a greater appreciation for the complexity of Franklin’s satire. Addressed to an unnamed, unknown youth who has previously admitted to the writer “violent natural Inclinations” regarding the female sex, the letter recommends “Marriage [as] the proper Remedy.” Without a wife, a man “resembles the odd Half of a Pair of Scissars” (*sic*). Presuming that this advice will not satisfy his lustful associate, Franklin’s persona grudgingly offers an alternative: “But if you will not take this Counsel, and persist in thinking a Commerce with the Sex inevitable, then I repeat my former Advice, that in all your Amours you should *prefer old Women to young ones*.” He supports his position with eight reasons that, taken together, suggest a man of long experience in love, a utilitarian, and a unique kind of male chauvinist.

The older woman’s deep well of experience, claims the epistler, makes her a more capable

conversationalist. As her beauty fades, she will work harder to be useful. She will maintain more discretion in her liaisons than a girl, and even “if the Affair should happen to be known, considerate people might be rather inclin’d to excuse an old Woman who would kindly take care of a young Man.” A bachelor need not worry about illegitimate pregnancy or the ruinous “debauching [of] a Virgin.” An older woman will not be embittered by a tryst, but will, whatever the outcome, be “*so grateful!*” These claims subtly belittle the fairer sex by suggesting that on the one hand, young women have nothing to recommend them except beauty and sex appeal, and on the other that older women may “have more Knowledge of the World,” but it is a positive attribute only insofar as it is employed in the service of a man.

The portion of the argument that likely accounted for the letter’s earlier scandalous reputation, however, emerges in an ironic version of the *blason du corps feminin*. A man should bed an older woman

Because in every Animal that walks upright, the Deficiency of the Fluids that fill the Muscles appears first in the highest Part: The Face first grows lank and wrinkled; then the Neck; then the Breast and Arms; the lower Parts continuing to the last as plump as ever: So that covering all above with a Basket, and regarding only what is below the Girdle, it is impossible of two Women to know an old from a young one. And as in the dark all Cats are grey, the Pleasure of corporal Enjoyment with an old Woman is at least equal, and frequently superior, every Knack being by Practice capable of Improvement.

While the bagatelle’s comic climax is certainly unflattering to women on a very literal level, it also satirizes both the letter’s writer and its addressee. The embarrassing scenario should serve to chasten the youth’s shallow sexual desires, against which his older friend has already warned. Moreover, the reader is almost certainly meant to cackle at the elderly male paramour’s exaggerated practicality in matters of love, reflected in his laughably clinical description of the body, his matter-of-fact solution to the

problem of confronting a wrinkled face in coitus, and his use of the word “Improvement”—which suggests Franklin parodying his own well-known literary personae.

### Biography

One of the most legendary figures in American history, Benjamin Franklin was born January 17 in Boston, Massachusetts. A renowned publisher, scientist, inventor, philosopher, diplomat, and civil servant, Franklin was also a prolific writer who demonstrated a fascination with human potential for self-improvement. His most famous works include his *Autobiography*, a series of *New England Courant* editorials produced under the pseudonym Silence Dogood, and the aphorisms and literary selections attributed to the fictional Richard Saunders in *Poor Richard’s Almanack*. Franklin also penned a variety of short, miscellaneous works, some of which he called “bagatelles,” trifles to amuse his friends. These bagatelles sometimes remind readers of the human foibles that balance the virtues Franklin is so revered for espousing. He died on April 17.

MARK S. GRAYBILL

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## FRENCH: SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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The impact of political developments in France during the seventeenth century on literary output can be likened to a rein encircling artistic expression. The assassination of Henri IV in 1610 resurrected widespread fears that the now unified nation could once again descend into the discord of the religious wars that had devastated late-sixteenth-century France. Largely as a precautionary measure to safeguard central stability, the delegates of the Estates-General of 1614–15, traditionally a body that forced royal compromise, effectively abandoned France to absolutism: this was the last gathering of the Estates until 1789. The growth of absolutism during the century is seen in the trend toward gathering artists, scientists, and writers under official patronage, as well as in the founding of official institutes to oversee and codify artistic endeavor. Cardinal Richelieu founded the Académie Française in 1635 in order to regulate and preserve the purity of the French language. It is no accident that its first official pronouncement was a judgment on Pierre Corneille's *Le Cid* (1636), demonstrating that policing the arts had become government business and that literary production was henceforward expected to conform to carefully determined guidelines.

With the backdrop of the Counter-Reformation and resultant burgeoning spiritual movements, together with the foundation of religious orders by notable figures such as François de Sales and Vincent de Paul, an identifiable group of writers, known by the disparaging term “libertines,” made their mark on the literary establishment. Libertinism during the seventeenth century is somewhat different from the notion of it during the Enlightenment, when it would be understood as much more of an organized, intellectual movement. During this period, libertinism was an all-enveloping concept covering a wide range of people, from freethinkers to atheists; in other words, the heterodox. Flushed with the success of officialdom turning a blind eye to their excesses—which included the public heckling of clerics preaching in the pulpit—due in part

to the sympathy of Louis XIII (whose same-sex tendencies were an open secret), the libertines' situation was transformed as a result of the successful prosecution of Théophile de Viau. The poet, part of a group of libertines notable for works glorifying homoeroticism, narrowly escaped the death penalty, and his trial was conducted by secular authorities, marking the transition to state, rather than ecclesiastical, control of censorship.

Moralists, such as Samuel Chappuzeau, opined that certain subjects were to be excluded from the stage, and emphasized the function of theatre as moral instruction. By stressing the ethical dimension of drama, authors went on the counterattack. The appearance of the anonymous poetry collection *Le Parnasse des poètes satyriques* (1622), attributed to Viau, marked the beginning of the censorship battle in France, as this work was published without the *privilège du Roi*, or official permission. The licentious poems in this work include vivid descriptions and terminology for genitalia and the sexual act, using vulgar as well as more poetic euphemisms for sexual activity, including sodomy. This method is shared by Claude d'Esternod, who dedicates a poem, *Le parfait macquereau suivant la cour* [*The Perfect Pimp Following the Court*] (1619), to the beautiful Magdelaine, exhorting her to give away her favors for free, as she used to, instead of insisting on a high fee. This appeared in a collection published in 1619 as *L'Espadon satyrique*.

One of most celebrated anthologies of erotic verse during this period is *Le cabinet satyrique* [*The Satirical Cabinet*] (1618), with contributions from poets such as Régner. This anthology presents sexual freedom in a positive light: contributions deal with lesbianism, nymphomania, prostitution, and masturbation, in addition to a discussion of the speed of erection and ejaculation. The *Nouveau cabinet des muses* [*New Cabinet of Muses*] (1658) contains *L'Occasion perdue recouverte*, a sexually explicit poem probably written by Pierre Corneille around 1650. Jean de La Fontaine's *Contes et nouvelles*

*en vers* (1665–74) detail lustful peasants, predatory clergy, and unfaithful wives, though the content is muted in comparison with earlier poetry collections (and it is for this reason that the work was granted a *privilège du Roy*), and the style is more bawdy than explicit. *Le dortoir*, for example, deals with a pregnant nun who is admonished by her abbess for having committed a sin. The transgression in question does not turn out to be fornication, but rather not having cried for help when the unfortunate nun was ravished in the convent grounds; this she did so as not to break the order's rule of silence. Clément's *Relation du Voyage de Copenhague à Brême* [*Account of a Voyage from Copenhagen to Bremen*] (1676) subverts travel writing with a verse account of a peculiar trip featuring morally dubious characters encountered in inns along the way.

While the seventeenth century is characterized by the flourishing of all branches of the theatre, both in tragedy and in comedy, this was accompanied by vehement disapproval from certain ecclesiastical quarters, culminating in open condemnation of the theatre. Suspicion of the stage often focused on actresses who were held to arouse libidinous feelings in their largely male audience. Unlike in England, where female roles were ordinarily played by boys, women played female roles in France, with the exception of older characters, whom actresses customarily refused to play. This meant that plots involving seduction or relations between the genders and love intrigues were afforded a realism that would have been impossible with an entirely male cast. Cross-dressing was a common motif in French theatre, invariably involving romantic intrigue and the "male" figure being courted by another male. Examples include Charles de Beys's *L'Hôpital des fous* [*The Madhouse*] (1636) and Jean-Baptiste Poquelin (Molière's) *Le dépit amoureux* [*The Lovers' Quarrel*] (1656). In the latter, the comedy's central character, Dorothee, engages in amorous talk with another man while disguised in male garb. Although subsequently unveiled as a woman, this does not exclude a homosexual reading. So prevalent was this leitmotiv in public theatre that it even filtered into religious drama (for example, Montgaudier's *Natalie* [1654]).

Works dealing with a homosexual theme, outside of moral treatises and confessors' manuals, are generally circumspect during the seventeenth century, though there are exceptions. A notable

example is the treatment of Henri III's alleged sexual preferences and favorites, to interest of historians and public alike throughout the seventeenth century. Thomas Artus's *Les hermaphrodites* (1605) is a satire on Henri III's alleged transvestism, and although the monarch was assassinated in 1589, the work was published only in 1605, with a frontispiece of the king wearing a feminine dress complemented by makeup and jewelry. Several poems composed by Faucherand de Montgaillard, published posthumously in 1606 as *Gaillardises du Sieur de Mont-Gaillard*, satirize the licentious activities of courtiers and favorites at the late monarch's court. These works demonstrate an unintentional consequence of these late-sixteenth-century libels: a growing awareness of same-sex love. The topic is not entirely absent from drama: Michael Hawcroft has argued that Pierre Corneille's *Clitandre* (1632) portrays "a kind [of] love that prefaces, dictionaries, and other dramatists did not explicitly mention or depict."

While swiftly and meticulously repressed and destroyed, libels on the sexual peccadilloes of powerful figures continued to appear throughout the seventeenth century. Cardinal Mazarin was the namesake of the "Mazarinades," pamphlets published from small presses during the turbulent years of the Fronde (1648–1652) which escaped official scrutiny. Some attacked the cardinal for an addiction to sodomy, while others accused him of sexual relations with the queen mother and regent, Anne of Austria. A seven-page Mazarinade entitled *La custode de la reine qui dit tout* [*An Account of the Queen Which Tells Everything*] (1649) is a bitter, explicit account of the queen's alleged affairs, and though the author was caught distributing the pamphlet on the same day he had printed it, a menacing crowd prevented his execution. Similarly, *Les amours d'Anne d'Autriche* [*Anne of Austria's Loves*] (1692, though originally published around 1649), probably written by Eustache Le Noble, presents Anne as having fathered Louis XIV by a long-term lover, Count Rantzou. A later work in this tradition, *Amours de Louis le Grand et de Mademoiselle du Tron* [*Loves of Louis the Great and Mademoiselle du Tron*] (1697), sets out the purported circumstances of a love affair between the aging Sun King and a voluptuous young noblewoman, in which their passionate meetings are arranged by the complicity of a priest. This is a



thinly veiled satire on Louis XIV and Madame de Maintenon. Such sexually charged polemics would persist to the period leading up to the French Revolution.

Writers entertaining heterodox opinions in matters of religion and philosophy faced a hostile and repressive climate, in which they were frozen out of the artistic mainstream. This resulted in an unusually steadfast sense of fraternity among figures who were ostracized or who identified themselves as libertines. A play that typified the tensions between moralists and libertine writers was Molière's *Tartuffe*. This comedy about an unscrupulous fraudster worming his way into a family by masquerading as a devout Catholic and playing to the head of the household's pious sensibilities was rightly viewed by the *dévots* (a secretive and powerful group of prominent Catholics) as a thinly veiled attack on their movement and its influence in contemporary society. The work was officially prohibited in 1664, a revised version suffered the same fate in 1667, and the text we possess now, the edition of 1669, is a watered-down version of the original. As with much satirical literature, Molière uses sexuality as the protagonist's downfall, in this case his lust for the wife of the head of household, Orgon. The fact that the dramatist persisted in rewriting the play into a version that eventually escaped censure, reveals that sexually charged drama was commercially successful. The link between political and sexual subversion is tantalizingly hinted at by the dramatist in the final act when Orgon is compromised through keeping some documents for a friend banished after the civil war of the Fronde. By the 1660s, trends in public taste had evolved, influenced by religious and cultural movements, resulting in the almost complete elimination of comedy relying on sexual (mis)behavior and bodily functions, though Molière relies on innuendo, double entendres, and older husbands obsessed with preserving their young wives' fidelity as his comic ammunition.

The execution of the libertine poet Claude Le Petit in 1662 for obscene and blasphemous writing was a reminder of the potential consequences of falling foul of the limits of what the authorities would accept. In Molière's *Dom Juan* (1665), at face value a play dealing with the comeuppance of a religiously and sexually deviant protagonist, the dramatist subtly undermines the moral implications of the last scene

where Dom Juan is dragged down to Hell as divine retribution for his sinful ways; Sganerelle, his faithful servant, is affronted at not having been paid and shouts after his master: "Ah mes gages! mes gages!" [What about my wages?] (V, 6). The depiction of sexuality in the tragedies of Pierre Corneille and Jean Racine is on a more subtle level. It is interesting that Corneille sets his martyr-play *Polyeucte* (1643) only two weeks following the marriage of the protagonist rather than the gap of several years specified in the original legend, firmly emphasizing that the central couple operate on the level of a sexual rather than domestic relationship. Similarly, in Racine's *Phèdre* (1677), Hypolite is not presented as the youth vowed to celibacy in the legend, but is in love with a princess. However, both Corneille's *Polyeucte* and Racine's *Britannicus* (1669) neutralize homoerotic elements that may be detected in source accounts (Metaphrates and Tacitus).

Roger de Bussy-Rabutin's *Histoire amoureuse des Gaules* [*Amorous History of the Gauls*] (1665) records the romantic adventures of various ladies of Louis XIV's court, and was published without the author's knowledge after his mistress lent the manuscript to one of her friends. The published work, altered in places by Madame de La Baume, cost the author over a year in the Bastille, and a frosty welcome when he attempted to return to court life, ensuring a lifelong exile from Versailles. While it details the relative promiscuity of some courtly women, the work concentrates more on the political intrigue of such liaisons rather than offering any apology for sexual liberty. This case mirrors French society's attitudes to sexuality; while adulterous behavior was not uncommon among the ruling classes, this was firmly a taboo subject. Ostracism, not execution, was how the establishment dealt with its own. Rabutin's narrative derives from the genre stylized by Pierre de Brantôme (1540?–1614); the first seventeenth-century edition of his *Recueil de dames galantes* [*Collection of Gallant Ladies*] was published at Leiden in 1665 as part of his memoirs.

The distribution of such works, with the ensuing scandal they produced, typifies the relative ease with which works could appear without the necessary official permissions. Another method of bypassing the censors, employed by dissenters in philosophy and religion as well as sexual free-thinkers, was to have their monographs printed

in the Netherlands (sometimes a false title-page was provided to give the appearance of a foreign imprint). Another alternative was to disguise a work's erotic content and present the imprint under the guise of an instructional manual.

Joan DeJean criticizes the common trend of categorizing nearly all seventeenth-century erotica as libertine writing. Charles Sorel's *L'Histoire comique de Francion* [*Comic Story of Francion*] (1623) may contain some erotic scenes, but this follows on, in style and content, from the *Decameron*, on which it is modeled. Exemplifying a tradition inherited from Rabelais, François Béroalde de Verville's *Le moyen de parvenir* [*The Means of Succeeding*] (1610) is essentially a sexual comedy which deals with virginity, chastity, and clerical celibacy in a bawdy and inventive novel, focusing on various sexual issues, such as a husband having to use a fork in order to break his new wife's hymen. The depiction of such incidents can be read as supportive of a greater degree of sexual education. The anonymous *Les quinze marques approuvées pour cognoistre les faux cons d'avec le légitimes* [*The Fifteen Approved Methods for Recognizing False and True Cunts*] (1620) is a narrative detailing how midwives determine, after a careful examination of the genitalia, whether a young rape victim's account of her ordeal is true. Nicolas Venette's *Tableau de l'amour conjugal* [*Representation of Conjugal Love*] (1686) similarly deals with the problem of a young man trying to decide the most suitable age to marry, and sets out the advice of various sages, including theologians, atheists, and men living in debauchery. However, the book contains outmoded medical opinions for curing sexually transmitting diseases, and a discussion of intercourse between a married couple is followed by a treatise extolling virginity.

The genre of the fairy tale, which flourished in France between 1690 and 1715, rarely portrays love in physical terms, though there is often a strong undercurrent of sexual suggestion. In Charles Perrault's "La Belle au bois dormant" [Sleeping Beauty], it is mentioned that the princess does not need to sleep much after she has met her prince. "Le Petit chaperon rouge" [Little Red Riding Hood] feels the wolf's naked body when she joins her "grandmother" in bed and is much amazed, though also curious, at the hairy figure. The author warns, in a moral at the end of this tale, that women need to be most wary of

wolves that are not to be found in the forest, which highlights the sexual metaphor running through the story. Sexual aggression also defines many tales. Marie Catherine D'Aulnoy's "Vert et Bleu" is erotically charged: the amorous Prince Vert gazes at Bleu bathing naked. The tale contains muted eroticism in that hope for marriage is also desire for physical union. There is a concentration on male voyeurism, but D'Aulnoy presents independent heroines who need compatible partners to satisfy their lives; in "La Belle aux cheveux d'or" [Beauty with the Golden Hair], the protagonist rescues the king's favorite (explicitly called "mignon" by the unmarried monarch) from the control of his master and ends up marrying him when her husband inadvertently poisons himself. Free from the possessive machinations of his king, D'Aulnoy notes the couple is not only happy but also "satisfied," thus completing the heterosexualization of Avenant ("Comely").

However, the fairy tales' unapologetic presentation of romantic love accepts the dominant discourse of sexuality, with its implicit exaltation of patriarchy. The invariable elements are that of women needing to find a husband in order to become contented and whole, whereas men must discover or affirm their masculinity through daring exploits. Nevertheless, as with the novel, this form of fiction allowed writers to express liberal attitudes to sexual matters, albeit in a heavily disguised form reliant on tropes.

The seventeenth century saw the publication of a number of erotic libertine works, and the growing commercial popularity of the novel saw this literary genre used as an experimental vehicle by some writers wishing to test the limits of what the public would buy and, moreover, what the ever-vigilant authorities would tolerate. Three of the most notable, if not notorious, novels are Michel Millot's *L'Escole des filles* [*The Girls' School*] (1655), Nicolas Chorier's *Le Mersius français ou l'académie des dames* [*The French Mersius, or the Ladies' Academy*] (1680, originally published in Latin in 1660), and François Chavigny de la Bretonnière's *Vénus dans le cloître ou la religieuse en chemise* [*Venus in the Cloister, or the Nun in Her Smock*] (1683). The publication and subsequent international popularity of these books marks a shift from Italy to France as the most significant center of libertine activity. The first two of these works deal with the sexual education of an innocent teenaged girl

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by a more experienced woman of the world. These follow on from an earlier tradition exemplified by the anonymous *Les secrettes ruses d'amour* [*Love's Secret Schemes*] (1610), which discussed, from a male perspective, the seduction of women and concluded that widows made the best lovers, as they combined experience with independence. Millot's work (whose publication he paid for together with Jean L'Ange, though the authorship remains uncertain) is generally considered to be the first widely available pornographic literary text. Nicolas Foucquet, Louis XIV's disgraced finance minister, was found to have a copy preciously stored in a secret room in one of his mistress's houses.

The pornographic genre had been created, and James Turner has described such works as "erotic-didactic fantasy organized around the fiction of the speaking agent." While Millot's work is relatively tame by libertine standards—it contains no blasphemous references or overt political subversion—it is marked by sexual explicitness, and official emphasis was laid on eliminating the work rather than those responsible for its publication, who were handed strikingly lenient sentences. It is possible to view the work as resisting the demands of a newly victorious absolutist establishment following the end of the recent civil war, and its obscenity as a defiant pose struck against the expectation for artists to render appropriate homage to the government. The title of Molière's *Ecole des femmes* [*School for Wives/Women*] (1662), a comedy about the romantic and sexual awakening of an innocent young girl, echoes that of Millot, which illustrates how far this work had permeated popular culture.

Chorier's *Académie* goes further than Millot in including lesbian acts and orgiastic scenes. Chorier is attributed with the authorship of *Le putanisme d'Amsterdam* [*Whoredom in Amsterdam*] (1681), a curious study of this city's prostitutes detailing their common ruses, makeup techniques, and way of life. The work takes the form of a mystical, nocturnal visitation to the red-light district led by a supernatural spirit, though the level of detail and familiarity suggests that the author was well acquainted with the world he was describing. This provides an unusual and incisive survey of seventeenth-century

prostitution, together with an earlier work, *Infortune des filles de joie* [*Misfortune of Goodtime Girls*] (1624), attributed to Adrien de Montluc. As well as a glimpse into prostitutes' methods, and some moral reflections on the trade (which castigates clients as well as the women), the work concludes with a reflection on the attraction, and revulsion, attached to thin women.

Chavigny's *Vénus* is a work composed of dialogue between characters, in this case three conversations between two young nuns, Angélique and Agnès, who justify sexual activity as a natural gift from the Creator, and the pair view their relationship with young clerics as fulfilling normal desires. As well as presenting an apologia for free love, the work concludes with the pair initiating intimacy with each other. Through satire of established religion and its representatives, in particular through focusing on hypocrisy and sexual excess, writers gave new life to a long-standing criticism of Catholicism. In their struggle for liberty of artistic expression against the constraints of standards of decency set by Church and State, the endeavors of such libertine writers sowed the seeds of the Enlightenment.

PAUL SCOTT

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# FRENCH: EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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Erotic literature flourished in 18th-century France, particularly after 1740, when a resurgence in explicitly pornographic writing was inaugurated with the publication of the best-selling novel *Histoire de D[om Bougre]*, *Portier des Chartreux* [*History of D(om Bougre), Porter of the Carthusian Monks*] by Gervaise de Latouche. In fact, the flowering of French Enlightenment philosophy that took place toward the middle of the century corresponded with a renewed interest on the part of writers and publishers in the production of a wide variety of erotic works. Between 1747 and 1748 alone, the materialist La Mettrie put out his radically mechanist philosophical treatise *Machine Man*; Montesquieu finished *The Spirit of the Laws*; the most famous pornographic work of the century, *Thérèse philosophe* [*The Philosophical Thérèse*] (attributed to Boyer d'Argens), appeared in print; and Diderot published the erotic orientalist tale *Les bijoux indiscrets* [*The Indiscreet Jewels*].

Erotic and obscene writing played an important role within the culture of the French Enlightenment, both as a form of literate entertainment and as a vehicle for the development and diffusion of new modes of thought. Literary scholars and historians (including Robert Darnton, Jean M. Goulemot, Lynn Hunt, and Jean Mainil) have emphasized the close ties linking ancien régime erotic writing to the more canonically philosophical texts for which the period remains known. Not only did several of the most prominent *philosophes* produce erotic, obscene, or libertine writings, but the expression “livres philosophiques,” used by booksellers of the period to designate illicit texts, referred to obscene novels such as *Margot la ravaudause* [*Margot the Darner*] (1750), as well as to works of philosophy.

The corpus of 18th-century French erotic literature includes salacious poems (notably *Ode à Priape* [*Ode to Priapus*] by Alexis Piron, 1710), dialogues, short stories, and *libelles* or *chroniques scandaleuses* (the “libels” or “scandalous chronicles” of the activities of aristocrats and

public figures). Of all these forms, erotic and obscene poetry has perhaps been the most neglected in treatments of the 18th century, even though the tradition is an impressively varied one which embraces verse from the mildly scabrous (Voltaire's *La pucelle d'Orléans* [*The Maid of Orleans*], 1755) to the openly indecent (*La foutromanie* [*Fuckmania*], attributed to Sénac de Meilhan, 1778). Eighteenth-century erotic poetry was read and appreciated for its ability to arouse and delight its readers. For instance, in his essay *La volupté* [*Sensuousness*] (1745?), La Mettrie discusses what he calls the “double happiness” of simultaneously perusing erotic poetry and frolicking in the “fresh, tufted” grass with his mistress. Erotic verse could be openly obscene and philosophical (as was the case with *La foutromanie*) or written in a more stylized idiom, like the *Poésies érotiques* [*Erotic Poems*] (1778) of Évariste Désiré de Forges, vicomte de Parny.

Despite the interest erotic poetry held for 18th-century readers, it is the erotic novel that represents at once one of the most popular and one of the most innovative genres of the period. While the designation “libertine novel” has been used to include everything from the allusive fiction of the abbé Prévost to the joyful bawdiness characteristic of Andréa de Nerciat, discussions of Enlightenment literary eroticism have traditionally distinguished between the libertine novel of worldliness and seduction (the *roman mondain*), on the one hand, and the obscene or pornographic novel on the other. Critics have historically been reluctant to associate the frank obscenity of the latter with the elegant suggestiveness of the former, even though the two genres share an Epicurean focus on sensual and sensorial pleasure as a *summum bonum* or greatest good.

The most representative examples of the libertine novel, whose practitioners include Claude-Prosper Jolyot de Crébillon, Charles Pinot Duclos, Claude-Henri Fuzée de Voisenon, and Claude-Joseph Dorat, highlight reiterated scenes of seduction, elegantly and sometimes elliptically

narrated, which take place in the opulent, idle, and highly stylized world of the most privileged classes of ancien régime France. The aesthetic that these novels promote (or in some cases, subtly call into question) is based on the valorization of an ethos of frivolity, ephemerality, and superficiality as the source not only of sensual gratification but of an aristocratic mastery of both self and other. This mastery comes about through the close study and careful imitation of social conventions, so that the libertine may more expertly manipulate those who are governed by them. The ritualized seduction of one libertine by another—or the equally ritualized education of a young man into the ways and means of this type of seduction by an older woman—expresses, in the *roman mondain*, an erotic hedonism that is also an understanding of the social world as malleable and transformable according to the disciplined will of the aristocratic individual. The rites of love, in libertine novels, are also rites of subjugation. Or, as the libertine Versac remarks to the young Meilcour in Crébillon *fil's* *Les égarements du coeur et de l'esprit* [*The Wayward Head and Heart*] (1736–38), “It is only by appearing to submit to all that [women] ask of us that we succeed in dominating them.” The best-known exemplar of the worldly libertine novel is probably *Les liaisons dangereuses* [*Dangerous Liaisons*] (1782), by Choderlos de Laclos, remarkable for its detailed and insightful portrayal of a libertine woman, the marquise de Merteuil, who describes the practice of seduction as a form of individual emancipation from the constraints placed by society on feminine sexual desire. Unlike many other libertine works, however, *Dangerous Liaisons* seems to conclude with an adherence to a sentimental moral perspective, in that the libertine protagonists end up either dead (the vicomte de Valmont) or disfigured and disgraced (Merteuil).

Libertine writings typically depict an aristocratic milieu in which the careful manipulation of strict social codes serves both to mask sexual desire and to facilitate seduction. Libertine ladies know that they must feign innocence with each new lover they take, while their male counterparts are obliged to show the signs of “authentic” passion even as they undertake their second or third sexual conquest of the day. Through the portrayal of a social environment in which appearance is valued above all else—a world in which even the most apparently

sincere outpouring of sentiment is liable to serve only the instrumental function of accumulating sexual triumphs—libertine novels call into question the idea that words, expressions, or gestures can possess one true or essential meaning. The universe of *libertinage* is one of masks, disguises, and double entendres, in which the moral relativism of the libertines is heightened by the necessity of conforming to social norms themselves in constant flux. In the words of Crébillon *fil's* arch-libertine Versac, “Is it not necessary to have a lively, varied intelligence in order to take on unflinchingly the roles that each moment demands you play... to be passionate without having feelings, to cry without being moved, to seem tormented without being jealous?” The ideal of polite hypocrisy that is expressed in this passage—and elsewhere in libertine literature—perversely includes strong elements of social criticism. The absolute insincerity of the consummate libertine mirrors the pervasive bad faith of a society in which discourses of moral and religious piety often appear to be used to conceal rabid self-interest. This strain of ideological critique is perhaps most visible in the work of the marquis de Sade, an author who seems to deny the very possibility of an ethics that is not simultaneously a practice of domination.

The oriental tale—in which exoticism serves to heighten the narrative’s erotic effects—is an important and highly successful variant on the libertine novel of seduction. These texts participated in the wave of fashionable orientalism initiated, in France, by the translation of the *Les mille et une nuits* by Antoine Galland [*The Arabian Nights*] (begun in 1704). They include Diderot’s famous *Indiscreet Jewels* (set in a fantastical Congo), as well as Crébillon *fil's* erotic social satire *Tanzai et Néadarné, histoire japonaise* [*The Skimmer, or The History of Tanzai and Néadarné*] (1734) and his ribald *Le sofa* [*The Sofa: A Moral Tale*] (1742), Voisenon’s *Le Sultan Misapouf* [*The Sultan Misapouf*] (1746), and Jacques Rochette de La Morlière’s *Angola* [*Angola: An Eastern Tale*] (1746). The image of the “oriental” harem—which, for French authors, tended to evoke fevered visions of lesbianism and despotic patriarchal privilege—also figured prominently in novels whose primary focus was not always explicitly erotic. The latter include Montesquieu’s *Lettres persanes* [*The Persian Letters*] (1721) and Prévost’s *Histoire*

*d'une grecque moderne* [*The Story of a Modern Greek Woman*] (1740).

Oriental tales usually (although not always) profit from the change of scenery they introduce to add elements of political and social critique to the serial depiction of libertine adventures. For instance, the *Indiscreet Jewels*, in which women's "jewels" are made to talk by way of a magic ring, is not only an investigation of what has been presented by writers from Diderot to Freud as the enigma of female sexuality; it is also a timely and satirical account of the morals, fashions, and rituals of the court of Louis XV (1710–1774). In the *Jewels*, Diderot uses the bawdy conceit of the talking jewel—the vagina as origin of both secrets and knowledge—to investigate an enlightened fascination with the search for rational, empirically verifiable truth in domains ranging from metaphysics to court politics. Diderot's dual strategy—partly frolicsome, partly analytical—is typical of a genre whose most playful aspects could serve as counterpoint to (and flimsy concealment of) critical accounts of the repressiveness of ancien régime orthodoxy. In the widely read *Mémoires turcs* [*Turkish Memoirs*] (1743) attributed to Claude Godard d'Aucour, the author produces a bracing critique of occidental prejudice and moral hypocrisy in the midst of a portrayal of an entirely fantastical (and often ridiculous) Orient populated by whirling dervishes, sacred prostitutes, and sexy slave girls.

The rise of the oriental tale, a widespread phenomenon in which the *Indiscreet Jewels* and the *Turkish Memoirs* played significant parts, gave evidence of a growing French fascination with the nature and cultural order of non-European societies. The popularity of the *conte oriental* persisted throughout the first half of the century and well into the second. In the most sophisticated versions of the genre, the eroticism of a fantastic Orient functions simultaneously as a reflection of what was perceived as the growing decadence of the French aristocracy and as a foil allowing for the construction of a vision of European society as characterized by rationality, orderliness, and a commitment to social progress.

The emphasis of libertine novels—worldly and orientalist—is on the witty manipulation of language and the playful evocation of an atmosphere of sophisticated and self-conscious sensualism. The obscene novel, traditionally considered somewhat beyond the pale by scholars of

the period, is more explicit—both sexually and philosophically. In obscene works, sexual exploration combines with more or less daring intellectual experimentation. For instance, *Thérèse philosophe* is both a raunchy coming-of-age tale and a materialist tract, while La Morlière's *Les Lauriers ecclésiastiques* [*Ecclesiastical Laurels*] (1748) includes a scathing critique of clerical bigotry, as does *History of D*. Similarly, Pierre Nougaret's *Lucette ou les progrès du libertinage* [*Lucette, or A Libertine's Progress*] (1765–66), although its ending is grim and punitive, contains hints of a potentially transgressive moral relativism. Somewhat later, in the years around the French Revolution, Gabriel-Honoré Riquetti, comte de Mirabeau, produced a series of obscene works combining a Voltairean skepticism, a critique of oppressive ancien régime traditions (such as that of the *lettre de cachet*), and lively depictions of sexual practices, including male prostitution (in *Ma conversion ou le libertin de qualité* [*My Conversion, or the Libertine of Quality*], 1783), masturbation, bestiality, nymphomania, lesbianism (in the essay *Erotika biblion*, 1783), sodomy, group sex, and male homosexuality (in the short story *Hic et haec*, 1798). The marquis de Sade, also writing toward the end of the century, is well known (and increasingly canonized) for his pornographic texts which are intended to provoke the reader physically *and* intellectually.

While contemporary scholars have tended to see philosophy and pornography as fundamentally separate endeavors, 18th-century novelists (de Sade included) use the technique of obscene depiction as both empirical demonstration and persuasive rhetorical device. The reader is swayed by the obscene narrative to lend credence to the philosophical arguments of the text, thus proving conclusively the naturalness, forcefulness, and ubiquity of sexual desire. In many obscene novels (as in the work of the marquis de Sade), obscene passages are therefore interspersed with philosophical argument. The goal of the obscene novel is not only the arousal of the reader, but enlightenment in a broad sense: the reader, in ridding him/herself of prejudice and what was often perceived as the "veil" of superstition, emerges from the novel with a newly clarified understanding of the importance of the senses in the development of knowledge about the world, the naturalness of sexual impulses, and the hypocrisy of churchly condemnations of the free expression of sexual

desire. In this sense, the pedagogical aims of the obscene novel are at one with those of the French Enlightenment as it has been traditionally characterized, and include a commitment to empiricism, the promulgation of limited individual freedoms, and the development of a moral law based in an understanding of natural processes. As Monsieur T\*\*\* remarks to Thérèse in the beginning of *The Philosophical Thérèse*, “these excessive ticklings that you feel in that part which rubbed against the column of your bed... are urges as natural as those of hunger and of thirst.” Obscene novels take an interest in sexuality as a natural “mechanism” of the human organism.

Because the sexual practices depicted in Enlightenment obscene writings (as well as in libertine novels) are often quite diverse, the delimitation of the domain of the “natural,” far from functioning consistently as a way of restricting the expression of sexual desire, reveals itself to be subject to almost infinite expansion. Both men and women are characterized, in obscene literature from the middle of the century in particular, as actively sexual and capable of experiencing a wide range of erotic pleasures. In *The Philosophical Thérèse*, the heroine’s mentor wholeheartedly recommends masturbation as a way for women to assuage sexual impulses without running the risks of penetrative heterosexual intercourse (including pregnancy, the loss of reputation, and disease). Women are described as having “the needs that men do; they are molded from the same clay, even though they cannot make use of the same resources.”

This egalitarian perspective on sexual desire is not unique to *The Philosophical Thérèse*. In La Mettrie’s philosophical essay *L’Art de jouir* [*The Art of Pleasure*] (1751), for instance, long passages are devoted to the joys of both male and female orgasm. Moreover, La Mettrie ends the essay with a discussion of the pleasure to be taken in acts of male homosexuality (although he condemns lesbianism as unnatural). “Believe me, my love,” he writes, “love makes of every beloved a woman; the empire of love recognizes no limits other than pleasure!” There is some evidence that the libertine ethos, as expressed in both ancien régime literature and aristocratic social life, included at least a limited acceptance of homosexual desire as a part of sophisticated sexual practice. In the *La véritable vie privée du maréchal de Richelieu* [*The Authentic Private Life*

*of the Maréchal de Richelieu*] (1790), attributed to Jean-Benjamin de la Borde and Louis-François Faur, the maréchal, who was, along with Casanova, one of the most famous libertine figures of the century, is shown with relative equanimity on the part of the author(s) to have appreciated the charms of male and female lovers over the course of his many travels.

Lesbianism, on the other hand, was at once the object of a certain amount of fascination and—in theory, at least—entirely nonexistent as a sexual practice at the origin of a specific sexual identity or type. The libertine marquise de Merteuil, in *Dangerous Liaisons*, describes engaging in lesbian sexual relations with her naive pupil, Cécile, as a test of the girl’s sensual aptitude. In Diderot’s erotically inflected novel *La religieuse* [*The Nun*] (1796), the seduction of the heroine by another nun is depicted at length and in highly sensual terms, although Diderot ultimately portrays lesbian desire as a perverse consequence of the unjust and unnatural imprisonment of women in convents. In obscene novels, implicit or explicit lesbianism generally functions to heighten the erotic effect of voyeurism.

Obscene writing became progressively more political in the years leading up to the French Revolution, as pornographic critiques of despotism proliferated in the form of *chroniques scandaleuses* and *libelles*. In the 1770s and 80s, *libelles* were widely distributed throughout France by means of clandestine publishing networks. These writings portrayed the “private lives” of kings and courtiers as well as the amorous adventures of women of the court (from queens to royal mistresses) and included, as the century wore on, increasingly scabrous and explicitly anti-royalist components. One milder example, the *Anecdotes sur Mme la comtesse du Barry* [*Anecdotes About Madame du Barry*], probably by Matthieu-François Pidansat de Mairobert, focused on the infidelities of Louis XV’s mistress and portrayed the king as a cuckold periodically blinded by his own lecherous desires. The heedless libertinage characteristic of Louis XV’s regime in fact provided fodder for booksellers long after the king’s death, and Robert Darnton has pointed out that the defamation of Louis XV played a key role in the fall of Louis XVI in the Revolution. In the last decades of the century, the transfer of power from an absolutist monarch to a republican

political order was accompanied by and narrated in vivid descriptions of the impotence of the king and the “depraved” promiscuity of Marie-Antoinette, as Lynn Hunt, Jean Mainil, and others have discussed. The revolutionary period witnessed an explosion in the production of obscene pamphlets and images portraying the pornographically debauched habits of the most privileged classes; in these works, the critique of the ancien régime is undertaken through the politicized description of sexualized bodies—from the decaying, syphilitic visages of aristocratic women to the virile nudity of the new citizens of the Republic.

Libertine and obscene novels, pornographic *libelles*, and bawdy tales continued to be written and circulated throughout the last decade of the 18th century. Nicolas-Edmé Restif de la Bretonne published his *Anti-Justine*, promoting a kinder, gentler eroticism in response to what the author deemed the “horrors” of the marquis de Sade, in 1798. Andréa de Nerziat, whose vivid and inventive prose references early forms of libertine eroticism with its insouciant epicureanism, was particularly active during the revolutionary period and beyond. Vivant Denon, author of the quintessentially libertine tale *Point de lendemain* [*No Tomorrow*] (1777), published a revised edition of this celebrated work as late as 1812. Denon’s story of a one-night affair between a cultivated older woman and a younger man manifests a characteristically libertine fascination with the ephemeral pleasures of the body, the fantastical trappings of great wealth, and the subtle manipulation of stylized language for seductive effect. Nonetheless, despite their extraordinarily refined tastes, the lovers of Denon’s tale act out a fundamental truth of sublunary human existence. “We are such *machines*,” declaims the hero. Although *Point de lendemain* is in one sense the tale of a young man’s passage into sophisticated adulthood, the lesson that the hero learns from his more experienced lover is simply that moral certitudes ring hollow in the face of pleasure. “I looked hard for the moral of this adventure,” he affirms, “and I found none.”

Notably, the beginning of the 19th century coincides with the publication of the first series of libertine novels known to have been written by a woman, the comtesse Félicité de Choiseul-Meuse. Her *Julie, ou J’ai sauvé ma rose* [*Julie, or I Have Saved My Rose*] (1807) contains explicitly erotic descriptions of many different varieties of

feminine sexual experience, although the female protagonist is careful always to resist penetration (not unlike her predecessor, the philosophical Thérèse). As Julie explains, “To refuse the ultimate favor is to know how to experience true pleasure.” Yet the first decades of the 19th century also witnessed the intensification of a climate of political and intellectual repression. Just as the aristocratic tradition of libertine eroticism did not survive the demise of the monarchy, the era of “enlightened” pornography eventually came to an end with the transformation of obscene writing into an illicit private pleasure with seemingly little connection to public life.

Thematically, French erotic writing of the 18th century demonstrates specific interest in and curiosity about the minds and bodies of women in particular. In this sense, erotic literature of the Enlightenment shares the preoccupations of the 18th-century French novel more generally, since both genres are intimately concerned with feminine experiences, sentiments, and social roles of women. This concern is especially visible in the obscene novel—with its reliance on female narrators and scenes of voyeurism centered around women’s bodies—but is also salient for discussions of the libertine novel, in which what contemporaries increasingly saw as a debauched “feminization” of tone and focus was reflected in a precious prose style and a fascination with the study of female psychology. Twentieth-century feminist critics have nonetheless remarked on the fact that the explicit portraits of feminine sexuality that appear in what is commonly understood as the corpus of 18th-century erotic literature were exclusively produced by men. Women writers, on the other hand, tended to excel in a genre which has not always been included in discussions of eroticism: the *roman sentimental*, or the sentimental novel.

While the erotic aspects of the sentimental novel did not necessarily appear consequential to literary critics of later periods, 18th-century commentators showed a strong awareness of and anxiety about the effects of precisely this type of novel on feminine sexuality. The erotically stimulating (and indeed potentially dangerous) elements of the form were highlighted again and again. For instance, Jean-Jacques Rousseau famously remarked, “No chaste girl has ever read novels.” This comment targeted not obscene literature, as modern readers might expect,



but precisely the kind of sentimental novel epitomized in Rousseau's own *Julie, ou la Nouvelle Héloïse* [*Julie, or the New Heloise*] (1761). It was feared that women, thought to be highly responsive to sensation and less amenable to the influence of reason, would be seduced by novels into cultivating a heightened state of sensibility that would leave them at the very least vulnerable to seduction, if it did not spur them to seek out the means to satisfy an increased desire for feeling of all kinds. The image of the woman reader, ubiquitous in the art and literature of the period, was itself a suggestive one, since the woman who read was seen as implicitly in a state of distraction and reverie (not unlike that presumed by 18th-century doctors to be brought on by masturbation). Rousseau writes, in the last book of his *Émile* (1762), of a woman who has fallen in love with a character from a novel and is thus unable to play her proper role as wife and mother. Similarly, the doctor D. T. de Bienville, in his famous treatise on *La nymphomanie ou traité sur la fureur utérine* [*Nymphomania, or Dissertation on the Furor Uterinus*] (1771), affirms the close relationship between excessive reading of novels and the development of uncontrollable sexual urges in women. In his discussion of the most dangerous kinds of novel, Bienville cites the "tender novel" (*roman tendre*) alongside the "lascivious" and the "voluptuous" types. In these and many other sources, it is clear that 18th-century critics and readers understood the sentimental novel to have significant effects on the stimulation of sexual desire; in other words, the novel of sensibility was thought to be as "erotic" as libertine and obscene texts. The similarities between the two genres may help to explain in part why the famously obscene marquis de Sade, who was himself the author of sentimental novels, did not hesitate to describe Rousseau's *Julie* as a literary chef d'oeuvre.

The vision of erotic pleasure outlined in sentimental novels is nevertheless distinct from that typical of libertine and obscene texts. While the latter tend to focus on sexual mastery and sexual knowledge, respectively, the eroticism of the sentimental novel inheres in the portrayal of feelings—particularly feelings of sympathy, longing, and unfulfilled (yet all-encompassing) desire. In Françoise de Graffigny's *Lettres d'une Péruvienne* [*Letters from a Peruvian Woman*] (1747), the female protagonist is wracked by love for her absent betrothed. In Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni's

*Lettres de Milady Juliette Catesby* [*Letters from Lady Juliet Catesby*] (1759), the heroine describes her struggle to resist her desire for a man she believes to be a rake; both her resistance and her erotic yearning are portrayed in evocative and voluptuous terms. In the sentimental novel, unlike its obscene and libertine counterparts, not only the gratification of desire but the endless deferral of it could incite eroticized feelings of sympathetic identification in readers. The masochistic pleasure to be taken in unfulfilled longing functioned as the feminine counterpart to the sadistic delight of sexual conquest. The differences between the sentimental and the libertine aesthetic are most neatly encapsulated in the marquis de Sade's twin masterworks, *La nouvelle Justine* [*The New Justine*] (1797) and *L'Histoire de Juliette* [*The Story of Juliette*] (1798–1801). In the former, the exaggeratedly sentimental Justine is repeatedly subjected to the most horrific of sexual tortures, while the latter depicts at length the sadistic delight taken by the libertine Juliette, Justine's sister and alter ego, in the misery of others. In these novels, de Sade parodically reveals the mechanisms by which the sentimental heroine gives erotic pleasure to readers through her masochistic resignation to suffering, while the libertine whose derives erotic joy from the sexual subjugation of her victims.

Over the course of the century, authors of literary, scientific, and legal texts became more preoccupied with what was coming to be seen as the fundamental distinctiveness of women's sexuality, which was often described as more enigmatic and disorderly than that of men. Twenty-five years after the publication of the adventures of the salacious and highly sexed Thérèse, Diderot explained in his article *Sur les femmes* [*On Women*] (1772) that women rarely experience orgasm, and are unlikely to feel the pleasure that men do even in the arms of a lover. Diderot writes of women, "Organized entirely differently from us, the mechanism that evokes voluptuous pleasure in them is so delicate and so difficult to reach, that it is not surprising that it should not work properly." The mechanistic and libidinous universe delineated by the obscene philosophical novel was giving way to a social domain marked by sexual difference as an explanatory principle. Women's mysterious sexual "organization" served in part to explain their social subordination, since, for both men and

women, sexuality was emerging as a crucial component of behavior—a key that might unlock the secrets of human nature.

The most famous literary instance of the developing interest in the explanatory power of sexual desire is probably the autobiography of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les confessions* [*Confessions*] (1782–1788). Here Rousseau describes in great detail the genesis and development of his sexual predilections. He discovers early on that he takes great pleasure in being beaten, particularly by older women. Rousseau writes, “Who would have thought that this childhood punishment, received at the age of eight at the hand of a girl of thirty, would have marked my tastes, my desires, my passions, my self for the rest of my existence?” Interestingly, Rousseau depicts his sexual and sensual life as essentially psychological: “I have possessed very few women, but I have nonetheless experienced much pleasure in my own way, that is to say, in my imagination.” This interiorization of sexuality—as an index of individual personality or identity—is a modern phenomenon (and one that is quite foreign to the libertine tradition, for instance). Rousseau goes on to recount other formative incidents in his erotic experience—an experience that later eras would characterize as perverse—including episodes of exhibitionism and prolonged masturbation. Even though Rousseau’s stated intention is not to arouse his readers, his work represents an important development in the literary portrayal of eroticism, since the extraordinary attention which Rousseau devotes to the presentation of his sexuality is a sign of a new interest in sexual desire as a crucial part of individuality.

The erotic literature of the French 18th century, in all its diversity, reflects the atmosphere of social transformation (and, ultimately, upheaval) in which it was produced. Libertines and their ilk functioned as the mouthpieces of a new Lockean empiricism and as the representatives of the most joyously superficial of aristocratic aesthetics, depending on the contexts in which they found themselves; the focus of the erotic novel may be subversively materialist (as in *The Philosophical Thérèse*) or apparently frivolous (as in Crébillon’s *The Sofa*). Protagonists range from sexually emancipated prostitutes (*The Story of Juliette*) to beautiful aristocratic ladies (*The Wayward Head and Heart*) to a talking bidet (Antoine Bret’s *Le \*\*\*\*\*, histoire bavarde* [*The Bidet, a Talkative Tale*] (1749);

characters in Enlightenment erotic writing may be depicted as literal sex machines (driven to copulate by predetermined natural forces) or as sexual aesthetes (hypersophisticated masters of the cultivation of erotic sensation).

On the other hand, not all 18th-century eroticism includes explicitly transgressive or critical elements. While the libertine or obscene novel often flirts with the more or less obvious violation of the codes governing virtuous behavior, the sentimental novel deals with the difficulties (and pleasures) inherent in the perfect obedience to these same codes. What does unify these extraordinarily wide ranging genres, however—and what is perhaps also their most characteristic sign—is a belief in the close connection of the erotic life of individuals to modes of thought that appear to modern readers as philosophical and political. For 18th-century writers of all stripes, the portrayal of erotic desire is never innocent. During this period, even the most explicit description of sexual congress was understood to make a point about what was considered (or *should* have been considered) natural human behavior as well as about the justness of the social order in which this behavior took place. While the link between the political, the philosophical, and the erotic has appeared less inevitable in later periods, in 18th-century France it was the heightened awareness of this tie that gave erotic literature its critical bite—and gives it, ultimately, its continued relevance.

NATANIA MEEKER

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# FRENCH: NINETEENTH CENTURY

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Although Nineteenth century France was content to retain the anodyne but usefully Protean term *amour*, French life and culture in the new bourgeois age was saturated with an unprecedented concern with sexuality that manifested itself in every sphere of existence, assuming, on the part of moralists and hedonists alike, the status of a veritable obsession. In much French writing of the period, this obsession was intertwined with fundamental social and political concerns, though with the flourishing Decadent aesthetic of the fin-de-siècle, sexuality would increasingly become a specialized domain savored for its own sake and distinguished only with difficulty from the pornography in which the same authors sometimes engaged. From early in the century, the ever more widespread disregard for conventional restraints on sexual behavior encouraged by the new economic order, and the increasing readiness to depict it in words or in the visual arts, went hand in hand with both a more general loosening of literary constraints and the promotion of greater specificity and explicitness in the descriptions of the external world to be found in the related realms of journalism and "realist" fiction. These latter developments frequently led to the juxtaposition, within the same composition, of high and low genres and a mingling of language both elevated and crude, mundane and exotic, that not only permitted a representation of the tensions underlying the new social reality, but challenged taboos the roots of which went much deeper than the

perspectives of either literature or polite society. Of equal consequence was the establishment of a new literary marketplace, in which the consumer's desires were indulged more or less subtly and with greater or lesser good grace, depending on the author's commitment to other aesthetic, philosophical, or moral imperatives.

Such examples of apparent restraint as existed in the literary treatment of love were rarely unrelated to this obsession with the sexual. As Roland Barthes observed of Eugène Fromentin's seemingly chaste "personal novel," *Dominique* (1863), if the explicit sexual dimension is erased, it nonetheless makes itself felt elsewhere in the writing, starting with bisexual name of the title character. Likewise, whereas the love poetry of Lamartine might seem to characterize the canonical image of French Romanticism, its wider historical significance derives from its representing one of the two extremes of erotic discourse, with the literal absence of the opposite extreme constituting an implied presence that both defines and questions it. The readiness with which "Le Lac" was felt to invite parody is noteworthy in this respect: an erotic version (complete with the French equivalent of four-letter words and an inevitable sexual play on the verb *jouir*) appeared in 1845, while Flaubert, in *Madame Bovary* (1857), has his Rouen boatman (an ironic counterpart of the Venetian gondolier of the Romantic stereotype) sing verses from the selfsame poem as he rows the adulterous couple who are his passengers. In the case of

Alfred de Musset, the Romantic poet himself becomes an (anonymous) pornographer as the author of *Gamiani ou deux nuits d'excès* [*Gamiani, or Two Nights of Excess*] (1833). The phenomenon to be studied, therefore, is not merely the explicit manifestation of sexuality, but the more or less total eroticization of 19th-century French society, its interactions, and its relationships of power. That the eroticization of modern life and culture was identified by contemporaries as a specifically French phenomenon is illustrated by the way Victorian England was ready to demonize contemporary French literary production, though this attribution to France of the role of forbidden Other alerts us to the presence of mythmaking, an activity which also is unlikely to be absent from the ways in which French society constructed images of itself. In 1888, the English translation of Zola's novel *La Terre* (1887) earned its publisher, Henry Vizetelly, a prison sentence. The depravation of Oscar Wilde's *Dorian Gray* was attributed by his creator to his reading of French literature, while the same author's erotic drama *Salomé* was produced in Paris (in French) rather than London. Unsurprisingly, few of the most influential or widely read French novels of the period escaped the papal Index (though the latter seems to have been compiled in accordance with a rhythm of fits and starts that now seems quaintly quixotic). Yet it was not the case that the French authorities sanctioned sexual license. In different ways, according to the hue of the particular political regime, they remained largely committed to censorship. Though somewhat less so than stage productions or the press, books were regarded as potentially dangerous. In the later years of the Restoration, for example, amid justifiable fears of political insurrection, the owners of *cabinets de lecture* were ordered to destroy all titles that had been placed on the Index for being immoral or irreligious, categories that overlapped considerably in the mind of the censor.

Censorship was pursued with impunity, notwithstanding its nature as a double-edged sword. From the point of view of literary fame, it mattered little whether the authors of *Madame Bovary* (1857) and *Les fleurs du mal* [*The Flowers of Evil*] (1857) were acquitted on charges of obscenity. (Flaubert, who wielded the twin advantages of an aesthetic of indirect statement and a cultivated moral ambiguity, was;

Baudelaire, whose poetry appeared more obviously inflammatory of the senses, was not.) In both cases, the work received unprecedented exposure, though Baudelaire was obliged to expunge some dozen poems whose erotic nature had given particular offense. As for the trial of Antony Méray, author of *La part des femmes* [*The Woman's Share*] (a novel serialized in a Fourierist newspaper in 1847), it was immortalized by the mention it received in Flaubert's *L'Éducation sentimentale* (1869). Censorship was, moreover, always ready to make an ass of itself. As Théophile Gautier recorded in his preface to *Made-moiselle de Maupin* (1835), the vicomte Sosthène de La Rochefoucauld attracted derision, in the closing years of the Restoration, for ordering the Opera dancers to wear longer skirts and for imposing a plaster fig leaf on every public statue. In *Madame Bovary*, Flaubert brilliantly catches the hypocrisy of much censorship: the outraged Homais, caught between his sense of propriety as the bourgeois *père de famille* and his self-congratulatory pose as a freethinker, castigates his young assistant Justin for reading a manual of conjugal love before informing the assembled company that in the right hands, the volume (the copy is presumably his) of course has a legitimate educational purpose.

Nonetheless the pursuit of indecency on the part of the authorities was invariably a response to an imagined political threat rather than an expression of general puritanism or prudery. A number of the political *chansons* Béranger wrote during the Restoration, and which led to his imprisonment, showed the censor to have been right to sense an ulterior motive behind obscenity. The Revolution of 1789, with the pornographic writings of Mirabeau and his imitators, the obscenities that peppered Hébert's newspaper *Le Père Duchesne*, and, above all, the crude pornographic satires depicting Marie-Antoinette engaging in incest, lesbianism, masturbation, and insatiable nymphomania, had provided some sulphurous examples. If the sexual scenes in Zola's early novel *La confession de Claude* (1865) attracted the attention of the censors of the Second Empire, the decision not to prosecute was due to their (correct) conclusion that the work was not politically subversive. One can, nevertheless, only conjecture how the same author's Rougon-Macquart cycle would have fared had the less repressive Third Republic not intervened.

## FRENCH: NINETEENTH CENTURY

The erotic obsession marking out 19th-century French literature was closely linked to the new prominence accorded women in post-Revolutionary France and heralded in symbolic fashion by the way the cultural philosopher and writer Madame de Staël was considered by Napoleon an enemy of some consequence. Whether as an increasingly complex, not to say perverse, object of desire or as the embodiment of her own sexual desires, Woman, as her often superior vitality (or individuality) as a literary fictional character revealed, came to possess a significance that both conferred on her the potentiality of embodying multiple “novelistic” intrigues (in a society where dramatic changes in fortune were the hallmark of the new socio-economic reality). This posited her as a threat to what was still a world in which men—however inadequate (or “feminized”) Stendhal, Balzac, Flaubert, and Zola might show them to be—remained the dominant force.

The 19th-century French male was nonetheless at risk from the new status of women. His increasingly ludicrous formal attire, completed by phallic top hat and cane, was a gift for caricaturists and became viewed as a theatrical garb that connoted standing and respectability but which, especially in depictions of the demimonde, was at odds with the moral and physical grubbiness it concealed. Its function as the uniform of the dandy, who, according to a Baudelaire or a Barbey d'Aureville, represented a cultivated superiority that went beyond the realm of costume, nonetheless reinforced the sense of an uneasy relationship with the female sex. The threat represented by women in the 19th-century French imagination was all the greater in that Utopian thinkers such as Saint-Simon and Fourier explicitly advocated the emancipation of women, while their female counterparts, notably Flora Tristan, readily adopted a feminist agenda and terminology. The more extreme facets of these imaginary societies might justify the luxury of ridicule, but no such belittlement, nor the adoption of an age-old misogynistic discourse, could seriously dent the fixation of the age upon the figure of Woman, nor palliate the dread that patriarchal structures would prove as flimsy as those quarters of Paris reduced to rubble by the grandiose schemes of that other Utopian, Baron Haussmann. It is only with slight exaggeration for humorous effect that Balzac, writing in 1848, looked back to “the great female emancipation of

1830.” The new prominence of Woman would duly find further expression in Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's novel *L'Eve future* [*The Future Eve*] (1886), which featured a beautiful android indistinguishable from a real woman.

This did not mean that the course of historical inevitability ran as smoothly as reformers would have wished. It is significant that Zola, in *Germinal* (1885), has the body of the female mineworker clothed by the same overalls as the male miner's, thereby rendering her sexless, while in *L'Assommoir* (1877), Gervaise's descent into alcoholism reenacts a topos previously considered masculine. It is striking, too, that whereas novel writing in the first decades of the century was virtually the exclusive province of women, the reverse became true after 1830. Margaret Cohen has argued that the significance and value of “sentimental” writing by women have been obscured by the prestige of subsequent male-authored works of “realism.” Yet initially such works of realism represented a hijacking by male writers of the novel's specifically feminine concerns. Rather than eliding the female perspective, or relocating it in an unproblematic past, Stendhal and Balzac offer the female reader the delight of a bolder feminine individuality, with the added (if doubtless insidious) prestige of being revealed by a male gaze and therefore accorded a proof of its origin outside the cocoon within which female writer and reader enclose themselves. Yet Mathilde de la Mole's Romantic self-image in Stendhal's *Le rouge et le noir* [*The Red and the Black*] (1830), while it possesses the realist status that might appear to sanction that of an emancipated woman, is subtly subordinated, by virtue of constituting an extra layer of heroic imitation, to the depiction of Julien Sorel and his overweening ambition. It was Balzac who was regarded by his contemporaries as having, in Jules Janin's mocking words, “invented women.” The vast interlocking fictions of the *Comédie humaine* contain the most remarkable diversity of female personages, separated not only by individual temperament and circumstances, but by age, class, marital status, and sexual orientation and united only through the fascination they arouse as a result of the novelty of their exposure and the ways in which they use (or disdain to use) their sexuality for their advancement. As if dissatisfied with existing categories, Balzac created others, some of which, notably the hitherto unacknowledged

“woman in her thirties” (*la femme de trente ans*), were gratefully received by the appropriate section of his readership. It was as if the novelist had usurped the privilege of access to the secrets of the woman’s bedroom accorded usually only to priest or physician. To judge by his fan mail, his female readers more generally felt gratitude for the extraordinary empathy he showed with regard to their desires and emotions. The fate of the liaisons he depicted was nonetheless shown to depend, disconcertingly or reassuringly according to one’s standpoint, on the prevailing social forces rather than on conventional morality.

The changing attitudes and behavior of women in a politically unstable world brought an unfamiliar compulsion to understand and redefine relations between the sexes, as may be seen in the way, for example, the century is marked out by such works as Stendhal’s *De l’Amour* (1822), the historian Jules Michelet’s *L’Amour* (1858) and *La Femme* (1859), and Paul Bourget’s *Physiologie de l’amour moderne* (1891). (Bourget’s writings were lampooned for their social exclusivity by Octave Mirbeau in *Le Journal d’une femme de chambre* [*Diary of a Chambermaid*], 1900.) At the key turning point in his career, Balzac published his humorous but insightful *Physiologie du mariage* (1829), a work he never repudiated and a topic to which he frequently returned. Its overtly sexual perspective serves as an appropriate introduction to the anarchy that had ensued from the way marriage had evolved. As Patricia Mainardi has shown, the combination of arranged marriages (often between partners of disproportionately different ages) and the lack of even limited divorce laws in France until 1884 inevitably led not only to adultery but also to a whole sexual subeconomy (involving married women and girls of easy virtue alike) catering to the young man denied more legitimate outlets. The unique figure of the accommodating *grisette* beloved by the Parisian Latin Quarter population, anatomized by Janin, nostalgically recalled by Théodore de Banville in his poem “L’Amour à Paris,” and lovingly drawn (along with her counterpart, the *lorette*) by Gavarni, was the uncomplicated response of the marketplace. Yet the obsessive desire for a mistress, recorded in the first part of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*, is also the cause of the hero’s downfall in Gustave Drouineau’s proto-Balzacian novel *Ernest, ou le travers du*

*siècle* [*Ernest, or the Distance of a Century*] (1829). More fundamentally disruptive of established order, the liaison between a young man and an older married woman, based on reciprocal sexual attraction, establishes itself as a topos susceptible of some telling variations, notably in *Le rouge et le noir* and *L’Education sentimentale*. Such instances cannot be dismissed as copycat examples of a young male’s fantasy. They are, still more, the product of profound tensions within the way French bourgeois society ordered its sexual economy. Small wonder that the 19th-century French novel and the novel of adultery appear almost synonymous.

If it is easy for each new age to appear to be the first to discover sex, the erotic obsessions of the French 19th century contrasted strikingly with those of the ancien régime, albeit with certain strands of continuity that must be considered first. That the *roman libertin* of the previous century exerted a formative influence on the writers of Balzac’s generation cannot be denied. As for the Marquis de Sade, he was read both more and less often than he was mentioned. The existence of an ambiguous dividing line between the erotic and the pornographic explained the similar attraction of the “gay [happy] novels” (*romans gais*) of Pigault-Lebrun, though these, together with the novels of his much maligned but also much read “successor,” Paul de Kock, also tapped into a much older tradition of Gallic, anticlerical humor. In early-nineteenth-century France, as Balzac’s *Physiologie du mariage* confirms, both Rabelais and Sterne were immensely popular and were taken to license narratives that contained a certain elevated or learned smuttiness (*grivoiserie*). It is to this tradition that Balzac’s *Contes drolatiques* [*Droll Tales*] (1832–37), written in pseudo-Rabelaisian French, belong, as does Maupassant’s story “Mes vingt-cinq jours,” [My Twenty-five Days], which links a magnificent walnut forest to an ingenious penance imposed by the village priest on his female parishioners who “fall.”

Yet 18th-century concepts of the erotic, outside the realm of pornography, remain distinct from those of the century that followed. If poets such as Gautier and Gérard de Nerval (and to a certain extent Verlaine) looked back nostalgically to the 18th century, it was to an age when a largely visual representation of erotic activity emphasized a notion of “la vie galante” that stressed wit, sensual yet tasteful pleasures, and

intelligent, self-conscious idealization. The physical activity of sex was not expunged but alluded to by witty innuendo which, while sometimes obscene, nonetheless addressed itself to the reader's intelligence with a *clin d'oeil*, a wink. It was the opposite of the explicit—the representation had to be “read” for it to reveal more than its picturesque exterior. As in the case of the *roman libertin*, the emphasis on intelligence was a mark of its aristocratic nature. The history of eros in 19th-century France is, in contrast, one of *embourgeoisement*, “bourgeoisification.” Nowhere is this more apparent than when Balzac, in *La Cousine Bette* (1846), dubs Valérie Marneffe a “Madame de Merteuil bourgeoise.”

As the bourgeois age progresses, there is an ever-increasing emphasis on the body and its secrets, as is shown by Balzac's comic portrait of Mademoiselle Cormon in *La vieille fille* [*The Old Woman*] (which makes much play with 18th-century *grivoiserie*), a temporarily uxorious spinster of advancing years who has to be cut out of her corset after fainting. The same fixation with the female body will later appear in certain of Mallarmé's poems, though in an infinitely more refined manner, with corporeal forms evoked suggestively as absences, thereby embodying the essence of “pure poetry.” Meanwhile, the progression of the nude from the polished classical and academic perfections of Ingres and Gérôme to Courbet's obese bathers (whom Barbey d'Aurevilly accused of “polluting the stream in which they bathe”) showed a development that responded to a call for greater realism, which in the eyes of some equated with ugliness. Yet nudity on its own achieved only a limited effect. A greater degree of erotic realism was achieved by that most “literary” of painters, Manet, when, in *Le déjeuner sur l'herbe* (1863), he surrounds his female nude with male picnickers who are fully clothed, or when, in his *Olympia* (1863), he has the courtesan (a forerunner of Zola's Nana) clothed by her nudity and her sexuality alluded to by a phallic cat who would make a reappearance in Zola's novel *Thérèse Raquin* (1867). Works by Balzac (*Le chef-d'oeuvre inconnu* [*The Unknown Masterpiece*], 1831) and Zola (*L'Oeuvre* [*The Work*], 1886) took the reader into the studio to see the very real (reluctant) nudity of the amateur model. The convention by which the beloved is little more than a name is left well behind as Baudelaire embraces with all his senses (but also his mind) those erogenous

features of his mistress's body to which he finds himself obsessively drawn.

The *femme fatale*, that dramatic and exotic form of the newly “realist” fantasy of the dominant female (for example, Mérimée's *Carmen*, 1847; Rachilde's *La Marquise de Sade*, 1886; or Mirbeau's Clara in *Le jardin des supplices* [*The Garden of Torments*], 1898–99), was required to have a highly developed physical allure. The Bible and antiquity, coupled with a personal experience of exotic sexual tourism, provided Gautier and Flaubert with the inspiration for further awe-inspiring examples of female physicality, such as Cleopatra, the fictional Sallambô, and the Queen of Sheba (in Flaubert's *La tentation de Saint-Antoine*, 1874), just as other writers were drawn to Judith and Delilah. Joris-Karl Huysmans's exploitation, in *À rebours* [*Backward*] (1884), of the biblical story of Salomé, which he took over from the painter Gustave Moreau, led to his exploiting, in a decadent (and highly cerebral) manner, the use the character makes of her body to impose absolute power on the patriarch who engendered her. Female nudity is fundamental to the more accessible libertinism of Pierre Louÿs, in such popular works as *Aphrodite* (1896), the story of a courtesan in 1st-century Egypt.

It is nonetheless the explicit emphasis on physical sexual activity that most surely characterizes the 19th-century French novel. Mérimée in *La double méprise* [*The Double Mistake*] (1833) and Flaubert in *Madame Bovary* were ready to scandalize (and delight) the bourgeois public with the unmistakable evidence of sexual coupling behind the blinds of a moving coach. More generally, Flaubert, Maupassant, and Zola gave a new centrality to the sexual act itself and depicted both the preliminaries and the locations in which it took place with a new level of detail. The film directors Visconti and Godard were later able to find suggestive erotic scenarios amongst Maupassant's short stories, while Buñuel found inspiration in *Le journal d'une femme de chambre* (first published in *La Revue bleue* in a bowdlerized version) and Louÿs's *La femme et le pantin* [*The Woman and the Puppet*] (1898).

It is, arguably, the relentlessly erotic character of Zola's Rougon-Macquart novels that offers the most wide-ranging reflection of the frenzied eroticism of the age. Sex for Zola was not so much a subject as a vast metaphor for a society

in the throes of autodestruction, though he was not unaware of the subject's allure. Even the evocations of the vegetables in *Le ventre de Paris* [*The Belly of Paris*] (1873) or the department-store window display in *Au bonheur des dames* [*On the Happiness of Ladies*] (1883) connote sexuality. The apparently regulated social order of the apartment block in *Pot-Bouille* [*Pot-Face*] is exploded by the unmasking of the building as the locus of illicit sexual desire, whether satisfied or frustrated. More generally, the living and working conditions of the modern city, in which the increasing encouragement of consumerist behavior, coupled with a new emphasis on the provision of entertainment, heightens expectations with regard to the satisfaction of appetites of every kind, bringing strangers into a new physical proximity that stimulates both sexual promiscuity and voyeurism. If scenes of undisguised voyeurism are frequent in Zola's novels, it is as if the Parisian environment makes voyeurs of us all, author and reader included. Yet, it was the anonymity of the city, and the stimulus of the chance encounter, that had been at the heart of Baudelaire's eroticization of the city. If his activity as *flâneur* was that of a dandy, aesthete, and refined connoisseur, subsequent writers and artists came to view the boulevards of Haussmann's Paris as locations in which individuals eyed each other up with a brazenness previously associated only with the world of prostitution. As the streets became the location for an ever-growing section of the population, there was a corresponding need for popular forms of leisure to be organized and controlled, as Huysmans shows in depictions of young working-class men and women both in the workplace and in places of entertainment such as the fairground (*Les soeurs Vatard* [*The Sisters Vatard*], 1879; *En ménage* [*Some Housework*], 1881).

Most indicative of the *embourgeoisement* of erotic activity in 19th-century France, however, is the intimate relationship between sex and money. Throughout the century, prostitution was the obsessive concern of the authorities and literary practitioners alike. Parent-Duchâtelet's report on prostitution in Paris (1836), published early in the July Monarchy, was widely read. Far from being a matter for automatic condemnation, prostitution was the subject of debate. Given the nature of marriage in 19th-century France, it is not surprising that it had its

defenders. So central was it to the period's thinking that Fourier, in keeping with his practice of rehabilitating negative concepts through the simple tactic of overturning their marginal status, placed universal prostitution at the heart of his blueprint for relationships between the sexes. In the literary realm, with no such intention on the part of the authors concerned, the prostitute similarly progressed from being a minor to a major figure. It is scarcely an exaggeration to say that she became the premier female literary character of the age, and certainly satisfied its appetite for superficial variety. The widespread curiosity about the courtesan's superior expertise finds tangible expression in the scene in *La Cousine Bette* in which the naive and virtuous wife, Adeline Hulot, is stunned by the opulent domestic surroundings of her rival, Josépha. From deluxe *objet d'art* to the bargain-basement streetwalker, from those who exploited their position to gain wealth and influence to those who maintained a conscience and a capacity to love or those who set an example of repentance, the species spawned a rich set of subspecies. Balzac's Coralie, his Florine, or his Esther Gobseck, Flaubert's Marie (in his early story "Novembre") or his Rosanette (in *L'Éducation sentimentale*), Janin's Henriette (in *L'Âne mort et la femme guillotinée* [*The Dead Ass and the Guillotined Woman*], 1829), Hugo's Marion de Lorme, Sand's Lélia, the *lorette* Suzanne in Méray's *La Part des femmes*, Dumas fils's Marguerite Gautier (his "Lady of the Camellias"), Maupassant's Boule de suif, Huysmans's Marthe, the Goncourt brothers' Elisa, Zola's Nana, the list could easily be prolonged. The high-fashion locales of Parisian prostitution, the Palais-Royal and the Opéra, as well as the more humble red-light district that forms the backdrop for *Gambara*, are given due prominence by Balzac, while both the Goncourts and Maupassant took their readers inside a *maison close*, a "closed house." In both literature and the visual arts, the brothel was all but indistinguishable from the theatre in what was a vast spectacularization of life in the French capital. Balzac's totalizing vision, moreover, makes prostitution the dominant metaphor of the *Comédie humaine*, and one that incorporates rather than excludes literary production.

Sex was also ensured prominence by the employment of more empirical forms of scientific inquiry, especially in the realm of medicine. Yet medical attention continued to focus on



masturbation in the wake of Dr. Tissot's celebrated 18th-century treatise on onanism. The portrait of a teenage boy in Balzac's *Le médecin de campagne* [*Country Medicine*] alludes to a need for him to be cured of the practice; while Mallarmé's evocation of poetic sterility and the dramatization of "disappearing vision" in "L'après-midi d'un faune" [Afternoon of a Fawn] and "Victorieusement fui le suicide beau" [Victoriously Fled the Beautiful Suicide] have been interpreted as an acknowledged punishment for adolescent masturbation. Balzac's theory of a limited vital fluid, together with the overtly sexual context of his tale of the wild ass's skin that shrinks with each satisfaction of a desire (*La peau de chagrin* [*The Skin of Sorrow*], 1831), may be regarded as forming part of a similar sexual pathology. The frustrating debate over the nature of female sexuality (and sexual pleasure) inevitably spilled over into nonmedical spheres. Flaubert's *Emma Bovary*, the Goncourts' *Germinie* (*Germinie lacerteux*, 1864), whose life was based on the inclination of their own maid to debauchery, Zola's *Renée* (his attempt at a modern *Phaedra* in *La curée* [*The Quarry*], 1872), to say nothing of Mirabeau's chambermaid, would have been inconceivable without the emergence of new views of female physiology. These views, and their fictional repercussions, indeed presented a challenge to what had previously prevailed as truth (*vraisemblable*).

The perception of an explosion of sexual activity was intertwined with questions of public hygiene as much as with those of morality (though the imaginary newspaper article included by Zola in *Nana* [1880] indicates how easily the same language could be made to do double service). In the 1830s morgue literature of Janin and Petrus Borel and his Romantic circle, as well as in other contemporary "social novels" (*romans de mœurs*), the prostitute's inevitable removal to the "hospital" was taken to indicate the venereal ward. If Dumas *fils* has the Lady of the Camellias die of consumption, this demands to be seen as a euphemistic allusion to a sexually transmitted disease, as must surely be the exotic infection passed on to Valérie Marneffe by her Brazilian lover, and, for all its superior realism, *Nana's* death from smallpox caught from her infant son. The plaster statue of a priest in *Madame Bovary* peels in giveaway fashion. But such cases are of minor importance alongside

the way in which sex in 19th-century France was associated with disease and death through the fear and reality of syphilis, of which Flaubert laconically observed in his *Dictionnaire des idées reçues* [*Dictionary of Generally Accepted Ideas*]: "[M]ore or less everyone is affected by it." (In 1900, some 15 percent of all deaths were considered to be from the disease.) Literary syphilitics included Baudelaire, Flaubert, Maupassant, Alphonse Daudet, and Jules de Goncourt, with the disease being pronounced responsible for any evidence of a pessimistic outlook on life, also associated with the influence of Schopenhauer. Initially not always mentioned by name, it is plainly the cause of the husband's death in Balzac's *Le lys dans la vallée* [*The Lily of the Valley*] (1836). Chapter 8 of *À rebours* recounts Des Esseintes's nightmare vision of the disease. Daudet's posthumous *Aux pays de la douleur* [*In the Land of Suffering*] is an autobiographical account of a man in the painful tertiary stage of the disease. Less direct illustrations of a self-aware syphilitic imagination may be found in some of Baudelaire's imagery.

The morbidity of the closely related Naturalist and fin-de-siècle aesthetics likewise drew on scientific thinking that stressed the animalistic in man. In Zola's *La Terre*, the peasant is shown to display a quasi-sexual obsession with the soil, but there is nothing indirect about the author's choice of language to depict it. If sexual incontinence, including that of an (admittedly amnesiac) priest in *La faute de l'abbé Mouret* [*The Sin of Father Mouret*] (1875), a novel which reworks the Garden of Eden motif, is a constant presence in the Rougon-Macquart cycle, it is, in contrast to the case of the cynical journalist Georges Duroy in Maupassant's novel *Bel-Ami* (1885), rarely controlled; the sexual adventurer Octave Mouret (see *Pot-Bouille* and *Au bonheur des dames*) may be counted an exception. Yet there is a still more general association in Zola's fiction between sex and death. It is the emphasis on the proximity of the sexual urge and the desire to kill that takes Zola's fiction beyond a more mundane association of sex and violence. The desire for illicit sexual congress forms the background to the husband's murder in *Thérèse Raquin*, but it is in *La bête humaine* [*The Human Animal*] (1890) that the principal character's homicidal response to exposed female flesh, which is presented as the product of a tainted heredity, unites the two in a more

modern perspective. His sexual relationship with his victim is moreover indissociable from the fact that she is urging him to murder her husband, just as she confesses to having, under duress, abetted the latter in the murder of an older man who had taken sexual advantage of her before she was married.

The fact remains that it is the sheer variety of sexual subjects that marks out 19th-century French literature, with those subjects that had previously invited ribaldry now becoming a matter of sexual pathology. In addition to the voyeurism and prostitution already highlighted, these included:

- Incest (the sibling example of Chateaubriand's *René*, 1802; the uncle and niece in Zola's *Le Docteur Pascal*, 1893)
- Undisclosed sexual secrets (Stendhal's *Armance*, 1827)
- Impotence (Mme de Duras's *Olivier ou le secret*, 1826; Balzac's *La peau de chagrin* and *La Vieille fille*)
- Sexual fiascos (the celebrated chapter in the 1853 edition of Stendhal's *De l'Amour*)
- Homosexuality (Custine's Aloys; Hugo's Claude Gueux; Balzac's Vautrin)
- Lesbianism (Balzac's *La fille aux yeux d'or* [The Girl with the Golden Eyes], 1834–5; Joséphin Péladan; Baudelaire's "Lesbos" and the two poems entitled "Femmes damnées"; the title originally envisaged for *Les Fleurs du mal* was *Les Lesbiennes*)
- Hermaphroditism/androgyny (updating the old fictional stratagem of cross-dressing and frequently associated with lesbianism and/or male homosexuality) (Latouche's *Fragoletta*, 1829; Balzac's *Sarrasine*, 1831, and *Séraphita*, 1835, and his George Sand-type character, Félicité des Touches; Gautier's *Mademoiselle de Maupin* and his poem "Contralto" in *Emaux et camées*, 1852; Péladan; Rachilde's *Monsieur Vénus*, 1884; Jean Lorrain's *Monsieur de Phocas*, 1901)
- Castration (*Sarrasine*; *La peau de chagrin*; Balzac's semi-autobiographical *Louis Lambert*, 1835)
- Bestiality (a female panther's infatuation with a soldier in Balzac's arguably jocular story *Une passion dans le désert*)
- Prolonged virginity (Balzac's old maids)
- Nymphomania (albeit with all due discretion, Emma Bovary)

- Frigidity (*La peau de chagrin*, which also incorporates hints of lesbianism and hermaphroditism)
- Fetishism (clothes and footwear in *Madame Bovary*; and the more literal (and fatal) case of boot fetishism in *Le journal d'une femme de chambre*).

Pornography as an entity, to which 19th-century literary eroticism inevitably relates, represents a special case, given its status as the "already written," and features as a thematically legitimized presence rather than as a properly constituted subject. A familiar topos, shared with pornographic fictions themselves, consists of the collection of curios locked away in the owner's library or with the pages (and, above all the plates) hidden behind rich bindings, the object themselves of fetishistic desire. An example may be found in the flagellation addict's library in Edmond de Goncourt's *La Faustin* (1881–2), with its "curious bindings stamped with phallic emblems." In a degraded version of such decadence, Mirbeau's chambermaid is exposed to obscene engravings by various predatory employers, male and female alike. (The same novel also contains the hilarious discovery by a customs official of a dildo in one of her mistress's jewel cases.) Such evocations of pornography partake of the tantalizing play of the hidden and the revealed and may, to an extent, be seen as emblematic of the period's conception of the book in general. More generally, the relationship between "nobler" forms of French 19th-century writing and the pornography with which its authors were so familiar remains to be studied, starting most fruitfully perhaps with the particular attraction exerted by Flaubert's representations of the "real."

As Mario Praz demonstrated with unprecedented erudition in *The Romantic Irony*, the predominant obsession within 19th-century French representations of sexual desire was with the sadomasochistic. The prevailing erotic sensibility was duly traced by him to the influence, both specific and general, of the Marquis de Sade. As early as 1824, a French Academician alluded to the latter's nefarious influence. This was further promoted by Janin's article of 1834 (duly read by Flaubert later in the decade). By 1843, the critic Sainte-Beuve felt authorized to claim that de Sade and Byron were the two principal influences on modern literature. In 1851 a conservative

critic (Horace de Viel-Castel) produced a long list of those marked by de Sade's influence, including George Sand, Musset, Eugène Sue, and Dumas père. Depending on the specificity of one's criteria, the list was either too long or not long enough. A more exclusive survey would highlight Petrus Borel's "Sadification" of the stereotypes of the English gothic novel and the ambiguities of pain and pleasure that permeate the poetry of Baudelaire ("I am the wound and the knife," he writes in "L'Héautontimoroumenos"). The Goncourt brothers recorded Flaubert's obsessive delight in de Sade, whom he evidently regarded as a "dark comic genius" and whose presence is unmistakable in Flaubert's juvenilia as well as in *La tentation de Saint-Antoine* and *Salammbô*. Sadistic torture and flagellation are featured in Péladan's *La vertu suprême* (1900), Paul-Jean Toulet's *Monsieur du Paur* (1898), and Mirbeau's *Le jardin des supplices*. De Sade's name is never mentioned as such in *Comédie humaine*, but traces of Balzac's awareness of his writings are evident.

The examples given would appear to constitute a veritable (and largely complete) compendium of sexual particularities evoked for their own sake, a response to the compulsion to embrace the universal through an exhaustive compilation of diverse particularities, though one that was fated more often than not to remain stuck in a contemplation of diversity and fragmentation. (Thus the "Notice" to *À rebours* rehearses the different types of woman possessed by Des Esseintes but is obliged to recognize that the character fails to transcend a feeling of jadedness.) The obsession with categorization and differentiation permeates even the illicit, as may be seen in the attempts to distinguish between *grisettes*, *lorettes*, and *insoumises*, which, as in the case of the narrative discourse of Balzac's *Comédie humaine*, constitutes a response to the panic felt in the face of both the amorphous and the multiple difference. In 1842, Dumas père wrote a piece entitled "Filles, lorettes et courtisanes." The proliferation of *codes* and *physiologies* (there was a *Physiologie de la lorette*) showed the long reach of the Napoleonic legal and administrative example, while Fourier's sexual Utopia was ordered, almost parodically, by categories and numbers.

Sexual inquiry in imaginative literature was, in other ways too, generally synonymous with the fundamental epistemological inquiry underlying

much of the literary writing of the age. It represented a means of pursuing inquiry beyond the familiar and beneath the surface, and was a means of entry rather than the end of the quest in itself. The exclusiveness of the sexual reference varied considerably, and the latter was by no means necessarily the foremost referent. The texts listed from the gerontocratic Restoration, for example, especially those involving scenarios of impotence, invite just as readily a reading in terms of political allegory (as does the shrinking of the skin in *La Peau de chagrin*, written in the wake of the July Revolution), while hermaphrodite and androgyne fictions may be regarded essentially as allegories of the divided Romantic artist. Yet the movement toward an ever more specialized form of sexual inquiry is undeniable. The Symbolist fin-de-siècle, with its fascination with the occult, spiritualism, and the Wagnerian, pursued a cult of the rarefied, the perverse, and the artificial for their own sakes rather than as part of the post-Rousseau dialectic that had formed the starting point of a Baudelaire. The focus on marginal sexual tastes nonetheless represented a continuation of the dandy's ambition to be the member of an elite.

In the final analysis, the erotic universe that has been surveyed, for all the prominence it gave to the nature and role of women, remained predominantly a male world, one in which Aurore Dudevant was led to dress in male costume and take the *nom de plume* George Sand. Not only were the vast majority of the authors men, they wrote mainly from outside the approved institution of marriage. Balzac teasingly attributed the authorship of his *Physiologie du mariage* to "a young bachelor" and remained a bachelor for virtually his entire life. If Zola sought to reduplicate his married life and surroundings in his additional life with his mistress, the many other bachelors included Sainte-Beuve, Stendhal, Mérimée, Baudelaire, Nerval, Flaubert, the Goncourt brothers, Maupassant, Arthur Rimbaud, and Jean Lorrain. The poet Paul Verlaine was hardly a model husband. Of these, few were exclusively homosexual, but the literary world they constituted was largely misogynistic and homosocial. Mérimée wrote letters of an explicitly sexual nature to Stendhal, whose own correspondence and personal writings did not want for a similar explicitness. The sexually scabrous exerted a strong attraction on Flaubert and still more so on the deeply misogynistic Goncourts.

A pornographic product of Musset's pen has already been noted. Maupassant had a justifiable reputation as an erotomaniac and, like Fourier, professed an attraction to lesbians (see, for example, his story "La Femme de Paul," 1881). He wrote some 40 risqué tales of varying complexion, mainly for the newspaper *Gil Blas*, together with pornographic poems and a light-hearted pornographic play entitled *A la feuille de rose, maison turque* [*With the Sheet of Pink, Turkish House*] (1875), privately performed with Flaubert in the audience and with fellow writers such as Mirbeau taking part. A whole section of Lorrain's work (he was a flamboyant dandy, homosexual, and ether addict) was pornographic, while his press pieces devoted to Parisian women took readers into the shadowy realities of the demimonde. Louÿs developed an expertise in French pornographic and libertine bibliography. Verlaine wrote two collections of obscene verse, *Femmes* and *Hommes*, published pseudonymously and posthumously, respectively, which celebrated sexual activity with both sexes. Certain of Rimbaud's prose poems have been decoded (controversially) to reveal obscene meanings.

Baudelaire recorded his misogynist views in *Mon coeur mis à nu* [*My Heart Exposed*]. Woman was presented by the poet as horrendous because she embodied the natural. In "Les Bijoux," one of his poems condemned in 1857, the attraction of the naked woman comes not from her unclothed body but from the artificial jewels decorating it. Barbey d'Aurevilly refused to be taken in by Baudelaire's evocation of the erotic charms of woman and dubbed him the "virgin poet." As for Michel Butor, writing a century later, he was led to suppose that the poet had discovered that although he was attracted to women, he was not able to perform as a man. Balzac's sexual orientation was for a time the subject of speculation by his contemporaries. Whether or not one accepts the claim that women sensed Flaubert to be a "feminine type," his writings support the view of him as a masochist. As for the seemingly pro-feminist *Madame Bovary*, Baudelaire claimed that Emma had the makeup of a man, and the novel can be read just as convincingly as the expression of a pervasive male fantasy as it can as a detached psycho-sociological study of female sexuality. It is this ambiguity that makes it the exemplary text with

regard to the French 19th-century incarnation of the erotic.

Yet the particularities of many of the authors in question should not be allowed to undermine the significance of the obsession with sexuality in 19th-century France. This obsession intersected with all the other major discourses through which the period sought to confront the problem of knowledge in a world that was changing at an unprecedentedly rapid rate. If the location of sexual desire in the body was acknowledged unashamedly, it was the recognition of its twin location in the mind that ensured that 19th-century French writers probed its more profound dimensions. The changing face of sex provided a privileged indicator of a new socioeconomic reality, in which the creation and satisfaction of desire was paramount. Still more importantly, the dismantling of conventional boundaries rendered the sexual sphere an incomparable area for experimentation and discovery, as well as allowing it to present a powerful challenge to institutions wielding power. Reading itself, newly commercialized and increasingly a mass activity, became intertwined with the pervasive subject of prostitution through the conjoining of money and pleasure. And if desire was predominant at the level of subject, so the literary representation itself became an object of desire, thereby blurring provocatively the distinction between writing that was pornographic and writing that allegedly was not.

MICHAEL TILBY

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There is neither a Marquis de Sade nor an Andréa de Nerciat in the literature of Québec for a specific reason: "Our literature will be solemn, meditative, spiritual, religious and evangelistic." This attitude, imposed by Mgr Henri-Raymond Casgrain as early as 1866 in the *Le Foyer Canadien*, served as a guide to all Québécois writers. One can easily understand that this advice did nothing to promote the emergence of

eroticism in Québec's literature. For nearly a hundred years, several generations of literary critics, themselves loyal Catholics, continued to control and forbid eroticism in fiction. In this severe ideological context, a strong censorship inevitably came down hard on any novel containing erotic themes. For example, *La Scouïne* (1918) by Albert Laberge was denounced by Monsignor Bruchési as "vile pornography,"

primarily for a scene depicting sexual content, masturbation, and bestiality.

Despite this climate of moral control, eroticism still found its way into Québec literature at the turn of the 20th century under the guise of realism. Already discredited by Catholic ideology, which viewed sexuality solely as a means of procreation, the erotic theme was first represented as a trivial act. Henceforth, every pretext became justifiable for nudity: the genitalia of the virtuous heroines are exposed publicly by unexpected falls in Rodolphe Girard's *Marie Calumet* (1904) and Arsène Besette's *Le débutant* (1914); other female protagonists voluntarily exhibit their naked bodies to excite their partners, an act which was unthinkable in novels during the 19th century; prostitution in Montreal is described in great detail in *Le débutant*; morally forbidden sexual behaviors, like masturbation, fantasy ("evil thoughts"), adultery, and homosexuality, are described in such a manner that they appear as subtle and ironic commentaries on religious doctrine.

Another constant in Québec eroticism at the beginning of the 20th century was its fairly sadistic nature. The scenes of rape and brutal violence are numerous. Claude-Henri Grignon's *Un homme et son péché* (1933) is a good example of this phenomenon. Séraphin Poudrier, the protagonist, sexually tortures his wife, Donaldda: "Once, just once, Séraphin took her brutally." Donaldda is very similar to O, the heroine of the *The Story of O*, considered among the most sadistic French novels of the 20th century. "Completely frustrated in both body and soul, by her desire for love and maternity, Donaldda embodies a submission so absolute that her story is essentially a Catholic and French-Canadian version of *The story of O*" (Smart, *Écrire*). Lemont, another character in the same novel, repeatedly rapes a number of young peasant women. Rather than being filled with remorse, the memory of these aggressions contributes to the novel's erotic ambience: "He [Lemont] remembered the scene with sensual thoughts. His imagination enveloped him with pleasurable sensations. These bewitching and speedy moments sparked in him a most violent desire!" Several other novels portray the same type of realistic and violent sexual behavior. In Gabrielle Roy's classic *Bonheur d'occasion* [*Luck of the Occasion*] (1945), Jean Lévesque rapes Florentine Lacasse, and in André Giroux's *Au-delà des visages*

[*Beyond Visages*] (1948) the rape and murder of a young woman is followed by a somber post-coital mood. In fact, it is as if although paradoxical, "this realistic literature also agrees with the essentials of moral discourse: yes, sex is violent, perverse, ridiculous, vile or pathological" (Angenot, *Le cru*).

In examining the French Canadian literature of the period from 1900 to 1960, it is important to discuss a reoccurring and more positive erotic figure: the stranger. In the Catholic world of guilt and secrecy, the characters who come from elsewhere are the only ones who can bring the liberating power of eroticism. In Louis Hémon's *Maria Chapdelaine* (1916), a young fur trader, François Paradis, appears out of nowhere in the close-knit village of Péribonka, where he captivates and seduces the young virgin Maria. Overwhelmed by her desires, she attempts to imagine "the first gestures of love that would unite them." In *Le survenant* by Germaine Guèvremont (1945), the eponymous character arrives in Chenal du Moine, where he literally irradiates his erotic energy: "Everything was happening as if Le Survenant, Eros incarnate, did nothing but awaken the sensuality and the latent eroticism of the villagers like the wild forces of their universe" (Major, p. 203). Finally, in Adrienne Choquette's *La coupe vide* [*The Empty Cup*] (1948), it is Patricia, an American woman in her prime, who arrives and seduces a group of four young college students who hover around her with excitement: "She offered her hands, coquettishly, so that they might help her stand up. Patricia quivered: stealthy lips brushed her wrist. Resolutely, the woman took the lead and decided to ignore the young man who had stolen her scent." These erotic games are possible only in the presence of the strangers, because they are not influenced by Catholic doctrine.

In the 1960s, this literary trend adapted itself to the sweeping winds of liberal change, known as the Quiet Revolution, which blew over Québec society. The representation of eroticism became much more openly disobedient. Here we find scenes of necrophilia and sadism in Marcel Godin's *La cruauté des faibles* [*The Cruelty of the Weak*] (1961); lesbianism in Louise Maheux-Forcier's *Amadou* (1963); incest, rape, and pedophilia in Marie-Claire Blais's *Une saison dans la vie d'Emmanuel* [*A Season in the Life of Emmanuel*] (1965); consummate and guiltless adultery in Roger Fournier's *Le journal*

*d'un jeune marié* [*Diary of a Newlywed*] (1967); multiple rape scenes in Hubert Aquin's *L'Antiphonaire* (1969); homosexuality in Blais's *Le Loup* [*The Wolf*] (1973); bloody and sadistic murders in Victor-Lévy Beaulieu's *Un rêve québécois* [*A Québécois Dream*] (1972).

All of these novels, and many others, voluntarily exceed the dogma of normative sexuality and explore a variety of unusual sexual practices. Here, the sacred mingles with the profane but no longer in a hierarchical relation, but rather in an interrelationship which generates desire and erotic pleasure. Transgression also arises, obviously, but without the guilt traditionally associated with the censure of the Catholic Church toward any representation of carnal/erotic pleasure. Eroticism separates itself simultaneously from the can(n)ons of literary aesthetics and religious ideology.

The Quiet Revolution, along with the sexual revolution, offers a new type of first-person narrator, who exhibits a liberated eroticism and aggressively demands a larger place in Quebecois fiction. However, it would be naive to narrow our discussion to a celebration of the liberating aspects of eroticism, which relies primarily on sexual punishment imposed on the weak—usually women and children who feed the erotic transgressive excitement. In the revolutionary eroticism of the 1960s, the ancestral fear of feminine erotic strength—which came directly from the Christian mentality—was still alive: “[B]ecause of her power to awaken masculine desire and therefore upset the order of male domination of the world, the female body must then be—following masculine logic—subdued, dismembered, mutilated” (Smart, *Écrire*). Whether it be rape, adultery, murder, or necrophilia, the sexual cruelties of revolutionary eroticism are inevitably perpetrated on women's bodies, which, as Anne-Marie Dardigna (1981) states, “serve as the best target for sexual aggression.”

In the early 1970s, eroticism distanced itself from the world of politics. Yves Thériault's *Oeuvres de chair* [*Works of the Flesh*] (1975) was the first text in Québec that overtly displayed its erotic content by featuring the subtitle “Erotic Tales” on its cover. The collection is composed of 16 erotic short stories whose inventive titles rely on double entendres that play on both culinary and sexual themes: “The Prepubescent Partridge,” “The Seductive Steak au Poivre,” “The Nubile Quail Terrine,” “The

Adulterous Ham,” etc. Most of these stories take place during the Middle Ages in an abbey or monastery where the religious characters prepare elaborate feasts that often transform into orgies. Transgression serves again to create an erotic climate in the texts, although in Thériault's stories it imbues joy and pleasure rather than destruction and guilt. Other tales may have more contemporary settings, but they all combine culinary and sexual sensuality. The meals, like the sexual acts, are meticulously detailed to highlight the pleasurable effect that each bestows on the protagonists. In *Oeuvres de chair*, it is thus the abounding details of the narration which create the collection's erotic climate.

The same phenomenon of excess in erotic writing is apparent in *Les cornes sacrées* [*The Sacred Horns*] by Roger Fournier (1977). Since the publication of his first novel, *À nous deux* (1963), eroticism has held a major role in Fournier's works. In *Les cornes sacrées*, the thematic takes on a magnitude previously unequalled. Both a tale of sexual initiation and a mythological allegory, *Les cornes sacrées* follows the adolescence of Nobert, who leaves the lower St. Lawrence River Valley with his young bull, Pigeon. Along their journey, each experiences his first sexual encounter. The apotheosis occurs in Greece as an orgy erupts including all of the villagers. A river of sperm literally flows into the fields from the collective sexual encounter. Everything is in superlative form in Fournier's text; eroticism is spread excessively. The characters' genitalia are enormous; the sexual positions, Olympian (having intercourse on the back of a bull); and the entire world is united in orgasm: “The cry is a caress that will cause the entire world to have an erection.” Eroticism intensifies to the point that it becomes what Gaëtan Brulotte (*Oeuvres de chair*) calls a commonplace of the genre: “In erotic literature, excess is a common theme and sexual prowess is beyond the reach of normal mankind. Excessive genitalia size, overstimulated characters, complex or often impossible coital positions, and abundant sexual energy all greatly exaggerate the human reality.” In fact, with this type of novel, eroticism essentially exceeds all forms of realism and thus becomes its own particular genre of literature.

Continuing throughout the 1970s, the feminist movement and a new generation of female writers greatly contributed to the creation of a new form of eroticism. In *French Kiss* (1975),

Nicole Brossard associates the pleasure of language with that of sexuality. Erotic play is interwoven with linguistic play, in this case, alliteration: “Encore qui vient à suivre dans le texte ainsi que sur la langue, des substituts érotiques, encore que l’on sent basculer dans l’ombre des joues, des jouissances mouvementées comme je jouis dans le jus” [What follows in the text as well as on the tongue are erotic substitutes to such a degree that one feels thrown into the shade of cheeks, turbulent pleasures, like when I have an orgasm in my juices]. More than ten years later, the narrator in Dandurand’s *Un coeur qui craque* [*A Heart That Breaks*] (1990) explains the effects that composing erotic literature has on her: “[W]riting, in the scorching heat of summer, stories like the one in the previous chapter, still wet with fresh ink, make me moisten and drip all over, too!... Sad madwoman that I am, lock me up and give me a straitjacket to keep me from masturbating.” Like conjoined twins, writing and erotic experience are fused together, making both from the creation of pleasure, which is exactly what the female narrator in Harvey’s *Un homme est une valse* [*A Man Is a Waltz*] (1992) means when she describes this particular phenomenon to her readers: “Writing while performing fellatio is difficult, but possible.”

Within the erotic texts penned by, usually postmodern, women, the female narrators are themselves authors who write about their own erotic adventures. Shoshana Felman (1981) explains the intimate relationship between text and sex: “That which is erotic is always linguistic.... The sexual act always connotes an act of language.... The sexual act of the narrator can be nothing but a linguistic exercise.” In the particular case of erotic literature, the sexual encounter is inevitably an act of language; these narrators are quite conscious of this, and for that reason they create a form of sexual excitation in their texts and vice versa.

Another discovery in the female version of eroticism in Québec was the male body! Eroticism had previously been the domain of the masculine perspective on the woman’s body—but along came a feminine vision which describes men. In this literature there is often a great deal of commotion at the discovery of the phallus:

It’s round! It’s long! It’s firm! It’s like marbled steel!  
This is what they call a charming cock! This is what is  
meant by an erection! And the head! Red and shiny,

dotted with stars, of liquid diamonds. The foreskin is pulled taut by the force of erection. The phallus is placed on a pedestal, decorated with bushy hair; his hot and heavy testicles, tucked into their pouch of brownish skin, dangle like ripe figs. (Boisjoli, *Jacinthe*, 1992)

As the sex point of view changes, the male body becomes lasciviously desirable and is therefore described, objectified, and broken down into its constituent parts. Abdomen, skin, hair, chin, butt, hips, hands, pubic hair, testicles, butt crack, neck, shoulders, arms—all of the male anatomy participates in the erotic encounter. The five senses are also included: the sight of the naked male body; the countless sounds of orgasmic delight that resonate in a partner’s ears; the smells of men evoked by every imaginable metaphor from the woods to tobacco; the taste of a lover’s salty skin and of almond-like or peppery sperm; and finally, the touch of every caress, lengthened in meticulous detail.

Since the 1980s, a new erotic perspective has emerged in which a heroine like Pauline Harvey’s in *Un homme est une valse* (1992) is not afraid to demonstrate her desire for her companion or her own sexual pleasure: “A man is a tool for reaching orgasm, if there are lovers, they shall be called pleasure, sexuality. A man is a waltz.” Because of the dynamics of movement between partners, dance is the best metaphor to illustrate a style of eroticism most commonly found in feminine writings. The greatest joy in the realization of an erotic ballet is the opening and abandonment of oneself. This time, however, it is the male that is opened: “He wants the belly, he wants the vagina, to open himself inside,” and the woman’s body is inhabited by a new presence. With nipples and clitorises erect, flowing vulvas and vaginas, flesh and bottoms caressed or tortured with delight, a new world is offered to discover: “She teaches me the geography of the land of Women” (Boisjoli, *Jacinthe*), a world which spins on the axis of pleasure.

Here, the notion of sexual fulfillment is not directly oriented to a single and final orgasm; the dynamics of “the waltz,” of a dance, would not permit it. One must be careful, however, not to limit this point of view to an erotic otherworldliness where women participate uniquely in relationships based on love, stormy or insipid, but always romantic. Feminine eroticism is quite similar to the masculine with regard to its practice. The major difference is that it appears



under the aegis of values considered exclusively feminine, such as love and sharing. As with the masculine model, transgression always serves as an impetus of desire—without, however, also being tragic.

Examples of transgression joyously gleaned from erotic works of several Québécoise writers include: the title character in *Jacinthe* corrupting her young 15-year-old neighbor and destroying everything traditionally viewed as authority—a nun, a pastor, a bishop, a professor, a psychologist—while confessing a fondness for sodomy; the heroine of *Un coeur qui craque* performing fellatio on a handicapped person while in a restaurant; and the protagonist in *Un homme est une valse* fantasizing about the adulterous acts she could perform with all of the men in her life. There is nothing to fear in the transgression in these texts because it is not performed in a context of guilt or fear; it has only one goal: pleasure beyond the norm, be it accepted or forbidden.

Amidst the explosion of erotic texts plumed by female authors in Québec during the 1990s, one in particular would stand out from the pack and help erotic literature gain acceptance from the literary establishment of Québec as a genre in its own right. The “sexplorer” Lili Gulliver, created by Diane Boissoneault, travels to the four corners of the Earth searching for sexual adventures in the tetralogy titled *Gulliver's Universe*. The first novel of the series, *Paris* (1990) tells of her vacation in the City of Lights, where she successively has sexual relations with Gérard, a psychiatrist; Francis, a wine steward in a restaurant; and Carl, an escort. Nothing is off-limits to her because she is on a mission to catalog the performance of her lovers and to create the *Gulliver Guide to International Intercourse*. Her ultimate goal is to find the world's greatest lover, or at least to provide a list of suggestions to her girlfriends.

In the second volume, *Greece* (1991), Lili finds herself in a place she lovingly refers to as the Land of Cocks, where she, among other activities, takes advantage of the local resources to create a cheerful description of the male genitalia: “Among the cocks I have known, there have been big ones, enormous ones, small ones, and tiny ones, malleable ones, soft ones, round ones, those that were bent like a boomerang, erect ones and limp ones, etc.” The third book

in the series is *Bangkok, Hot and Humid* (1993), which deals with the “sexploits” of Lili in Asia. Her tales overflow with clichés of small penises and the carefree sexuality of the Taiwanese. Lili eventually falls in love with Richard, an American.

In the fourth volume, *Australia Topsy-Turvy* (1996), Lili finally meets the world's greatest lover, Tarzano Rambo, a composite of the love-hate aspects of the ideal man. With her mission accomplished, Lili returns to Québec but refuses to abandon her erotic activities and international projects: “I can do it under any circumstance and in every position. I allow myself to be taken everywhere and come what may! I no longer try to make sense to myself; I abandon myself to pleasure. Always make me come and let it never end, *Please!* That will be my Australian vacation, after which we'll see.... Who knows, Lili in Africa?”

During the second half of the twentieth century, eroticism had its unveiling in Québec's literature. After a rough start of being ostracized by religious literary authorities, several courageous or naive authors were able to bypass these restrictions by using guilt or a moral when portraying the thematic. It was not until the 1960s, along with the liberating trend in Québec society, that eroticism became a common and accepted literary theme. Later, in the 1970s, fueled by the feminist movement, with its entourage of women writers, eroticism became a true literary genre. The erotic texts written by women brought with them a new dimension on a thematic often viewed with a guilt that was the fruit of the Judeo-Christian tradition which had had such a hold on the imagination of the Québec people. At the end of the millennium, Lili Gulliver appears in Québec's literature like a sexual adventurer who travels around the world seeking pleasure for herself and for the benefit of all the women of Québec. From that point on, eroticism has been rightfully recognized by several institutions in Québec: sections in libraries have been dedicated to eroticism, publishers have printed collections of erotic works, and many newspaper articles have been devoted to erotic themes. From the limits of Catholicism and censorship, eroticism in Québec has become, throughout the years, feminine and joyous. Who can complain?

ÉLISE SALAÜN

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## FRENCH (UP TO THE RENAISSANCE, INCLUDING THE MIDDLE AGES)

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Despite the dominant moral influence of the Catholic Church in medieval France, the literature of the period, ranging roughly from the 10th through the late 15th centuries, foregrounds erotic relationships in a wide variety of genres. That France was not a united country, politically or linguistically, explains the existence of two distinct, yet interrelated literary traditions—one written in the various dialects of *langue d’oc* (Provençal), the linguistic group of southern France, the other in *langue d’oil*, the group of dialects ranging across northern France and into what is now England. The earliest manifestation of a literature explicitly concerned with sexual pursuits appeared in the southern dialects. By the 10th century, the *langue d’oc* gave birth to the *troubadours*, whose erotic poetry would spread both north and south. As the troubadours’ works became better known in the north, partially as a result of political alliances, erotic themes found their way into the works of the northern French poets, the *trouvères*. Celtic literature and Arthurian legends also play a significant role in northern French literature, finding their greatest expression in lays and romances. By the late 11th century, the adulterous erotic triangle was commonplace. The themes articulated in the poetry of the troubadours and trouvères and composers of lays and romances dominate nearly all French medieval texts, although some specific variants developed. In contrast, the epic neglects most references to the erotic. As a parallel to these serious genres, the comic literature of medieval France, first in the *fabliau*, then in the *nouvelle* and the farce, treat these same themes in an irreverent fashion.

Whether serious or comic, attitudes toward sexual relations in medieval French literary texts were heavily influenced by the notions of gender and sexuality that society held. At the same time, those texts contributed to the construction of those same notions. One of the most pertinent questions revolved around the ideal of

female chastity and the implications for those women who did not remain chaste. Should a lady, whatever her social status, engage in a sexual relationship before marriage? What are the consequences for her? Further, what are the consequences of an adulterous relationship? A second aspect of this literature also merits attention. The vast majority of these texts deal only with heterosexual erotic relationships. Nonetheless, same-sex relations, primarily male, haunt many of the most representative erotic relationships and also are hinted at in the epic.

Troubadour poetry developed in and around the affluent courts of the southern French nobles. Partially because of trade, partially because of favorable geographic situation, and partially through the greater romanization of the area during the Roman Empire, the courts of southern France displayed a refinement in the late 10th and early 11th centuries that was not as evident as their northern counterparts. It was in this setting that a new genre of love poetry flourished, the *canço*. The poets themselves were frequently members of the nobility. The lyric poems of such early troubadours as Bernard de Ventadour and Jaufré Rudel posit an idealized love between a humble lover and a lady who is distant either emotionally or geographically to the point of being unobtainable. Frequently, she is married. Although frustrated in his efforts to approach her, the humble lover remains faithful and maintains a cloak of secrecy to protect his beloved’s reputation. The troubadours created an erotic discourse of *fin’ amors* (refined/“good” love) that continued into the 16th century. Its poetics are those of desire and deferral.

Alain’s Chartier’s “Belle Dame sans mercy” (c. 1424) captures the essence of the troubadour lyric, taking it to the logical conclusion of the rejected lover’s death. (Indeed, some 400 years later, Yeats would take Chartier’s title as his own for one of his greatest poems). Yet, there

are counterpoints to the cruel lady. Christine de Pizan's *Cent balades d'amant et de dame* [100 Ballads Between a Lover and a Lady] (c. 1409–10) creates a dialogue and traces the evolution of the relationship. Refusal leads to acquiescence and abandonment, and it is the lady who faces death, betrayed by her lover. Between these two extremes lies the *alba*, or "erotic dawn song." Troubadour poets created a feminine voice, and the conceit continued on in northern lyrics as well. The coming of the dawn signals the end of the night that the lady has spent with her lover and a moment of separation. The genre subverts both social structures and the stereotypical cruel lady, creating a thematic that is at once transgressive and erotic. Typically, a watchman alerts the couple of the impending dawn and possible discovery of the adulterous affair. The male lover and his lady bid farewell, consoled in anticipation of another night together.

Early northern poets, *trouvères* such as Gace Brulé, Conon de Béthune, and Adam de la Halle, retained love as a theme; but it is in the romance and the lays that the clearest shift from the *canso* occurs, and *fin'amors* changes into *amour courtois*, or courtly love. Where the troubadour's *canso* sings nearly exclusively of un consummated desire, northern texts focus on a passionate, all-consuming love, which may lead to exile or death. While not all relationships in the literature are adulterous, through the legends of Tristan and Iseut and of Lancelot and Guinevere the erotic triangle of husband/wife/lover becomes the model for romantic love. The locating of desire and love outside of the marriage bond reflects the social structures of the period. Marriage was most often a business transaction in which women served as a type of currency. And although no single complete text of *Tristan and Iseut* has survived in Old French, the fragmentary versions from the late 12th century clearly establish the conflict between love and marriage in the Western literary tradition. In spite of her betrothal to Tristan's uncle Marc, Iseut falls passionately in love with Tristan and he with her. The lovers struggle: on the one hand they try to resist their desire; on the other hand, they attempt to overcome the obstacles that separate them. This struggle eventually leads to their deaths, inextricably linking the notions of love, death, and the lovers' willingness to die for their love.

Chrétien de Troyes (d. 1185), one of the most influential courtly writers, composed verse romances firmly locating the Knights of the Round Table in the French literary canon. His *chevalier de la charette* [The Knight of the Cart] (c. 1180) recounts the story of Lancelot, Guinevere, and Arthur. Like Tristan and Iseut, the adulterous lovers struggle, unsuccessfully, to curb their desire and to break off the relationship. The tale of Lancelot and Guinevere, like that of Tristan and Iseut, would be written and rewritten throughout the medieval period, beginning with the anonymous prose *Lancelot* in the early 13th century. Yet, not all of Chrétien's romances focus on the adulterous liaisons of the protagonists. In *Yvain, ou le chevalier au lion* [Yvain, or the Knight of the Lion] (c. 1178), he poses the problem of how to reconcile erotic desire with social duties. The beginning of the romance hints that Arthur is a weakened king because of his excessive desire for Guinevere. The hero of the tale, Yvain, marries and, after losing himself in physical pleasure with his wife, begins a series of adventures, eventually leading him back to a balance between the erotic and the social. Chrétien also condemns marital infidelity (on the part of the husband) and rape in his brutal tale of *Philomela* (c. 1165). An integration of erotic desire also motivates the protagonists in his *Erec et Enide* (c. 1165) and *Cligès* (c. 1176), the latter proclaiming itself to be an anti-*Tristan*. Thus, while working within the courtly tradition, Chrétien expands its limits and attempts to deal with the more problematic nature of sexual relationships in a highly structured society.

Adulterous triangles and illicit sexual encounters infuse nearly all examples of courtly literature. The *Lais* (c. 1170) of Marie de France, a collection of twelve short verse tales, exploit this theme in varied ways. As in Chrétien's works, the Celtic and Breton legends that inspired many of these tales bring with them a supernatural element. That a lover turns himself into a bird so that he might spend the night with his beloved, as in *Yonec*, or that a wife learns that her husband is a werewolf, as in *Le bisclavret*, heightens the erotic tension in the tales. *Le chèvrefeuille* [The Honeysuckle] relates an episode of *Tristan and Iseut*, using the metaphor of the two entwined as the honeysuckle is around the tree to symbolize their desire, blurring the metaphor of love and death.

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One important subgenre of the medieval lyric poem, the *pastourelle*, complicates the thematic of the suppliant lover by reversing many of its conventions. In a typical scenario, a knight recounts his encounter with a shepherdess. Invariably he asks for her favors, mimicking the discourse of the *trouvères*, and frequently she acquiesces; the poem thus relates a successful seduction. In a number of *pastourelles*, the shepherdess refuses the knight's advances, but unlike the idealized lady who receives respect for her refusal, thus generating another series of poems, sexual desire dominates and the shepherdess is taken by force. These poems of rape often reflect class relationships. Whereas in the courtly model the lover and object of his affection are of similar social status and the lady herself is frequently revered and feared for the erotic power she exerts over her lover, a shepherdess suffers by her inferior position. Nonetheless, in some instances a shepherd is the sexual aggressor. Thus the *pastourelle* articulates conflicts along class and gender lines, hinting at the tensions around the eroticism in the genre.

At the opposite end of the erotic spectrum are the *fabliaux*, a genre that flourished from the 12th to the 14th century. The corpus consists of some 170 short comic tales in verse, the majority of which are anonymous. As examples of bawdy humor—the “esprit gaulois”—the storylines regularly echo the courtly erotic triangle, although the characters that populate these texts are normally members of the bourgeoisie or clergy or are peasants, with occasional appearances by nobles. Yet, as in “La Bourgeoise d’Orléans,” the resolution often leads to possibilities of continued infidelity as the wife outmaneuvers her jealous husband. Jean Bodel, one of the first authors of *fabliaux*, establishes the lubricity of the clergy in his “Gombert et les deux clercs” [Gombert and the Two Clerks] (c. 1190). Satire of the clergy’s sexual mores is a major theme of the genre, one that continues on into the 14th- and 15th-century short tales in prose—“nouvelles”—and on into the Renaissance. Language also furnishes a theme for sexual comedy in the *fabliaux*, which sometimes are elaborated around a sexual metaphor, based on the renaming of sexual organs. A young man attempting to trick a girl into a sexual relationship relies on a metaphor of an animal and food, as in “L’Escuirrel” [The Squirrel] or “La dame qui abevra le polain” [The Lady Who Watered the Horse]. Similar sexual metaphors

figure in *fabliaux* such as “Porcelet” [Piglet] and “La dame qui aveine demandoit pour Morel” [The Lady Who Asked for Wheat for Morel], but here they function as linguistic games to initiate sex in a married couple.

To a certain extent, the *prose nouvelle* (short story) and the *farce*, two genres which grew in popularity in the 14th and 15th centuries, carried on the sexual themes of the *fabliaux*. *Les cent nouvelles nouvelles* [The Hundred New Tales] (c. 1460) took inspiration in length from Boccaccio’s *Decameron*, albeit eschewing its complex structure. The 45th *nouvelle* offers a typical example of the use of Italian sources: it relates the story of a young man who disguises himself as an itinerant washerwoman in order to gain access to the ladies of the house. As in an anecdote, these tales create an erotic scenario that is usually played out with little detail or development. What the *nouvelle* supplied to a population that was slowly becoming literate, the *farce* staged in the public square. A *farce* such as the 15th-century “Le ramoneur de cheminées” [The Chimney Sweep] plays out the double entendre of the work of the chimney sweep as he visits the houses of townswomen while their husbands are away. In “La confession Margot” [Margot’s Confession], the eponymous heroine whose name indicated a loose woman recounts her sexual adventures to a priest who revels in the account. Overall, as in the *fabliaux* and the *nouvelles*, the *farces* rely primarily on stereotypes and stock situations, with little nuance.

Perhaps the most unique text of the period is the 22,000-line *Roman de la Rose*, begun in the 1130s by Guillaume de Lorris and then completed some 40 years later by Jean de Meung. In it, the courtly tradition collides with a rationalist, realist approach to relations between the sexes which focuses on reproduction. This highly controversial and popular text is read through the filter of either courtly love (for Part 1) or Christine de Pizan’s late-14th-century literary debate over its misogyny and vulgarity (Part 2). Guillaume de Lorris’ beginning (only a bit over 4,000 lines) articulates the central trope of the Lover trying to obtain his goal, the Rose, who is enclosed in a garden. Allegorical figures such as False Friend or Fair Welcoming people the garden and help or hinder the lover on his way to his goal. Taking up Lorris’ unfinished work, Jean de Meung expanded the dialogues to a more philosophical discourse, highlighting

Reason and Justice as important figures. Where Guillaume de Lorris' lover might have been content to gaze from afar, Jean de Meung's lover determines to pluck the Rose, encapsulating the conflict between idealized woman on the pedestal and the carnal nature of desire.

While heteroerotic relationships dominate the literature of this period, an underlying tension, suggesting the possibility of the homoerotic, pervades many of the most "heterosexual" of the texts. Few examples in medieval French literature deal explicitly with homosexual relationships. A single poem from the 13th century by Beiris de Romans, a *trobaritz* (female troubadour), addressed to Lady Maria, "her source of all happiness," uses the same language and imagery as her male counterparts to express longing and desire. Sexual ambiguity appears in a number of romances, in which a cross-dressed woman develops an erotic relation with a woman and may marry her. Cross-dressing in these tales does not originate from lesbian desire. For example, in Heldris de Cournuaille's *Roman de Silence*, the daughter is raised as a boy for purposes of ensuring her inheritance. In *Huon de Bordeaux*, the Virgin Mary intervenes and changes the cross-dressed woman into a man at the moment of her marriage. The 14th-century *Roman d' Yde et Olive* presents a more complex set of variables. Yde dresses as a man to flee from her father's incestuous affections. As a man, she marries, and her wife must navigate the erotically ambiguous marriage without revealing her husband's gender. In terms of medieval society, it could be suggested that a female same-sex relationship may well have been less threatening than incest.

Male homoaffective relationships often appear to coexist with the suggestion of a possible homosexual one. The *chanson de gestes* (epic poems) depict the world of knights and soldiers, downplaying the role of female characters. One of the earliest examples is *Ami et Amile* (c. 1200), in which the eponymous heroes form an idealized couple. Even though they each marry a woman, at the close of the poem it is Ami and Amile who share a tomb, as they had earlier shared a bed. Queer readings of courtly literature point up the closeness between Tristan and Marc (who had remained unmarried), the ties between Yvain and Gauvain, between Lancelot and Galehaut or Lancelot and Arthur. The world of companion knights leads to strong

homoaffective ties that may have been a literary equivalent of the closet. These types of relationships (like their adulterous heterosexual counterparts) most frequently end in separation, exile, or death. Even the *Roman de la Rose* does not resist a queer reading. Fair Welcoming, a male figure, attracts the Lover nearly as much as does the Rose, and rosebud itself is described in phallic terms. A number of Marie de France's lays present characters of suspect sexuality. Lanval is accused by Guinevere of preferring young men to women. The lay offers a heteronormative conclusion, with Lanval having a lover, although it is she who appears to have the active role in the partnership. "Le Bisclavret" [The Werewolf] offers the most provocative conclusion: the werewolf who had been kept like a beloved dog by the king who found him receives loving kisses from that same king when he is again transformed into a man. The homosocial bonds that were the fabric of medieval French society offer possible glimpses into a homoerotic subculture.

The themes found in French medieval literature are consonant with many of the overarching social structures. Marriage appears frequently in these texts, but it functions as an obstacle to love, or at least to sexual pleasure. Erotic relationships within marriage can be as threatening as extramarital ones, for they may cause the husband to neglect his social duties. As woman's access to power was, in the main, limited in medieval French society, so is her role in many of these texts. Exercising choice in her sexual relationships usually leads to condemnation. Where she does succeed, it is most often as a negative example, a warning. Same-sex eroticism appears to exist primarily in the margins. While male homoaffective relationships develop in many of the texts, they are never fully articulated as erotic. Thus, the overwhelming effect of this literature is to reinforce normative gender roles and to manage erotic desire within a markedly limited range of possibilities.

EDITH J. BENKOV

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## FRIDAY, NANCY

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1937–  
American novelist

### *My Secret Garden*

In the first chapter of *My Secret Garden*, Nancy Friday argues that the inception for the book came from two rejections of the idea that women have sexual fantasies, both by men—the first private the second public. When she told a lover a fantasy, he put on his trousers and left. When she made a heroine of a potential novel have a fantasy, the editor rejected it as making her a freak. In many ways, *My Secret Garden: Women's Sexual Fantasies* was compiled to prove these men wrong: to show that most women do have a rich fantasy life. Published in 1973, at the beginning of the Women's Liberation Movement in America, it was joined by Shere Hite's *Hite Report: A Nationwide Study*

*of Female Sexuality* (1976) as part of the attempt to establish what women's sexuality was actually like, as opposed to what a phallogocentric society inferred it should be. Compiled from interviews and questionnaires publicized through the newspapers, *My Secret Garden* seeks to give voice to an area of femininity silenced by cultural expectations. Consisting of a series of transcribed fantasies, identified only by the women's first names, the book is divided into six chapters which are introduced by the author, as she seeks to explain why women fantasize, the childhood source of these, and the female guilt around male anxiety that often accompanies such fantasies when they are not accepted. The main strength and interest of the book lies in the fantasies themselves. Sex with an anonymous stranger or in front of an audience, rape fantasies, and the thrill of the forbidden top the favorite ones reported. As Friday is keen to stress, the irrational world of sexual fantasy is very different from the actuality

of sexual practice, and the fact that so many women report the thrill of being forced to enjoy sex has more to say about their guilt over the cultural prescription of feminine decorum and frigidity in the early 1970s than about a real desire to be raped. Black men, young boys, dogs, and other women were favored partners for white women. Friday, who rejected a college education because of her desire to be closer to her audience as a writer, has no real model of how to analyze the fantasies she presents, though she does articulate a superficial Freudianism, but her refusal to pathologize is one of the book's strengths. Coming at the time of white middle-class women's banding together in sisterhood, the book, with its first name terms, as Jane Gallop argues, "brings women together as confidantes and sisters" to help create a climate where it is safe for women to confess to having a rich and lush fantasy life.

*My Secret Garden* was a best seller, and soon gave rise to a sequel, *Forbidden Flowers: More Women's Sexual Fantasies*, in 1975. Less groundbreaking, it followed the same format and compared the sexual fantasies of a younger generation, those who grew up in an era of sexual expression, with the Beatles and Elvis Presley, to see if they carried the same guilt factor translated into being "forced" to enjoy their sexuality. Again the fantasies themselves are the interest, interleaved with Friday's encouraging comments about how they show not that the women are neurotic but that they are enjoying their bodies. The fantasies range from being initiated into sex in church, as a religious ritual, to incestuous relationships involving dogs. Again, Friday refuses to pathologize or analyze, taking them all at face value, though her Freudian model now posits the disapproving mother as inhibiting women's sexuality.

In 1980, Friday varied the format by turning her attention to male fantasies, *Men in Love: Men's Sexual Fantasies—The Triumph of Love over Rage*. Arguing that men's sexual excitement, "his secret garden," formulates itself in ways that women may not recognize as love and may at times find disturbing in its aggression, Friday posits a scenario where men are independent and their need for love forces them to abandon this security and bind themselves to women, in settling down. The conflation of love and sex in this work and the

normative view of marriage make this the most conservative of Friday's work, as she explains to women that they need to realize how much men "worship women's beauty" and long for women who will share responsibility for sex. The most favored fantasy was a voyeuristic watching of a woman masturbating.

Friday's final compilation to date, *Women on Top*, was issued in 1991. It situates the early 1990s as a much more somber sexual climate, due to AIDS, abortions, and unwanted pregnancies, than was the heady sexual curiosity of the 1960s and 70s. But the younger generation of women accept fantasies as a natural part of their sexuality. Female fantasies in this new society, "wallpapered with sex," focus less on guilt and anxiety at being in control (i.e., rape fantasies) and more on women in control, women with women, and women as sexually insatiable. Young women now take masturbation as a normal part of their sexuality, and part 2 of the book, "Separating Sex from Love," is in praise of masturbation, for allowing women to become more sexual and orgasmic and to distinguish sex from love and thus, like men, separate from the mother. Friday's continuing to place all blame for sexual inhibitions on the child's early relationship with the mother is a pop Freudianism which fails to see mothers as also inflected by social prescriptions, and equally vulnerable. Asserting that while women are changing and are now more in control of their sexuality, men are not and are being frightened by women's assertiveness, she claims that this is "women's responsibility, having started the sexual revolution, to finish the job."

Where Friday's first book, *My Secret Garden*, helped give voice to the burgeoning feminist demands for rethinking cultural prescriptions of femininity, her stance has become increasingly questioning of feminism. Many of her assumptions, models, and conclusions lack a sophistication that in the climate of the 1990s is more problematic than it had been in the 1970s. Women's fantasies about having sex with other women are linked to a "nostalgia for the mother's breast" that obscures and silences a whole range of erotic desires. As Andrea Stuart argues, her lack of cultural specificity and her bland assumption that she speaks for every woman, of whatever age, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, makes the project prescriptive in its own way: "Yes she



## FRITSCHER, JACK

has put women's erotic lives on the map; but I suspect that by enshrining women's sexuality in this particular way, Friday may have helped to cut us off from the possibility of creating our own erotic language." But where the explanations unwittingly censor, the fantasies themselves continue to demonstrate the wild diversity and complexity of real women's sexual fantasies, and in documenting and publishing them, Friday has helped to change the climate of opinion on women's sexuality and their erotic desires.

### Biography

Born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, August 27, she attended Wellesley College. She began as a reporter and magazine editor in the early 1960s, before becoming a freelance writer. She is most well known as a compiler of best-selling books of women's emotional and sexual experiences, from the 1970s through to the 1990s. She has been married twice, to W.H. Manville (October 1967) and Norman Pearlstine (July 1988).

MERJA MAKINEN

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# FRITSCHER, JACK

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1939–

American novelist and editor

Jack Fritscher has been many things: tenured university professor, novelist, writer of short stories, biographer, magazine editor, maker of more than 200 erotic videos, photographer, chronicler, and critic of American pop culture. His writing links all these activities into an exploration of eroticism, which is, for Fritscher, an arena of masculine-identified sexuality. His approach is twofold. On the one hand he is the formally trained critic and ethnologist, curious about all aspects of human behavior, as demonstrated in his nonfiction titles *Popular Witchcraft: Straight from the Witch's Mouth* and

*Mapplethorpe: Assault with a Deadly Camera*. On the other, he is the writer-artist dramatizing a personal vision—expressed, for example, in his ambitious signature novel, *Some Dance to Remember*. There, as well as in all of his writing and photography, his focus is on what he calls "homomascularity"—less the act of sex itself, more a complete state of being.

He sees in the very males who attract him—bodybuilders, cowboys, cops, men in sports gear and uniform—ritualized totems of the potent American Dream, taken from his own dream visions, as well as from the dreams of the intense cult following whose tastes he has recorded and reflected for many years on page and screen. He believes, as the author of the award-winning

novel *The Geography of Women*, that just as women now investigate gender, similarly many men have become increasingly curious about their own gender identification. In his view, true homomascularity, far from canceling out the female principle, offers the valid gender balance of male animus that the female anima demands and deserves. His writing dramatizes the fact that there is in male-to-male sex an underlying current of violence—that sexual relationships between grown-up men, the bulls and bears of the herd, often veer toward displays of brute strength, and even beyond this to episodes of action-adventure that outsiders might view as violence. As an American erotic writer, he also perceives that these outbursts of physical competition are intrinsic to the nature of American life. Usually quite cinematic, his style is often as challenging as his content. So naturally does he fit eros into revelations of what it is to lead a sexual human life that he refers to his literary erotica as “men’s adventure stories.” In *Burning Pen: Sex Writers on Sex Writing*, Fritscher, distancing himself from autobiography, explained his gonzo journalistic approach to reflexive erotica in his essay “Porno Ergo Sum”: “I inhale experience. I exhale fiction.”

In another gay-studies essay, “Erotic Writing Manifesto,” he added: “The gay erotic writer is to gay non-erotic writers what Ginger Rogers was to Fred Astaire: gay erotic literature does everything gay literature does, but does it backwards and in high heels adding to its Olympic degree of difficulty and pleasure.”

“One hopes,” he writes, “when one works in erotic literature to constantly redefine what we consider to be erotic. I often develop fetish-based stories, perhaps foreign at first to the reader who ultimately gets seduced by this strange alternative-angle approach to orgasm. This freshens the surprise and delight of the genre with both beauty and terror—and for many readers, terror is their only hard-on.”

Fritscher mixes his first-person verisimilitude with character development, screenplay-like story arcs, and dialog typified by stories such as “Wild Blue Yonder,” “How Buddy Left Me,” “Daddy’s Big Shave,” and “Foreskin Prison Blues.” Stylistically, he creates erotic rhythms through word choice and precise punctuation, as in the comic erotica of the 3,000-word short story “Three Bears in a Tub (A One-Sentence Romance)” in *Best American Erotica*, 2003. His

images of sex comment on human life: eroticism is means toward humanism.

As San Francisco editor-in-chief of *Drummer*, Jack Fritscher developed, and in some cases brought to print for the first time, themes that have since become staples of gay literature: the concept of “gay pop culture” itself; the gender identity of homomascularity; the fetish analysis of bondage, cigars, rubber, bears, and edge play. His writing of erotic interviews and feature articles balances his erotic fiction.

As he wrote, in his role as founding adviser to the Erotic Writers Association, 2002: “Erotica is the essential writing of lesbian culture the way that blues and rap are essential to African-American culture. No one successfully dares censor blues or rap. Yet both the puritan ‘straight mainstream’ of publishing, as well as the exclusionism of the self-anointed ‘gay literary establishment’ have too long censored lesbian gay erotic writing by denying both its cultural essence and its literary nature. Historically, everything has been rigged against erotica—agents, publishers, printers, distributors, bookstores, reviews, and awards. Yet erotica is a quintessential form of human expression, because it is the subtext of life, as much as erotica is always the avant garde of art.” His Catholic-school education—as well as his longtime career commitment to the Catholic priesthood—may explain how, though Fritscher’s erotica may seem Freudian, it is really more Jungian and basically Platonic in its ejaculatory ideal. “My S&M erotica,” he has written, “spins out of the central image and the main archetype of Western culture: the handsome, muscular, masculine, nearly naked Christus, bound, whipped, and crucified.”

## Biography

Jack Fritscher was born in Jacksonville, Illinois, June 20. Educated for the Catholic priesthood at the Vatican’s Pontifical College Josephinum, 1953–1963; first published, 1958; received doctorate in philosophy, Loyola University, Chicago, 1968, having written his thesis on *Love and Death in Tennessee Williams*; founding member, American Popular Culture Association, 1968; wrote novel, *I Am Curious (Leather)*, 1969, published 1972, and republished as *Leather Blues*, 1984; wrote *Popular Witchcraft: Straight from the Witch’s Mouth*, 1973; university professor,

teaching American literature and cinema, 1967–1976; founding editor-in-chief of San Francisco–based *Drummer* magazine, 1977; wrote signature novel *Some Dance to Remember* using his own erotic journals, 1970–1982; created and edited with Mark Hemry first 'zine of the eighties, *Man2Man Quarterly*, 1980–1982; from 1977 onward, wrote short stories, features, poems, plays, and screenplays later anthologized in six volumes, including the canonical *Corporal in Charge of Taking Care of Captain O'Malley*, 1978; in addition wrote transgender erotica, "Aqua-Nymph," 1981, and lesbian novel, *The Geography of Women*, 1998, as well as cross-cultural Celtic fiction, "Chasing Danny Boy," 1999; wrote erotic memoir *Mapplethorpe: Assault with a Deadly Camera*, 1994; wrote benchmark essay on erotic theory, "Porno Ergo Sum," 2001; since 1969, has been an erotic photographer shooting covers and centerfolds; created Palm Drive Video, 1982, writing and directing more than 200 erotic feature and gay documentary videos; founding member advisory board, Erotic Authors Association, 2002; Story Teller of the Year Award, 2002, for priest sex-abuse novel, *What They Did to the Kid: Confessions of an Altar Boy*; wrote erotic pop-culture history of *Drummer* magazine in the documentary anthology *Eyewitness Drummer: A Memoir of the Gay History, Pop Culture, and Literary Roots of the Best of Drummer Magazine*, 2003. His books have sold more than 110,000 copies, and his erotic videos more than 250,000 copies. Two of his videos, including *Dureau in Studio*, produced by Mark Hemry, profiling the erotic painter-photographer George Dureau, New Orleans, are in the permanent collection of the Maison Europeene de la Photographie, Paris.

EDWARD LUCIE-SMITH

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## FURNITURE

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It might be thought, on the basis of modern stories, that erotic literature tells about people doing things in bed, but the bed is not usually the main focus of interest in stories written before 1850. The most common piece of furniture in classical boudoirs, as described in French libertine literature, is the sofa, or divan. When paintings and engravings of the time show people making love, and when literature describes them doing so, they are not usually “in” bed, as in modern stories, but sometimes leaning on or spread across a divan or some other piece of furniture, using it as support. Even where a bed is present, the characters are likely to have one foot on the floor.

Furniture is often described in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century stories as providing, so to speak, a ready-made shape, waiting to be adopted. Women are said in French to be “curved” on sofas, turned into seductive shapes by aligning themselves with the contours of the furniture. If it is remembered that another vital element of boudoir decor was the mirror, one can begin to understand that classical libertines were quite deliberate and self-conscious about the poses they were adopting. Literature, engravings, and paintings on the walls showed how it was done; the furniture provided material support; and mirrors allowed people to see that they were doing it properly.

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, erotic stories began to tell more and more of furniture that broke during the action. Instead of the classical stability that allowed poses to be

taken up like tableaux and enjoyed for themselves, one finds incidents in which the furniture cracks and falls apart. It may be just a chair, or perhaps some kind of light bed made of webbing, but the furniture now appears quite unstable. And lest this might appear simply as a comical turn of events, deflating erotic tension, readers are continually told that the resulting collapse is a good thing. Rather than pulling the lovers apart, disturbing their erotic poise, it actually throws them together. As they fall, the man penetrates more deeply, the woman yields more completely; it is in fact the happiest of accidents. The point of this rather new kind of story, which flourishes in French around 1790–1800, seems to be that true, natural pleasure does not need to follow ready-made boudoir shapes. But the breaking bed or the chair that comes crashing down is in its own way a model for using furniture erotically, suggesting that the best positions are not the ones that lovers adopt with care, but the ones they fall into.

The historical change in erotic furniture described in stories has a technical dimension. Instead of the firmness and stability associated with classical sofas, the furniture described around 1790–1800 is noteworthy for its resilience. Beds are often sprung and made for bouncing on. Making love in coaches also comes into vogue in stories of that time, and it was sometimes said then that coaches were better than boudoirs, precisely because of their continual movement.

Late-nineteenth-century stories in French describe a different kind of boudoir from the

## FURNITURE

classical one, which had clean lines, pastel hues, and plenty of mirrors. Fin-de-siècle boudoirs are generally dark places, with walls of deep pink or red, heavy drapes, and soft, deeply capacious furniture. This is the time when erotic stories are filled with atmosphere, in the quite literal sense of the word. The sensations of the outside world hardly penetrate at all, and the air is thick with perfume, if not with ether or opium. Around 1880–1900, the bed becomes the archetypal centerpiece, the surrounding decor being barely visible, and therefore, in the proper sense, hardly a decor at all. In libertine stories of 1750, and even as late as de Sade's novels, around 1800, boudoirs are well-lit places in which the characters perform erotic routines with theatrical overtones. But at the end of the nineteenth century, the action usually takes place deep inside the bed, with the rest of the room lost in a haze. What matters most is no longer the shape of the furniture, but its rich material qualities.

Quite a lot of erotic stories actually feature items of furniture as central characters. *Le sofa* (1740), by Crébillon, and *Le canapé couleur de feu* [*The Fire-Colored Sofa*] (1741), by Fougere de Montbron, are stories typical of their time. Crébillon's novel, which continues to be widely read, tells the story of a man whose soul is imprisoned in sofas by a magic spell. He can gain release only if a virginal woman gives herself to a man for the first time on a sofa in which the hero is currently residing. In the kind of libertine world described by Crébillon, there is a shortage of virgins, and it seems as if the hero will never find release, try as he might to find the right sofa, the right house, and the right woman. But he eventually does so, and the story is able to end. There is no mention in Crébillon's novel of sweat or strain, or wet patches: the sofa is simply a support for love-making, and a perfect vantage point from which a "soul" can tell erotic stories.

It was still possible for a piece of furniture to be the narrator-hero in a fin-de-siècle novel, but

the thematic role became quite different. *Les Mémoires d'une chaise longue* (1903), by Victorien Du Saussay, focuses on the rivalry between a chaise longue and a bed. They stand side by side in the apartment of a promiscuous bachelor, and each can be used for seduction. The chaise longue, which tells the story, sees itself as the proper place for libertine dalliance, and regards the bed as a vast, unthinking place of sleep and death. The chaise longue tells proudly of its own erotic sensitivity, of its capacity to vibrate in sympathy with any who might make love on it. So sensitive is the sofa, indeed, that it suffers from the kind of nervous disorder which is widespread in literature of the time, and acutely present in erotic stories. The chaise longue admits to being hysterical. Its springs are its nerves, and they are so hypersensitive that the chaise longue's condition eventually degenerates into neurasthenia. It also develops a drinking problem. Such erotic pathos would have made no sense to eighteenth-century libertines. It represents the most extreme development of sympathetic, atmospheric furniture. In the fin-de-siècle, eros crosses over into sickness, and the furniture is caught up in the epidemic: the chaise longue itself is sick with desire and pleasure. As the dominant notions of pleasure changed over time, so did the furniture.

PETER CRYLE

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## GARCÍA LORCA, FEDERICO

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1898–1936

Spanish poet and dramatist

The most popular poet in Spain at the time of his death, Lorca's successful literary career lasted only eighteen years. His juvenilia, much of it prose, reveals his early preoccupation with the vicissitudes of love and desire, and his letter correspondence often expresses the voice of a subject who struggled with the social implications of sexuality. His relationships with Salvador Dalí, Emilio Aladrén, and Rafael Rodríguez Rapún, as well as with Phillip Cummings while he was in New York, reflect Lorca's poignant and frustrated sense of love as expressed in his poetry and plays. The principal characteristic of Lorca's concept of eros is frustration: love and desire, heterosexual and homosexual, are at best, unrequited, at worst, fatal. Although it is now commonly accepted that Lorca was gay, until the 1990s, literary critics generally silenced his homosexuality, either by ignoring it altogether or suppressing it in favor of a more "universal" interpretation of his concept of eros.

In his poetry Lorca adopted both traditional and avant-garde techniques, drawing on

predecessors such as Shakespeare and Góngora, employing forms such as the ballad and the sonnet, yet also seeking innovation by turning to free verse and surrealism. In *Romancero gitano* (1928), Lorca engages in a poeticization of the mythic figure of the gypsy, infusing the traditional form of the romance with his profound passion for Andalusia. Lorca transforms the popular traditions of Andalusian culture and the figure of the gypsy into a poetic expression of eros as anguished and violent, producing a collection suffused with sexual desire, violence, and death. Desire appears as a masculine "wind" wielding a heated sword, and sexual relations are characterized by deception, adultery, and incest; in "Thamar y Amnon," for example, Lorca draws on the Biblical theme of incestuous love in which Amnon violently rapes his sister and flees. In *Poeta de Nueva York*, written in New York between 1929 and 1930, Lorca eschews the traditional form of the ballad for free verse and surrealist symbolism, exchanging Andalusia for the urban space of New York. He leaves behind the narrative quality of the ballads and strives for a personal yet highly hermetic expression of his tragic, anguished vision of

eros; the gritty urban space of New York reflects his sense of alienation. Several of the poems convey the poet's struggle with his own homosexuality, juxtaposing the happiness of his childhood and former friendships in contrast with his present emotional state. Yet it is the famous "Ode to Walt Whitman" that offers the most explicit engagement with homosexuality as a source of frustration and alienation: Lorca extols the virile, masculine image of Walt Whitman from *Leaves of Grass* and rejects the depraved, promiscuous urban homosexual. Between 1935 and 1936, Lorca worked on a collection of sonnets that has come to be known as *Sonetos del amor oscuro*. The lyrical voice speaks to an absent beloved, expressing the anguish and frustration provoked by the beloved's absence; the gender of the poem's addressee is not specific but in many instances suggests a male recipient. Love oscillates between corporeality and spirituality, between a desire for physical contact that is rarely achieved and a vision of love as a spiritual connection that extends beyond the body. In *Diván del Tamarit* (1933–1934), the poet, influenced by Emilio García Gómez's anthology *Poemas arabigoandaluces*, draws creative inspiration from the traditional forms of the *ghazal* and the *qasida* to extol the virtues of homoerotic passion. In spite of formal and thematic differences in his poetry collections, Lorca's works in verse consistently employ nature imagery (rivers, barren trees, the moon) as symbols of human desire.

Lorca's dramatic works share the same vision of love and desire as his poetry: Homosexual and heterosexual love suffers from frustration, social opprobrium, and fatal destinies. *El público* (1930), an avant-garde theatrical work influenced by surrealism, is Lorca's most explicit treatment of homoeroticism as various male characters ask each other what would happen if they were to declare their love for one another. As a metatheatrical work, it dramatizes the possible phobic reactions of the public to the theatrical representation of homosexuality. *La zapatera prodigiosa* (1930) and *Amor de don Perlimplín con Belisa en su jardín* (1933) take inspiration from the traditional narrative of the "old cuckold" whose youthful wife seeks amorous and erotic attention from virile paramours. While comedic in tone, the plays nevertheless announce Lorca's profound engagement with the asymmetry of erotic relations in which the subject's desires are

stronger and thus remain unrequited by the emotionally vacant other. *Así que pasen cinco años* (1931) portrays the fatality of a desire in a surrealist guise as the central protagonist; a young man must wait five years before being reunited with his beloved, who in turn scorns him. In a card game at the drama's denouement, he is forced to play his Ace of Hearts (symbolic of love) and dies. Similarly, in *Bodas de sangre* (1932), the female protagonist's marriage plans end in death as her former lover and future husband kill each other in a violent, jealousy-driven battle. In *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (1936), the youngest of the five Alba sisters, Adela, maintains a passionate affair with her sibling Angustias's suitor, Pepe the Roman. At the end, Adela, believing that her mother, Bernarda, has shot and killed Pepe, commits suicide. Desire is also linked to sterility in Lorca's dramas, his plays populated by female characters who lament the absence of men and the failure to bear offspring. In *Yerma* (1934), the eponymous protagonist anguishes over the failure to bear offspring and ultimately kills her husband, Juan. In *Doña Rosita la soltera* (1936), the titular character vainly waits for her cousin to return from America to marry her, only to discover after her youth has passed that he is engaged to another woman. Lorca's poetic and dramatic works thus strike a consistent chord: love is a wound, a transient source of happiness whose rapid passing leads to pain and despondence, and at its most tragic, to destruction and death.

### Biography

Federico García Lorca was born on June 5, 1898, in Fuentevaqueros, near Granada. Lorca originally wanted to study music but followed his father's wishes and initiated his studies in law and humanities at the University of Granada in 1914. In 1918, Lorca published his first book, *Impresiones y paisajes*, a work of prose that was followed by his first poetry collection, *Libro de poemas*, in 1921. An uninspired student, Lorca moved to the Residencia de Estudiantes in Madrid in 1919, enjoying the greater freedom that Madrid offered and completing his law degree in 1923. In 1924, he wrote the highly successful *Romancero gitano*, published in 1928. A dramatic shift occurred in 1929 when Lorca undertook a year-long trip to New York, prompted in large part by his struggles with

homosexuality. Enrolled at Columbia University, he composed the surrealist-inspired *Poeta en Nueva York* and worked on the dramas *Así que pasen cinco años* and *El público*; he also composed a first version of *Yerma*, later revised and staged in December 1934 in Madrid. Upon his return in 1931, Lorca collaborated with the university theater group La Barraca, representing plays of the Spanish Golden Age around the country. Focused more on theater than on poetry, Lorca wrote *Bodas de sangre* in 1932, first performed in 1933 in Madrid, and *Doña Rosita la soltera* in 1935, which premiered the same year in Barcelona. In 1935, he also worked on a collection of sonnets, commonly known as *Los sonetos del amor oscuro*. In 1936, Lorca composed his last play, *La casa de Bernarda Alba* (not staged until 1950 in Madrid), and continued working on the sonnets. In the midst of increasing political turmoil Lorca returned to Granada in July 1936, against the advice of friends who urged him to leave Spain. On August 19, just days after the outbreak of civil war, Lorca was assassinated by members of the right-wing Falange. The motives for his murder—whether punishment for his left-wing political leanings or his homosexuality—remain a matter of historical debate.

PATRICK PAUL GARLINGER

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# GARCÍA MÁRQUEZ, GABRIEL

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1928–

Colombian journalist and novelist. Nobel Prize in Literature (1982).

*Cien años de soledad* [*One Hundred Years of Solitude*], García Márquez's most successful book, was written within a framework of social crisis, censorship, repression, and the tyranny of successive Right-wing governments, all necessary elements for this new stylistic literary mode. Magic realism allowed writers to, apparently, "depoliticize" their work and create magical and marvelous worlds which invite the suspension of disbelief.

*One Hundred Years* embraces a range of universal themes encompassed in this novel: solitude, love, sex and desire, and the circularity. These themes are encompassed within the story of the decline and fall of a family who have founded a new town 100 years before.

"Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendía was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice." With that opening sentence an omniscient narrator evokes the end of a vital cycle from the very outset. This chronological confusion, the present seen from the perspective of the past, will continue throughout the main recurrent episodes of the novel.

One of García Márquez's recurrent themes is the failure of collective memory and the lack of accountability for actions taken in the past. Yet, the most outstanding theme is incest. The story begins with Úrsula and José Arcadio's incestuous marriage (they are direct cousins). The family dynasty is not only founded in incest; the physical consummation will occur at least once in each of the seven generations. Driven by irresistible physical urge brothers, sisters, cousins, aunts, and nephews intermarry and procreate. Aureliano José will marry Pilar Ternera. Yet he is in love with Amaranta, his aunt, who in turn is madly jealous of his wife. José Arcadio will marry Rebeca, who was adopted by his parents and brought up with the rest of the siblings as a

blood sister. Amaranta, although she dies still a virgin, can only experience sexual arousal while playing with her nephews. Finally, as he faces the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano will try to evoke the memory of his wife but feels ashamed when he can only recall the smell of his mother.

Sexual relations are rarely simple and straightforward between members of the clan. Choice of sexual partner is frustrated by various taboos such that sexual intercourse rarely goes hand in hand with love. It takes Úrsula and José Arcadio more than a year to consummate their marriage, haunted as she is by the fear of giving birth to a baby with a pig's tail—a curse which has already manifested itself once before in the family. Colonel Buendía seeks physical solace with Pilar Ternera because of lack of interest by Remedios. Aureliano consoles himself with Rigromanta before he turns to Amaranta Úrsula. Indeed, Amaranta Úrsula and Aureliano are the only couple that are in love and manage to physically consummate that love. Ironically, Amaranta gives birth to the last Buendía, the one who bears a pig's tail, and whose story closes the cycle of the family and the town of Macondo.

*El amor en los tiempos del cólera* [*Love in the Times of Cholera*], the story of a love triangle, is perhaps the most autobiographical of García Márquez's books. Florentino Ariza must wait fifty years before finally marrying the love of his life, Fermina Daza, who rejected him in favor of a better match. But Florentino Ariza, after having spent a lifetime securing his economic success, seizes his opportunity when her husband dies. They set out on Florentino's ship and he puts up the flag indicating cholera so that nobody will bother them in their renescent lives and long-awaited sexual reunion.

Florentino Ariza, however, is essentially an erotomaniac. The principal way in which it manifests itself is with regards to his ability to compose love letters, not just on his own behalf, but for others as well. Although he had dedicated his heart to one person, he abandons himself physically to some 622 (García Márquez is quite

precise about the number) passionate and sometimes long-standing love affairs, devoting himself to this amorous antiquarianism with the same intensity as the passion he professes for Fermina. Given that Florentino Ariza is an excellent letter writer, logorrhea plays an important role in his long courtship process. In fact, Florentino Ariza might best be likened to Cyrano de Bergerac, who it might be remembered composed poetry on behalf of star-crossed lovers. Indeed, he brings so many couples together that he soon finds himself composing replies to his own love letters.

García Márquez is also concerned with the depiction of social imposture. He is particularly mocking of Fermina's husband Juvenal Urbino. Urbino is an educated and well-traveled man who knows how to treat women. He is especially patient with their first lovemaking experience, as realizes his wife is terrified of physical intimacy.

Although most of García Márquez's stories are set within a fictional time and place, they can be read as ironic and humorous but also tragic epics that reflect, often negatively, and denounce Latin American and particularly Colombian social and political reality. Other works include the novella and various collections of short stories *No One Writes to the Colonel*, *The Stories of Big Mama's Funeral*, *Innocent Eréndida and Other Stories* and the recent *Memorias de mis putas tristes*. In this short novel, García Márquez's first after ten years, an elderly journalist decides to celebrate his 90 years in a grand way; an expensive treat only his long-time friend Rosa Cabarcas, who runs the most prestigious brothel in town, could arrange for him. His life changes radically, however, when he sees the young woman lying in bed, completely naked, and he finally meets himself, close to dying, not of old age but of love.

### Biography

Born in 1928 in Aracataca, in the province of La Guajira, Colombia, his career commenced in journalism. Between 1947 and 1955 he published regularly in various Colombian newspapers such as *El Espectador*, *Crónica*, and *El Heraldo*. In Spain, he contributed to *El País*. In 1955, he published his first book *La Hojarasca*, followed in 1958 by *El Coronel no tiene quien le escriba*. He founded the magazine *Alternativa* in 1974 and the short lived *El otro* [*The Other*] in 1982

(closed for political reasons) and was editor of the *Semanario Crónica* in 1950.

The 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s witnessed a wave of innovative, young Latin American writers who, influenced by modernists such as Proust, Joyce, Woolf, and Faulkner, became known as "el boom." Miguel Angel Asturias was considered the precursor of this group; other members included Agustín Yanes, Alejo Carpentier, Juan Rulfo, Carlos Fuentes, Julio Cortázar, Mario Vargas Llosas, Guillermo Cabrera Infante, and Manuel Puig.

García Márquez's relatively low profile career as a journalist ended in 1982 when he won the Nobel Prize for *Cien años de soledad* which, by its twentieth anniversary in 1987, had sold 30 million copies and had been translated into 36 languages. During the intervening years, with an international spotlight firmly fixed on South American literature, García Márquez continued to write steadily.

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## GAUCLÈRE, YASSU

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1907–1962

French essayist and novelist

Gauclère's literary career suffered many misfortunes which delayed its reception (*L'Orange bleue* was only republished once, almost twenty-five years after it was written), as did her untimely death which limited her work and its influence. She wrote only three novels, the first two of which are dominated by erotic themes. Eroticism in Gauclère's work serves as a counterpoint to a perverted innocence, marked by a questioning of abjection, secrets, suffering, and guilt. It appears within the narrative as a figure of sin (in *L'Orange bleue*) or as the tyranny of the flesh (in *La clé*), creating in Gauclère's *œuvre*, an eroticism of anti-eroticism. In the same way as Jean Paulhan remarked the surprising respectability of *Histoire d'O* by Pauline Reage, Gauclère's eroticism could be branded as pitilessly respectable. Her mastery of form both exposes and contains the exhibition of the intimate.

The cover of *L'Orange bleue*, carries the word 'Récit..' Written between 1933 and 1939, the novel, in a manner reminiscent of André Gide's autobiographical *Si le grain ne meurt* (1926), tells the first person account of the gradual sexualization of the subject. In Gauclère, however, this process is one of an objectification, even a reification of the body. The narrative depicts the very young boarding school girl, innocently falling prey to several practices and abuses, with an increasing sense of estrangement. The main theme of the novel is the displacement of the

fatherless girl, who moves from one place to another and often from hands to hands. Barely eleven years old, she is presented with a succession of abusive substitute fathers, who despicably introduce themselves as 'petit papa' or 'Uncle Joseph' and try to take advantage of her. Interestingly, the attempt to pervert her involves making her read erotic books, namely the series of *Claudine* by Colette, since 'a little girl who reads *Claudine* can see everything..' The young girl converts to Catholicism, and later experiments with the repressive order of several religious institutions, where she tries to escape the sin of the flesh through mysticism. She also hopes to redeem her Jewish father, and yearning for the vocation of celibacy, prays that if she ever is to get married, the marriage will remain white.

The quasi-sacrificial interiorization of values imposed upon her is also undermined by the sensitive portrayal of the unavowed eroticism of the meticulous school rituals, such as the nuns' curiosity, the discipline, the common stripping of the boarders, and the everyday humiliations. Predating Foucault, Gauclère demonstrates the erotic potential existing in the inscription of power relationships on the girls' bodies. The teaching of feminine behavior by the nuns, the corporal punishment, and prohibitions such as not crossing one's legs, prove to be an instruction into temptation and an incitation to representations of impurity. This awareness helps to transform a victimized eroticism into an eroticism of conquest, and to regain freedom from the infinite casuistic of religion. Yet such conquest leads

her only to be rejected into a world dominated by the aggression of desiring and objectifying looks: 'Then I was able to understand the world which had been depicted as being so dangerous. I'd had no money, no books, no friends and I'd meet disgusting gentlemen, who'd call me doll.'

An even more tragic form of eroticism is at the core of her novel *La Clé*, dedicated to Etiemble. As the title suggests, the novel, set in Paris and in Mexico, deals with closure. The failure of a metaphoric key to open the prison built around the main female character, in her desire to be untouchable, is rendered in the opening chapter by the discovery of her putrescent body two months after her suicide. Once an object of unwanted desires, she has been reduced to a stanching corpse. Dominated by this figure of decomposition, physical love in the novel finds a parallel with a process of corruption, degradation, and physical pain. The recurrence of animals involved in or as inspiration for sexual acts (a parrot, a bull, a man disguised for sexual rituals as a cock, another as a horse), suggests an identity between copulation and bestiality she cannot accept: 'Love was male and female blinded by the species.' However, the only real escape is death.

The diversity of erotic themes interwoven in Gauclère's novels, their rich psychoanalytical content, and the quality of her style makes her *œuvre* particularly original. Its neglect by critics appears completely undeserved and calls for a systematical rediscovery.

## Biography

Léonie (aka Yassu) Gauclère, was born on the 10th of January 1907 in Paris. She studied Philosophy at the Faculté des lettres de Bordeaux and obtained the Agrégation de Philosophie in 1931, in the same year as Ferdinand Alquié, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Robert Derathé, and Simone Weil. She taught Philosophy in several high schools, including Lycée de Moulins in 1931, Lycée de Toulouse, (1932–1936) and Lycée de Sèvres (1936–1938). She met her future husband, Etiemble (\*), at the Moscow International Writers' Congress, in 1934 with whom she wrote a remarkable biography of Rimbaud in 1936. Etiemble's scandalous debut novel *L'Enfant de chœur* (1937), which tells of the

sexual education of a young boy, is dedicated to her, while Gauclère's first novel, *L'orange bleue*, deals with the sexual apprenticeship of a young girl. Published in June 1940, during the French exodus before the arrival of the Nazi armies, copies of the book could reach neither the public, nor the critics. Fearing for her life because of her Jewish background, she left France for America where Etiemble was teaching. She taught in Hamilton College until 1943. After leaving teaching, she worked as a civil servant, as an attaché in the Government Press service, in Alger and Paris (1944), and at the French Embassy, in Cairo (1945–1947). She divorced Etiemble and became a civil servant for UNESCO in Paris, continuing to write and was awarded the Prix Sainte-Beuve in 1951 for her second novel, *La Clé*, dedicated to Etiemble. *L'orange bleue* was republished in 1961. She died young on the 22nd of September, 1962.

DOMINIQUE JEANNEROD

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# GAUTIER, THÉOPHILE

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1811–1872

French poet, novelist, and journalist.

Though *Mademoiselle de Maupin* must be considered Gautier's most important discussion of eroticism, the subject, often in a highly veiled manner, is omnipresent in his work. A number of the *contes fantastiques* [fantasy tales] of the 1830s and 1840s consist of opium-induced reveries which seem to be leading to imaginary (and, invariably, frustrated) erotic encounters. 'Omphale' (1834) and 'Clarimonde' (1836) are best described as erotic ghost stories. The erotic is, in fact, also the theme of Gautier's 1835 novel: D'Albert, a young poet, finds the embodiment of his ideals of love and physical beauty in Théodore, a charming young squire (who is, of course, the Mademoiselle de Maupin of the title). D'Albert's choice of an androgyne as love-object, however, gives rise to all manner of aesthetic, intellectual, and psychological paradoxes which Gautier explores with relish in his diffuse and complex novel. While *Mademoiselle de Maupin* was shunned by the general public, its influence on French Romanticism and the decadent movement (especially Sainte-Beuve, Baudelaire, and Swinburne) was considerable.

Gautier's most overtly erotic (or offensive) work, however, was a long communication which he sent from Rome in October 1850 to Apollonie Sabatier, an enchanting *demi-mondaine* who was maintained by a rich banker. She also numbered Baudelaire and Flaubert among her devoted admirers. Surprisingly, given its Rabelaisian content, hand-written copies of this letter would seem to have circulated more or less freely in the Parisian literary milieu for a number of years (a version was read to the Goncourts in December 1857, for example). Though it did not make its way into print during the lifetime of either the author or the recipient, Augustus Brancart, the celebrated clandestine bookseller who had recently moved his center of operations from Brussels to Amsterdam, issued it as *Lettre à la Présidente* in 1890. ('La Présidente,' perhaps in

honor of her capacity as a hostess, was Gautier's own affectionate nickname for Mme. Sabatier). Later editions (now as *Lettres à la Présidente*) are often augmented by a further seventy or so short notes by Gautier to Mme Sabatier, mainly dealing with matters such as tickets for the opera, together with the handful of erotic poems that the author had been wary of publishing under his own name during his lifetime.

Given the capital importance of the *Lettre à la Présidente*, it is surprising that literary critics and biographers still tend to make little or no reference to it. Nowhere else, however, does Gautier reveal himself so unreservedly. This is especially important with regard to an author such as Gautier who, though his work is dedicated to the cult of beauty and amorous encounter, was apparently not only incapable of commitment (except perhaps to women who were unattainable) but also haunted by images of disease, physical deformity, scatological excess, and the frustration of desire. In many respects, the *Lettre à la Présidente* represents the very antithesis of *Mademoiselle de Maupin*.

The letter itself begins by recounting one of the nocturnal fantasies ("fantasmagories nocturnes") that Gautier experienced in Geneva involving the use of a wire pulley (of the kind employed by acrobats on the stage) for the purpose of coition. A few days later, in the countryside, he is fantasizing about a woman with three nipples. More alarmingly, a picture of a military battle that he notices in an auberge at the Simplon Pass metamorphoses before his eyes into a pornographic image: "The cannons were transformed into ejaculating penises, the wheels became testicles, the barrels erections, and the smoke simulated the frothy cream of spurting semen" (my translation). At Domo d'Ossola, the glimpse of a bottle of olive oil gives rise to some speculative remarks on its possible employment in the hands of aristocratic pederasts, a vice he seems to identify with English travelers. This is followed by a bewildering kaleidoscope of images: an erotic marionette theater; animals

copulating in the street; and a description of a nine-hour coach journey during which time he is continually aroused by the rubbing of the upholstery (the vehicle's suspension, apparently, is to blame). In Venice, he employs a pimp to take him and his traveling companion (Louis de Cormenin, though he is never formally identified) on a tour of the back streets, where a heavily-pregnant woman offers herself. Though only 22, she has already given birth to six children. Mercifully, the offer is declined: "Be as enterprising as you like, you can hardly ram a fetus back into it's mother's belly; and it's no fun to feel some brat treating the end of your penis as a trampoline" (my translation). Florence, Rome, and Naples offer a similar variety of exotic experiences.

Why did Gautier send this curious missive to his friend in Paris? Internal evidence would seem to suggest that Gautier had never made love with Mme. Sabatier (or "trinqué du nombril," i.e., rubbed navels, in Gautier's curiously childish expression), so one suggestion must be that the *Lettre à la Présidente* was merely an exercise in masculine bravado. The recipient, however, would not seem to have been in the least scandalized by the letter. This implies, perhaps, that such matters were talked about fairly freely in front of her. More generally, Gautier's fascination with such images is clearly part of a broader phenomenon: the nineteenth-century bourgeois male fascination with dirt and prostitution.

There are a number of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century translations of *Mademoiselle de Maupin* into English, but readers should be aware that many of these will not be very reliable. *Lettre à la Présidente* remains untranslated.

### Biography

Gautier was born in Gascony in 1811 but spent most of his childhood in Paris. Along with writers such as the temperamental Pétrus Borel and the nomadic Gérard de Nerval, he belonged to

the young Romantic school of the early 1830s (Le Petit Cénacle) whose members looked to Victor Hugo as their spiritual leader while actively seeking to surpass him on the strength of their own macabre or aesthetic excesses. Gautier's first book, a collection of poetry, passed almost unnoticed in 1830; *Albertus*, a bizarre fantasy about a young poet who sells his soul to the devil for love, suffered a similar fate two years later; while *Les Jeunes-France, romans goguenard* (1833), essentially a collection of sketches satirizing the aesthetic pretensions of his Parisian literary friends, was too narrow in its appeal to attract a wide audience. The same might be said of his most important literary work of this early period, *Mademoiselle de Maupin* (1835). Though Gautier's preface is now considered one of the principal manifestoes of Art for Art's Sake, the licentious subject matter of the novel (which deals with the myth of the androgyne) caused the book to be shunned by middle-class readers. The commercial failure of this novel may have pushed Gautier towards developing a career as journalist, critic, and travel writer. Though he continued to publish fiction throughout his life (including *Le Capitaine Fracasse*, 1863, an engaging picaresque novel), French readers in the mid-nineteenth century would have been equally aware of his work as a theater reviewer and art critic. He died in 1872.

TERRY HALE

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## GAY (MALE) WRITING

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Although gay erotic writing undoubtedly shares many of the characteristics of straight writing, the marking of homosexuality in terms of object choice gives any gay eroticization of the male body a different political, social, and ethical edge. By putting the sex (back) into homosexuality, gay erotic writing makes a statement about itself and about sexual identity which arguably has more in common with women's erotic writing than with much straight male writing about women. Such eroticization is, however, a two-edged weapon. On the one hand, it foregrounds a sexuality which has been traditionally subject to censorship, self-censorship, and stigma. On the other hand, it can give the impression that male gays are at least as phallographic as heterosexuals. Gay male erotic writing can, therefore, be seen to be treading a fine line between, on the one hand, using "men are beautiful" (or at least, sexy) to show that "gay is beautiful" and, on the other, making it look as if gays are unreconstructedly phallographic. In many cases the writing discussed here will not simply fall into one of these categories and be either hegemonic or counter-hegemonic but be rather, in a variety of ways, both: by combining modes of identification and distance, much of the writing charted here will combine pleasuring the male body with an awareness, analysis, and even alienation of that pleasure. Erotic fantasies will be constructed as they are demystified, demystified as they are constructed and, as a result, the simplistic assimilation of sex(uality) and identity will be simultaneously asserted and questioned. Even some gay pornography—and this is doubtless one of the reasons for its interest for literary and cultural critics—can be seen as operating at these different levels and giving its readers and viewers opportunities for the demystification of its (and their) seemingly most visceral fantasies.

One way of simultaneously asserting and demystifying the assimilation of sexuality and identity is to allow gayness to be submerged into a generalized, universalized homoeroticism.

Although, for instance, Grant Foster's collection of short stories, *Long Slow Burn* (2001), is trailed as "masterful gay erotica," gayness as such recedes before "a tidal wave of testosterone" where each man has a "piece" with "a life of its own" and, with wives and families at least temporarily removed, can surrender to the "beast trapped within [him]": boys will be boys and locker-room horseplay leads to irresistible sex between inexperienced narrators and a series of muscled sportsmen, truckers, and bodyguards. This emphasis on immediate physical and emotional connection between men is, in William J. Mann's short story, *By the Numbers*, attributed to "the libidinous network that makes up the queer nation" (Lawrence Schimel, *The Mammoth Book of Gay Erotica*, 1997). With their "gaydar" and "secret scent" all gay men are linked "dick to dick" across the United States and, according to Steven Saylor writing as Aaron Travis, also across the centuries: the homoeroticism of Roman statuary is repeated in the equally accessible sculpted beauty of present-day Italians (*Do as the Romans Do*, *ibid.*, pp. 58–66). If, in Neil Bartlett's acclaimed *Ready to Catch Him Should He Fall* (1990), the young protagonist, Boy, immediately connects with the older but equally beautiful O(ther), this is also seen as part of the feverish—some would say promiscuous—homoeroticism of The Bar where they meet, which gaybashers seek, in vain, to eradicate. Even in this quintessentially gay novel, the sexual aura of the symbolically named Boy and O extends, as in the previous texts, over time, space, and specific identities: here again, boy(s) will be boy(s) and gay sex(uality) merges with a universalized male-to-male eroticism, presided over by a similarly generalized "Mother."

At the same time as implicitly turning the Boy into an archetypal Cupid or Eros himself, gay narratives also deconstruct the tautology that "boys will be boys," notably in childhood or adolescent (auto-)fictions such as Edmund White's celebrated *A Boy's Own Story* (1982). Whereas "real" boys are characterized by their

“reedy, sinewy, scruffy maleness” (p. 119), the physically retiring narrator combines the alienation of precociously internalized stigma with the self-distancing of coruscating adult prose: however pleasurably he “cornholes” with fellow youngsters and experiments with local hustlers, the narrator wants to be and remain heterosexual. Struggling to distinguish sincerity from insincerity, real identity from fantasized romances, the narrator finally becomes himself through a gratuitous act of betrayal—thus echoing the links between homosexuality and deviance/deviousness suggested by Gide’s youthful “counterfeiters” (*Les Faux-monnayeurs* [1926]) and Genet’s young criminals (*Notre-Dame-des-fleurs* [1944]). Relatedly, *A Boy’s Own Story* recalls a whole series of schoolboy narratives by authors as different as Emmanuel Carrère, Jean Cocteau, Éric Jourdan, Håkan Lindquist, Yukio Mishima, Henri de Montherlant, Alain Peyrefitte, and Michel Tournier, where self-questionings combine with erotic awakenings, and also texts where a mature narrator seduces compliant Arab boys, from Gide’s *L’Immoraliste* (1902) to Tony Duvert’s *Journal d’un innocent* (1976), or where he simply admires one from afar as in Thomas Mann’s *Tod in Venedig* (1912). By charting the conflict between the beauty of the boy and “the world’s spleen and deceit” (White) such texts ask: Where is the homosexual? On the side of beauty or on the side of deceit?

Although such adolescent self-questionings can be discarded when the boy becomes a man, homoerotic hedonism is still problematized in “adult” fictions—for example, by other forms of (self-)destructiveness, by the implications of promiscuity, and by AIDS. In James Baldwin’s *Giovanni’s Room* (1957), for example, a combination of Giovanni’s murder of his employer and the narrator’s eventual preference for a relationship with a woman, Hella—who still rejects him—results in the execution of Giovanni and the isolation of the other protagonists: the gorgeous Giovanni is seen by Hella as “a sordid little gangster” and the narrator is left alone. While ostensibly very different in period and in tone, gay men’s *penchant* for a handsome “bit of rough” also leads to betrayal, unfulfilment, and even prison in Alan Hollinghurst’s *The Swimming-Pool Library* (1988). Even if youth, beauty, money, and connections give the narrator-hero, Will, access to repeated good sex,

that sex concentrates on a relatively underprivileged, well-honed waiter, who betrays him, and on a homeless, sensuous Black, who is, like Giovanni, also drawn into murder. If, at the same time, other characters’ minor misdemeanours lead to arrest or imprisonment, then gay sex is shown to be either semi-innocently exploitative or unjustly persecuted, by gay-bashing in the streets or in the courts. Since, moreover, homoeroticism crosses time—from the images in Lord Nantwich’s Roman pavement to The Shaft—and space—from 1930s Egypt to contemporary London—and indeed class—from Wormwood Scrubs to the gentleman’s club—homosexual desire is shown to be constantly linked not just to arbitrary, hypocritical, social oppression but, even more dangerously, to elegant, hedonistic self-oppression. Equally ambivalent is the fiction dealing with ageing and AIDS—often taken together as in Pier Vittorio Tondelli’s *Camere separate* (1989) and Andrew Holleran’s *The Beauty of Men* (1996). On the one hand, Holleran’s mid-fifty-year-old protagonist, Lark, agonizes over the deaths of his friends and over fellow gays’ continued emphasis on youth, beauty, and the appropriate body parts. On the other hand, writers such as Ramon Fernandez in *La gloire du paria* (1987) celebrate the dignity and loyalty of AIDS-affected couples and others, such as Hervé Guibert, even see AIDS as a “marvellous disease,” giving AIDS an aestheticized, eroticized aura. Whether AIDS is seen as unalloyedly calamitous or strangely empowering, it is, in both cases, eroticized: if only because of the very nature of AIDS, the AIDS patient’s combination of self-analysis, self-contemplation, and self-withdrawal is, like the gay adolescent’s self-questioning and the gay adult’s (self-)oppression, a constant reminder of the link between eros and gay identity.

As can be seen from the presence of young if often unpremeditated gay killers in *The Swimming-Pool Library*, *Giovanni’s Room*, Tônu Õnnepalu’s *Piiririik* (1993) and Fernando Vallejo’s *La Virgen de los Sicarios* (1994), and from the related, recurring appeal of “rough trade,” gay eroticism can be more than tinged with a suggestion of violence, whether in the choice of partner (compliant boy initiated by older man), in the sexual act itself (active/passive and accompanying dress codes), or in the socio-cultural-historical context of the relationship: internalized oppression, AIDS, or war. Internalized stigma,



as in Mishima (where hypermasculinity is close to ultra-nationalism), and in Fernandez, is often accompanied by references to the archetypal “gay” martyr, Saint Sebastian, and, from the earliest known epic, *Gilgamesh*, to Pierre Guyotat’s *Tombeau pour cinq cent mille soldats* (1967), male-to-male bonding is often accompanied by warfare and death. Although gay violence sometimes seems to figure in the writer’s life as much as in his art—Gilles de Rais, Sade, Genet, Mishima—and although some gay serial killers have themselves generated more publications than many actual authors—Jeffrey Dahmer, John Wayne Gacy, Dennis Nilsen—it is the carefully coded, ritualized forms of what might be broadly called sado-masochism which have prompted most fictional representations, from the prolific output of John Preston (*Mr. Benson*, 1992) to the parodic but deeply disturbing fictions of Dennis Cooper (*Frisk*, 1991). While the latter exposes the inseparability of desire and violence and of representation and pornography, the former is an apologia of ritualized S/M between the narrator-slave and the master-Mr. Benson, in contrast with “real” sadists represented by a vicious German, Hans. By associating gay bonding with violence—whether the supposedly instinctual violence of the untamed boy as in Éric Jourdan’s *Les Mauvais Anges* (1984) or the cultivated violence of the older man as in Joël Hespéy’s letter-novel *S.M. Roman* (1994)—the male homosexual is shown to be more, rather than less, masculine than his heterosexual equivalent. Thus Hespéy’s older Sylvain repeatedly urges his trainee, Marc, to “take it like a man”: submissiveness and pain give unprecedented access to a physical and psychological virility which Marc can then pass on to future trainees in an unending transfer of male empowerment. This enhanced masculinity is, moreover, achieved through an inseparable combination of violence and writing: Marc is instructed to write his own S/M novel and he literally “gets off” on a sheet of paper he sends to Sylvain with every letter on which their relationship depends. Hespéy’s text thus demonstrates the inseparability of violence, male-to-male sex, and representation. Put differently, the real or symbolic tear shed by the “submissive” male reinforces the “money-shot” of gay fiction.

Despite this enhancement of masculinity—and corresponding elimination of any suggestion of the effeminized gay—much gay fiction still

blurs or questions the compartmentalization of sexual difference (Guy Hocquenghem’s *Ève* (1987)), gender roles (the novels and plays of Jean Genet), and homosexuality and heterosexuality. In Cyril Collard’s *Les Nuits fauves* (1992), for example, the presumably bisexual hero, Jean, is sexually active with Laura, Samy, and a host of other men, and in Hespéy’s *S.M.*, Marc identifies neither as homosexual or heterosexual, but as, simultaneously, Sylvain’s slave and heterosexual lover of Nicole. Indeed, part of the excitement of such fiction is to lure the supposedly heterosexual man into a more erotically fulfilling gay affair—witness Grant Foster’s “The Wedding Thief” in *Long Slow Burn* and the gay tryst of the handsome, married Beauchamp in Armistead Maupin’s *Tales of the City* (1972). What seems to matter here is less the relevance of precise sexual categories than a general increase in erotic activity amidst an equally general “gaying” of sexuality and thereby a general “queering” of the community, society, and even the world. If gay men have been oppressed, then liberation means global gay sex—not just for self-identified gays, but for all. In this welcome reversal of conventional sexual hierarchies it is the straight who joins the gay out of the closet of sexual hypocrisy and inhibition.

OWEN HEATHCOTE

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## GE HONG

283–343  
Chinese poet

### *Baopuzi*

Ge Hong is a famous Taoist writer of the Jin dynasty. His works are plentiful, and many of them, such as his writings on poetry and strategy, have long disappeared. But fortunately the two books for which he is known, *Baopuzi neipian* and *Baopuzi waipian*, have come down to us. The *Baopuzi neipian* [*The Inner Chapters of the Master Who Embraces Simplicity*] is certainly the most interesting of the two. This book, which is well known in Taoist circles, remained hidden for many centuries, but has become the object of close studies during the last hundred years or so, in China, Japan, and in the West. It is nothing less than an immortality handbook in twenty chapters, and deals with all possible aspects of the subject: technical, moral, philosophical, etc.

About half of the book concerns the techniques one has to master in order to become immortal. As Ge Hong himself puts it (Chapter 8), “He who seeks immortality only has to acquire the essential, that is treasuring your essence, circulation of breath, and absorption of one great medicine. This is enough, there is no need for more.” The three arts Ge Hong mentions here have occupied the minds of Taoists during at least two millennia. Put into plain words, they make reference to Taoist sexual techniques, the Chinese yoga known today as *qigong*, and alchemy. If the last of these is seemingly no longer studied in China, the first two are still practiced by many Chinese, especially *qigong*.

The art we are interested in here is that of the bedchamber (*fangzhong shu*), which is essential,

according to Taoist belief, to attaining immortality, but also in avoiding diseases and enjoying a long life. Ge Hong remains very discreet about the details of Taoist sexual techniques, but does give us a few hints, which we shall examine here. First of all, he reaffirms, as the famous Confucian philosopher Mencius (or Mengzi) did many centuries before him, that eating and having sex are part of human nature: “Mankind’s way wants you to eat exquisite food, to wear light and soft clothes, to unite yin and yang, to gain a position in society (...). To abandon wife and children, to live alone in the mountains and swamps, to remain hidden and cut off with human nature, to be lonely, having nothing but trees and stones as neighbors, all this is unworthy” (Chapter 3). But more than a hedonist activity, sex, just like *qigong* and alchemy, is a therapy against old age, if practiced properly. For both abstinence and debauchery cause damage to a man’s health: “Man should not abstain completely from yin and yang. If he does so, he will soon develop obstructive diseases. Those who live reclusively and in celibacy often suffer from illness and do not live to old age. On the other hand, to abandon oneself to a life of pleasure is a danger to one’s life. He alone who knows the balance between economy and waste can avoid damages” (Chapter 8).

As to the right way of having sex, it is simple in theory, though somewhat disconcerting for a twenty-first-century westerner. The idea, which one finds throughout Chinese sex history, is for the man to retain his semen, and send it through his spine up to his brain. Sperm has very little chance, we know, of running up one’s spine to one’s brain, but there are various ways of retaining it, “As for the arts of the bed-chamber, there

are more than ten schools. One uses them to compensate for loss and to cure illness. If one can collect yin [positive energy] to fortify his yang [negative energy], he will prolong his life. The gist of it consists of one thing: returning your essence to reinforce your brain. True Men (Taoist immortals) pass on their methods mouth to ear but never write them down.” Fortunately, others beside Ge Hong have written down some of these secret methods, making it possible for all to learn and practice them.

Ge Hong incidentally mentions a rather simple way of extending one’s life span: “Zhang Cang, minister under the Han dynasty, discovered by chance a very simple method: he used to suck his wife’s milk, and thus lived up to a hundred and eighty years” (Chapter 5). (*Book of Han [Han shu]*, written in the 1st century CE). However, the author exaggerated the effect of this particular practice, for the *Book of Han* talks about it being ‘only’ a hundred and twenty years.

The longest and perhaps most interesting passage about sex in Ge Hong’s work is a kind of poem, willingly obscure but full of imagery. Just like many ancient Taoist texts, one needs a number of clues to understand its exact meaning, but most of them have long disappeared, and we can only call upon our imagination in order to appreciate this pure piece of erotic poetry:

“He chews and sips the precious flower,  
In the infinite sky purifies his mind,  
Outside himself meditates on the five lights,  
Inside himself preserves his nine essences;  
He reinforces the jade lock into the gate of life,  
Links the pole star to the yellow court,  
And brings the three lights into his clear room.  
The breath of the origin flies to him and purifies his  
body,  
On his golden beam he collects the divine liquor,  
Repudiating the white forever and retaining the  
black,  
He freezes his limpid fountain into his cinnabar field,  
And leads his submerged pearls to the five cities.

The alabaster cauldron comes down onto the furnace,  
The adorned bird raises its head and cries;  
The jasper flower raises its ear,  
The heavenly deer spits out jade.  
He keeps the primal laws in his scarlet palace,  
Conceals the nine lights in the darkness of his cave,  
The cloud loft increases and joins heaven,  
The long valley fills itself and the fabrics are mixed.  
(...)  
He sits down, then lies in his purple chamber,  
Chews and sucks the golden flower,  
Shining autumn mushroom,  
Rosy flower and emerald stalk,  
Precious ointment clear and pure,  
Quiet overflowing and continuous rain from the  
clouds.  
He appeases his hunger, quenches his thirst,  
Travels to the heart of things,  
Nourishes himself with peace and harmony,  
And retains *hun* and *po* souls.  
Filled are his bones, light his body,  
He can whip wind and clouds to fly up to the sky,  
And ride the chariot of chaos and live eternally.”  
(Chapter 5)

## Biography

Ge Hong was born in Jurong in 283 to an influential family. He became a minor southern official during the Jin dynasty but often retreated for years at a time to Mount Luofu where he did most of his writing. He died there in 343.

PHILIPPE CHE

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# GENDER

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## Gender Roles in Erotica

From ancient erotica to modern-day erotica, male and female sexuality takes a wide variety of guises. Whores are to be found in brothels; virgins wait in family homes to be seduced by libertines; gullible virtuous nuns find their introduction into libidinous abandonment through secular paramours or villainous priests; female flagellants are found in parlours, boarding-schools, and vice dens disciplining their charges; while morally unencumbered rustic peasants occupy the Arcadian landscapes free from guilt. All of these images present complex views about gender and male/female sexuality.

Gender disparities are distinctly evident in the treatment of the sexual roles of men and women. Women were, and continue to be, portrayed alternately as passive/submissive, wild/passionate, Madonna/Whore in ancient and modern depictions. In erotica, frequently, women are seen as being overpowered by men, a line which followed the sexual attitude dominant in society throughout the ages. However, as well as indulging in the conquered virgin themes (see *Virginity*), erotica frequently transgresses these traditional submissive roles, depicting women as sexually assertive or as unbridled nymphomaniacs. More recently, from seventeenth-century erotica onwards, both qualities are combined in anti-religious erotica, as seen in the nun's character in *Venus in the Cloister* (French original, 1683; English reprint, 1692). The innocent female *religieuse* is initially portrayed as submissive, gullible, and a victim. Once introduced to sex, she becomes as lascivious as the other female characters, their sexual downfall being blamed on the men. The male religious characters are invariably cast in a poor light, as tyrannical debauchers of young innocent girls. This was a reflection of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century anti-Catholic sentiment which fired the production of images of sexually depraved priests.

The notion of an essential female lasciviousness is routinely expressed throughout erotica.

Women have long been believed to be connected to nature and, as such, have been portrayed seen as unrestrained and sexual wanton. For example, the landscaped female (a concept influenced by the ancients such as Ovid) was updated in the eighteenth century. In *A New Description of Merryland* (1741) the land is depicted as wild, unpredictable, and unruly, echoing the uncontrollable force of the Hippocratic humoral female body. The female flagellant as seen in *Exhibition of Female Flagellants* (1777; J.C. Hotten reprint, 1872) is dominant, elegant, and refined whilst gradually unleashing her passions. In twentieth-century erotica, the female dominatrix clad in leather wielding a whip has overshadowed the more refined version of the eighteenth-century flagellant.

The most prominent image of masculinity was, and still is, one of self-possession and control, the polar opposite of its female counterpart. The male body is often depicted as the principal force for reproduction, as in *Arbor Vitae, Or the Natural History of the Tree of Life* (1732); conversely in some erotic satire, men are made completely redundant, as in John Hill's *Lucina Sine Concubita* (1750), in which women reproduce independently via parthenogenesis, echoing men's concern over female sexual autonomy. Although men are frequently depicted as aggressors, despite their control and power within the sexual hierarchy, they are often seen as less energetic sexually and easier to weaken physically. Erotica through the centuries has contained subtle warnings to men to be restrained or women would sap their strength.

By the nineteenth century, erotica was becoming increasingly aggressive. Rape themes became more common and included violent scenes which placed women in a subordinate role. A further change over the last two hundred years can be seen in flagellation fantasies. In the eighteenth century, women were the most likely victims of the female dominatrix character but during the Victorian era, men were also being depicted in roles of both victim and aggressor.

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Homosexuality is rarely mentioned in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century erotica, except disparagingly. By the nineteenth century, explorations of homosexual love are being made in works such as *Teleny, or the Reverse of the Medal* (1893), a work by a number of authors, one of whom is sometimes said to have been Oscar Wilde; and *Priapeia* (1889).

### Gender and Readership

It is generally assumed that erotica was traditionally written and read by men. It is generally well-known that in eighteenth-century England, groups of libertines such as Sir Francis Dashwood, Paul Whitehead, John Wilkes, and the members of a notorious “hell-fire” club kept an extensive library of erotica. However, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that women both wrote and read erotica.

Seventeenth and eighteenth-century erotica frequently targeted women in their prefaces with an “address to the ladies” indicating that the writers of erotica either aimed their material at a female readership or wished to create the allusion of one in order to add another layer of fantasy for male readers. Female characters in *Venus in the Cloister*, Thérèse Philosophe (1748) and *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1749) are depicted as enjoying pornographic books. Mainstream books also portrayed women as reading erotica, as in Fielding’s fictional *Shamela* (1741) who favored *Venus in the Cloister*.

Although the creation of a female persona who read about sex was a literary device in order to establish the sexual nature of a character, evidence exists that some women were writers and readers of erotica. Sarah Lennox liked to read anything she regarded as “wicked,” such as Voltaire’s *Candide* (1759) or the pornographic *le Canapé* (1741) of which she exclaimed, “Tis the filthiest most disagreeable book I have ever read.” Women gave and received pornographic books and particularly appreciated fine copies. Women read about sexual intrigues in women’s magazines which occasionally carried risqué trial reports, racy poems, and sexual satires. Francis Place noted that *The Ladies Magazine: or, The Universal Entertainer* (1749–1753) carried all three, including Hill’s *Lucina Sine Concubitu*. The anonymous late seventeenth-century sex guide, *Aristotle’s Master-Piece*, was thought decent enough to give as a present to engaged

couples despite the fact that young apprentices masturbated over it.

Women also played a role in its publication. Paula McDowell has traced the activity of women in Grub Street between 1678–1730 whence erotica emanated. During the 1980s, the debate about reading erotica became a complicated feminist debate with dispute over the opinions of Dworkin and McKinnon who posited the view that pornography is a violence against women and should be banned. This ignores the notion that some women want to continue enjoying reading it. By the turn of the twentieth century, it was clear that many women wrote and read pornography and female fantasies were more likely to be included in erotica for the enjoyment of women.

Transvestism itself has a long history (see *Transvestism*) but transexuality has become a more prominent issue in the west towards the end of the twentieth century, although ‘Lady Boys’ have a much longer standing history in the east in places such as Thailand and India. With the advent of the Internet, pictures and scenes of transsexuals within an erotica content have become common-place and add to a distinctly more diversified understanding of gender, in which gender is no longer a bipolarized state but is made up of many layers of self-identification.

JULIE PEAKMAN

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## GENET, JEAN

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1910–1986

French novelist and dramatist

Genet’s work is remarkable for the incendiary tone which characterizes plays, novels, and rhetorical essays alike. Although Genet shocks through the explicit depiction of gay sex, sexuality is always accompanied in his work by the shadow of criminality: the *Journal du voleur* tells the story of a homosexual thief and prostitute who wanders across Europe in a state of unremitting poverty and extreme solitude. Because of the correspondence of the narrative to the myth surrounding Genet in the post-war years, and in part due to Jean-Paul Sartre’s account of Genet’s life and work, the book has frequently been considered as an autobiography. While the links between Genet’s own lived experience and the events of the *Journal* are more problematic than at first appears, the *Journal* is central to Genet’s concerns in its juxtaposition of criminality and homosexual identity.

*Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs* (1948) is set in gay Montmartre, and is concerned, like most of Genet’s fiction, with relationships of power as well as with sexuality. The relations of the drag queens and their lovers and pimps operate according to a rigid social framework. Here, as

in Genet’s prison fiction (notably *Miracle de la rose* (1946)), passive homosexuals occupy the lowest position in the hierarchy. In the homosexual *milieu* of the prison or the penal colony, social hierarchies are reproduced: the prisoners adopt a strict, self-imposed pecking order in which specific roles are adhered to. Prisoners are categorized according to active or passive roles in sex, the despised “cloche” becoming a chattel borne proudly by the dominant “marle.” In *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs*, passive partners and queens are *not* simply promoted to the most powerful roles in an effort to reverse preconceptions regarding their status. Much of the subtlety and power of Genet’s work lies instead in the insidious confusion wrought in power relations by those who are apparently most marginalized by them. In a Montmartre café, Divine, the queen upon whom the narrative centers, is gushing with camp eloquence when her false teeth fall out. Placing them upon her head, she reverses the humiliation of the situation, announcing “je serai reine quand même.” The humiliating stigmatization of gay characters paradoxically becomes the means by which their identity is most powerfully asserted.

Genet’s most famous works, the plays *Les bonnes*, *Le balcon*, and *Les nègres*, go still

further in questioning the social categorization of sexual behavior. In *Le balcon*, sexual role-play consists of assuming the trappings of the different representatives of social authority who pass through Madam Irma's brothel, including the General, the Chief of Police, and the Bishop. While the "real" action (including a muted revolution) is happening elsewhere, the main players in that action periodically return to the brothel. Each is crucially dependent on the baroque fantasy realm which it creates: when the General rides into a fantasized battle on the back of one of the prostitutes, sex has become simply the means of assuming identities, of projecting images. The radical sidelining of the "real" produces the uncomfortable suspicion that the real is forged precisely *within* the deluded role-play of the brothel scenes. The array of appearances and uniforms denoting social authority exactly mirrors those in the brothel, and their bearers' identities can only be maintained through the theatrical performances which the brothel permits. The sexual becomes the domain in which the inherent theatricality of power structures is exposed.

Elsewhere, meanwhile, sexuality is an aberrant field in which power is no longer functional. For most of the *Journal du voleur*, power relations seem to have been abandoned entirely: it seems that everything that Genet's character "Jean" does will, instead of redeeming him, drag him further into social and sexual humiliation. The scandalous war-time novel *Pompes funèbres* (1947), meanwhile, contains Genet's most graphic and complex treatment of sex, including ludicrous vignettes of Hitler engaged in a variety of sexual acts. Homosexuality is an essential part of Genet's universe and yet it is betrayal, more than solidarity, that characterizes the relationships of his gay characters. In *Pompes funèbres*, the narrator-protagonist is trying to come to terms with the death of his lover, Jean Decarnin, killed by the Nazi militia. His extraordinary solution is the fantastic creation of Riton, the militia man whom he imagines to have killed Jean, and who becomes the subject of extended sexual fantasies; in order to take control of his grief at the death of Jean, the narrator perversely exacerbates it, striving to make of his imaginary betrayal of Jean the site of an ironic pleasure. The narrator's ruminations on Riton's sexual

relationships are imbued with a powerful charge which hovers between eroticism and violence. Although *Pompes Funèbres* is perhaps Genet's most explicit and barbed book, it resonates with his other novels in its exploration of sexuality as an arena in which power relations may be played out, tested, and ironised. The quasi-erotic betrayal of Jean is a means of mastering the fact of Jean's death, and therefore of reversing the condition of disempowerment which it entails.

### Biography

Born Paris, 1910. Given up to the *Assistance Publique* by his mother; raised by a foster family in the Morvan region; primary school education. Abortive apprenticeships; runs away and is sent to the children's penal colony Mettray (Tours region), 1926; Signs up for the army, 1929; Postings in Syria and Morocco; deserts, 1936. Series of journeys through Europe, including Italy, Albania, Yugoslavia, Austria, Czechoslovakia, Poland, and Germany. Returns to France and is imprisoned, 1938. Dates the beginning of his writing from this period. Meets Cocteau and Sartre, 1943–1944. Publication and premier of Genet's play *Les bonnes*, 1947. Publication of novels *Miracle de la rose* (1946), *Pompes funèbres* (1947), and *Notre-Dame-des-Fleurs* (1948). Publication of *Journal du voleur*, in part based on wanderings in the thirties, 1949. Directs *Un Chant d'amour*, the only film which he will both write and bring to fruition, 1950. Publication of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Saint Genet: comédien et martyr*, Sartre's "existentialist biography" of Genet, announced as the first volume of Genet's *Œuvres complètes*, 1952. Publication of the plays *Le Balcon* (1956) and *Les nègres* (1958). First Paris performance of *Les paravents*, at the Odéon, accompanied by violent protests due to its portrayal of the French military and of the Algerian War, 1966. Genet's first major political writings, 1968. Involvement with the Black Panthers and with the Palestinian cause, 1970. Publication of *Quatre heures à Chatila*, one of Genet's most important political pieces, concerning the massacre of Palestinians at Chatila refugee camp, 1983. Death (Paris), 15th April 1986. Posthumous publication of *Un captif amoureux*, 1986.

DAVID HOUSTON JONES

## Selected Works

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## GEORGE, STEFAN

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1868–1933  
 German poet

From his earliest verses, written when he was still a schoolboy, to his last collection, published in 1928, Stefan George's poetry bears witness to his same-sex inclinations. Although the nascent homosexual rights movement claimed him as one of their own as early as 1914, for decades later critics preferred to overlook this pervasive aspect of George's poetry. In 1987, Marita Keilson-Lauritz corrected these decades of homophobia in her work *Von der Liebe, die Freundschaft heißt: zur Homoerotik im Werk Stefan Georges* [*On the love called friendship: the homoerotic in Stefan George's work*]. As Keilson-Lauritz mentions in *A Companion to the Works of Stefan George*, "there is no doubt that the concept of love in the texts of Stefan George is a homoerotic one. That is to say, even if George never would have called himself a 'homosexual,' the main subject of his texts is love of men and boys."

George's earlier work is symbolist, having been strongly influenced by Mallarmé and his circle. The collections *Hymnen* [*Hymns*], (1890), *Pilgerfahrten* [*Pilgrimages*], (1891), *Algabal* (1892), and *Die Bücher der Hirten-und Preisgedichte* [*The Book of Eclogues and Eulogies*], (1894) reflect this influence of symbolism, an influence which ends with the publication of *Das Jahr der Seele* [*The Year of the Soul*], (1897) and *Der Teppich des Lebens* [*The Tapestry of Life*], (1900). In this earlier period many poems dealing with queer desire and identity do so in a decadentist and medievalist context. This picture changed in 1902 when George met the precocious 14-year-old Maximilian Kronberger, who died of meningitis two years after. George deified the youth as "Maximin" in *Der siebente Ring* [*The Seventh Ring*], (1907) and in subsequent collections, *Der Stern des Bundes* [*The Star of the Covenant*], (1914) and *Das neue Reich* [*The New Empire*], (1928). Here George expressed queer sexuality often in more religious language representing an

increasing vatic and pedagogical vocation in his late work.

Queer sexuality in all of his poetry is, however, strategically disguised. George dubbed this "übergeschlechtliche Liebe" [supersexual love], encompassing homosexual love, platonic love, friendship, and love transcending sex, gender, and age, all frequently connected to "lust und peim" [lust and pain]. As Keilson-Lauritz notes, one of George's strategic disguises lies in the use of the gender-neutral second person singular. The poet also played with ambiguous metaphors and allegory. Far beyond simply creating ornamental and ultimately substitutable lexical deviance, George's use of metaphor helps to blur the boundaries of gender and desire. His poetry grapples with the tension between the heterosexual reality of Wilhelmine Germany and a repressed same-sex sensitivity.

These strategies both mask and signal a profound social conflict. Since George lived in a period of extreme social, political, and economic change, this is particularly significant. His times saw strong challenges to conventional concepts of sex, gender, and sexuality fueled by the emergence of the sexology of Tardieu, Ulrichs, Westphal, Tamassia, Charcot, Magnan, Havelock Ellis, Krafft-Ebing, Raffalovich, and others. The growth of psychoanalysis added further to this competition of ideas. Magnus Hirschfeld's *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* [*Yearbook for Intermediary Sexual Stages*] appeared at roughly the same time as George's *Blätter*, 1899 to 1923, and Freud published his *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* [*Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*] in 1905, only two years before George's *Der siebente Ring*.

As homosexual acts were still outlawed in Germany, however, the fear of being singled out makes George's preference for metaphor and more oblique forms of presentation understandable as self-protection. George's oblique expression contrasts sharply with the direct autobiographical articulation championed by his contemporaries. This allowed George to deal

with a variety of queer subjects such as pederasty (in poems like “Sieh mein Kind ich gehe” [See my child, I leave] and “Mein kind kam heim” [My child came home]), hermaphroditism (So sprach ich nur in meinen schwersten tagen [These words were said when living was a loss], “Der du uns aus der qual der zweiheit löstest” [You took away the pain of inner schism], “Ist dies der knabe längster sage” [Is this the boy of oldest legend], and “Ich bin der Eine und bin Beide” [I am the One, I am the Two]), and sadomasochism (“So werd ich immer harren und verschmachten” [And must I always thirst and wait], “Lobgesang” [Encomium], “Empfängnis” [Conception]). While accepting same-sex sexuality and other queer phenomena as neither pathological nor sinful and reviving Greek models of platonic love and love of boys, the range of queer *performativity* and the complexity of the queer strategies at work nonetheless betray an internalization of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century European scientific and religious discourses on sexuality.

This multifaceted treatment of same-sex eroticism, which found its real-life corollary in the ambiguous cultural politics of the male-bonded *George-Kreis*, makes George a *moderne à contre-cœur*. His work, despite its general antimodernist position, fits into the larger picture of queer modernist poetry by Verlaine, Rimbaud, Cavafy, Kuzmin, Lorca, Crane, Saba, Cernuda, and the like. The elitist forms of *Männerphantasien* inherent in George’s eroticism, torn between utter devotion and self-preservation, also place him in the aesthetic and moral vicinity of Jean Genet, who might at first glance appear to be an antipode.

In the still topical controversy surrounding George that resulted from the Nazi appropriation of his work, it is a *vérité inavouable* for certain apologists that his work has a proto-fascist character and that his treatment of same-sex eroticism relates to this character. Other critics who consider George an ideological precursor of Nazism have usually done so from a heterosexist perspective. However, the link between George’s notion of a “Secret Germany” and his understanding of sexuality must be avowed. Thus a queer—not gay hagiographic—approach to George’s output and its wider political ramifications becomes all the more necessary.

## Biography

Born into a Catholic family of wine merchants of partly French heritage in the village of Budesheim near Bingen, Germany, 12 July 1868. Attended Gymnasium in Darmstadt (1882–1888), becoming proficient in Greek and Latin while continuing courses in French and English, and teaching himself Norwegian and Italian. Upon graduating, traveled throughout Europe. In Paris (1889) met Albert Saint-Paul, Paul Verlaine, Stéphane Mallarmé, and other symbolist poets. Subsequently studied Romance literature for three semesters at Friedrich-Wilhelm University in Berlin (1889–1891). While in Berlin, co-founded the *Blätter für die Kunst* [*Pages for Art*], which was to become a prominent literary journal in the years between 1892 and 1919. In 1891, met Hugo von Hofmannsthal in Vienna, starting an intensive friendship lasting until 1906. All through the rest of his life remained a wanderer, continually on the move mainly between Heidelberg, Munich, Berlin, and Switzerland. In 1927, received the Goethe Prize of the city of Frankfurt am Main. In 1933, declined the Nazis’s offer of membership in the Preussische Dichterkademie, reflecting a complex antipathy and sympathy for German National Socialism. Died near Locarno, Switzerland, on December 4, 1933.

MAX D. KRAMER

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## GERMAN: TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

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Erotic literature is defined here as a genre with three progressively explicit types of text: the erotic, the sexual, and the pornographic imaginary in its linguistic expressions and versions; progressively explicit is understood as the representations of the erotic imaginary from the implicit (i.e., erotic) to the more explicit (i.e., sexual) to the most explicit (i.e., pornographic) in content and form. The designation of erotic literature is thus employed as an umbrella term and is understood by the levels of linguistic explicitness of the imaginary from the erotic to the sexual to the pornographic. It is in this context that our focus in describing German-language erotic literature in the twentieth- and the first years of the twenty-first century is to be understood.

While there are many examples of the erotic text in twentieth-century German-language literature, for example passages about Madame Chauchat in Thomas Mann's *Magic Mountain* or in Robert Musil's descriptions of youthful confusions and experiences of sexuality in his novel *Törless* or his allusions to incest in *The Man without Qualities* or in Frank Wedekind's *Pandora's Box*, our focus is on texts where the imaginary, the thematics, and their descriptions are linguistically and in the imaginary explicit from erotic to sexual to pornographic in form and content. It should be mentioned, however, that perhaps the best example of the low-key sensual-erotic belletristic text par excellence in German is Arthur Schnitzler's (1862–1931) *Traumnovelle* (1925) [*Dream Story*, trans. Otto P. Schnitnerer, 1927] — the short novel adapted to the film *Eyes Wide Shut* by Stanley Kubrick (1999).

In German-language literature of any period erotic texts as defined here are a minor genre in form, content, and numbers published. For example, while at the end of the eighteenth century German erotic texts acquired the themes and forms of the *roman libertine*, they did not achieve the aesthetic and linguistic elegance of the French texts and that with regard to the nineteenth century — and perhaps even to date — it can be argued that only one author's work, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's (1836–1895) *Venus im Pelz* [*Venus in Furs*] (1870) has acquired world-wide renown while the memoirs of opera singer Wilhelmine Schröder-Devrient (1804–1869), *Memoiren einer Sängerin* [*Memoirs of an Opera Singer*] (1862), are in some sources noted as the most famous text of German-language erotic literature (although the authorship of *Memoiren einer Sängerin* by Schröder-Devrient is contested). The memoir shows the influence of the Marquis de Sade's *Justine* with numerous descriptions of sadomasochism.

Twentieth-century German-language erotic literature (including the first few years of the new millennium) can be described by the following characteristics: 1) the translation of foreign texts of erotic literature dominates while original German-language texts are scarce; 2) although German-language erotic texts are frequent before World War I, the most active period where erotic texts and the publishing of such occur is in the period of post-World War I to 1933 when the Nazi government is installed, 3) most texts are published in private editions and the criticism that these texts are of popular

literary quality when compared with high-brow/canonical texts — as argued by Englisch already in 1927 (see below) — remains a characteristic of the genre up to several decades after World War II, and 4) with the arrival of new media in the 1990s, in online material where text and visuals represent a type of *Gesamtkunstwerk*, an innovative period is in the making whose developments are yet to be seen.

In twentieth-century German literature the most prominent erotic text is *Josefine Mutzenbacher. Lebensgeschichte einer wienerischen Dirne, von ihr selbst erzählt* [*Josephine Mutzenbacher: The Life Story of a Viennese Prostitute, as Told by Herself*] published in 1906 and attributed to the novelist and theater critic Felix Salten (pseudonym of Siegmund Salzmann, 1869–1945). Heavily influenced by Cleland's *Fanny Hill* (1749), the text is written in Viennese dialect with sexual and pornographic descriptions about the heroine's life who by her thirteenth year had already had more than two dozen lovers. A sequel entitled *Josefine Mutzenbacher und ihre 365 Liebhaber* was published in 1925, with similar descriptions of pornographic content. Another text of some renown of the period is C.W. Stern's 1909 collection of thirty tales taken from the fairy tales of the Brothers Grimm where the tales in the collection are re-written in sexualized language. Also interesting is the four-volume translation of the *1001 Arabian Nights* entitled *Tausend und eine Nacht. Arabische Erzählungen* (1913, trans. Gustav Weils, ed. V. Ludwig Fulda, and illustrated by Fernand Schulz-Wettel) where the erotic content is not the text itself but the illustrations. There are also B. Stern's (no relation to C.W. Stern mentioned above) 1908 *Illustrierte Geschichte der erotischen Literatur aller Zeiten und Völker* [*Illustrated History of Erotic Literature of all Times and Peoples*], a compendium with excerpts of texts and with much German-language material and Fritz Foregger's novel published in 1913, *Die Liebespredigt* [*Sermon of Love*] with love poems about oral sex, masochism, homoeroticism, necrophilia, aphrodisiacs, etc.

Since the mid- to late-nineteenth century, when in literature the urban environment and urbanity became dominant themes and the main locus of literature, also in erotic literature it has been city life that has become the most frequent setting and theme. In particular, Berlin and Vienna, the two largest German-speaking

cities of Europe, have become both the location of the stories in the texts as well as the location of the publication of the texts. Here are the most prominent examples of this genre of erotic literature: the loves and sexual exploits of the Berlin prostitute are the theme of Richard Werther (pseudonym of Ernst Klein) who has published since 1907 novels such as *Freudenmädchen* [*Women of Pleasure*], *Tagebuch einer Bordell-dirne, Lore* [*Diary of a Woman of Pleasure, Lore*], *Durchtollte Nächte, durchjubilte Tage* [*Crazy Nights, Wild Days*], and *Der lüsterne Detektiv* [*The Horny Detective*]. The usual plot is about the exploits of prostitutes in city night life, with the sexual and pornographic description of stereotypical excesses. Another popular novel of the period before World War I, also attributed to Richard Werther, is *Memoiren eines Arztes* [*Memoirs of a Physician*]. Loosely connected descriptions written in a retrospective mode, the story is about a physician whose sexual interest is in under-aged girls and who oversees a sanatorium for women where he enjoys life as a peeping tom. A further example of urbanity and sexuality in literature from the period before World War I is the novel *James Grunert. Ein Roman aus Berlin W* [*James Grunert: A Novel from Berlin West*] (1908) not the least because of the biography of its author, Werner von Bleichröder, who was the son of Bismarck's banker Gerson von Bleichröder (1822–1893), the first Jew who was ennobled without having to convert. Werner von Bleichröder describes in first-person narrative his life as the son of a banker named James Grunert. The novel's setting located in Berlin's high society and aristocracy, James begins his sexual life when as a ten-year-old he is seduced by the mother of one his school friends. Attracted to women with power, Bleichröder's alter ego Grunert's stories are about wild sexual lust in Berlin's affluent upper class including many a coming-of-age young woman. The at times unflattering description of the upper-class teenage women and their sexual promiscuity suggests the author's intention to criticize the Berlin society he obviously knew well as the son of a wealthy banker who in turn has had several kept mistresses.

As mentioned previously, German-language erotic literature of the twentieth century has been dominated by translations: the genre begins with the publication of Pietro Aretino's *I Ragionamenti* [*The Dialogues*] about the life of

the courtesan, translated by Heinrich Conrad, published in 1903. Conrad also published the German translation of the prototype of the *roman libertin*, Nicolas Chorier's *Académie de dames*, and Casanova's memoirs. By the 1920s, following the liberalization of society in the Germany of post-World War I including the abolition of censorship in 1918, many French and Italian texts of the Renaissance were published in translation in private editions but also regular publishers took advantage of the new interest of the reading public in erotic literature. For example, the *Decameron* was published in 1924 by the Berlin publisher Neufeld and Henius (translated by Klabund).

A prominent author as translator of classics of erotic literature is Franz Blei (1871–1942; Blei used the pseudonyms Medardus and Dr. Peregrinus Steinhövel) — known today as a supporter of Franz Kafka, Robert Musil, and Hermann Broch, and their literary legacies. During his life, however, Blei was decried as a “pornographer.” Blei's translations include Lucian, Laclos's *Liaisons dangereuses*, Vivant Denon's *Point de lendemain*, Antoine de la Salle's *Quinze joyes de mariage*, the amorous poems of Johannes Secundus, etc. In several anthologies, he published mainly French classics of erotic literature but authored erotic comedies himself, wrote commentaries about Franz von Bayros's erotic-sexual drawings, and published various other erotic material in *Ametyst* and *Opale*, magazines he founded. Examples of his own writing of erotic literature include *Lesebuch der Marquise* [*The Reader of the Marquise*] and *Von amourösen Frauen* [*About Women in Love*]. In his autobiography, *Erzählung eines Lebens* [*The Story of a Life*] (1930) he describes his first love with a Viennese girl in sexual detail.

Of importance is that for Blei erotic literature is framed within a social context and in his autobiography he discusses the meanings and functions of social mores in philosophical excursions where one of his arguments is the negation of the moral necessity of monogamy altogether. Further, in a scholarly context, in his *Formen der Liebe* [*Shapes of Love*] (1930), Blei presents in essays his thoughts on the meaning and history of eroticism. Further examples of translations in the period include translations such as the anonymous *Roman de mon alcôve* (1869) translated as *Die Geheimnisse meines Alkovens* (trans. Fred Marr, 1910).

Arguably, the most significant German-language contribution to erotic literature is scholarship and not fiction per se, namely Paul Englisch's 1927 *Geschichte der erotischen Literatur* [*History of Erotic Literature*], a work that to date is considered the largest and most reliable source of the topic. Little is known about the author and the name is likely a pseudonym: he was born in 1887, studied law and accumulated wealth in the retail business, a cultivated man who acquired a large private library. In his history of erotic literature, he defines the genre as “the description of sexually charged feelings of love — owing to the excitation of the nervous system and as a result of the stimulation of sensual desires — to one's self, to one's own gender, or to the opposite sex” (3, trans. Totosy). The book contains shorter chapters about Greek and Roman antiquity, French erotic literature is described in no less than twenty-one chapters whereby the most detailed description is devoted to the eighteenth century, six chapters are devoted to Italian material, and three chapters to English erotic literature while the periods of German erotic literature are detailed up to the 1920s. Non-European erotic literature is discussed in an appendix of the book. In addition to an overwhelming amount of information and detail, Englisch shows no prejudice and mixes descriptions of content with his critical remarks and his observations about historical contexts. Further, in 1932 Englisch published an anthology of erotic short stories, *Anthologie der erotischen Literatur aus vielen Jahrhunderten* [*Anthology of Erotic Literature*], with a preface by Franz Blei, in Vienna (private edition; rpt. in 1966). Blei's preface is of interest because he not only reiterates his objection to monogamy but discusses pornography and argues that owing to its fictional representation of sexual acts, pornography as mere “virtual reality” ought to be understood as a kind of “idealistic romanticism.” Although the texts in the anthology are from a wide array of sources and cultural geographies, the selections are mostly tame and even from *Josefine Mutzenbacher*, the selected text is the most unerotic possible.

In German language scholarship about erotic culture, it is of note that for the first two decades of the twentieth century, the best source of primary as well as secondary literature is Hugo Hayn and Alfred N. Gotendorf's eight-volume *Bibliotheca Germanorum erotica et*

*curiosa* (1912–1929). Another scholar whose work is internationally renowned is Eduard Fuchs (1870–1940) who published the six-volume *Illustrierte Sittengeschichte vom Mittelalter bis zur Gegenwart* [*An Illustrated History of Morals from the Middle Ages to Contemporary Times*] (1909–1912) and *Geschichte der erotischen Kunst* [*History of Erotic Art*] in 1920. What makes the classification of these works of scholarship erotic literature is the visual representation of sexuality in the books which at the time would have had considerable impact. Although Fuchs's depictions in categories such as "Prostitution in the Renaissance," "The Business of the Brothel," or "The Lust of Monks and Nuns" indicate an intention to polemicize, the pictures would have had undoubtedly an erotic impact on readers and viewers of the time.

In his *History of Erotic Literature*, English credits Fritz Thurn (the pseudonym of either Adolf Gruss or Fritz Foregger) as the best author of erotic literature of 1920s Germany. Thurn's *Weisheiten der Aspasia* [*Aspasia's Wisdom*] (1923) suggest an author with a classical education while at the same time his text attests to his knowledge of the genre aimed at the "Erregung sinnlicher Begierde" [awakening of erotic/sexual desire]. The locus of the novel is ancient Athens and we are in the palace of antiquity's most famous courtesan, Aspasia, later the wife of Pericles. The text is a quasi-historical novel whereby focus is on the description of sexual exploits and pornographic imagery. With Aspasia, the main character is Alcibiades who is invited by Aspasia to partake in her activities as a matron to virgins whom she educates in the art of love, in theory and in practice. Alcibiades participates in Aspasia's lessons by a string of sexual acts such as the deflowering of a Spartan prisoner of war and similar exploits and he responds to Aspasia's flirtations with his ability to withhold his orgasm until his lover and himself arrive at the highest levels of pleasure and satisfaction. What is interesting in the narrative is that Thurn's language is elegant and that he uses no common or coarse vocabulary when describing body parts or sexual acts. In the next chapters of the book, Alcibiades is allowed to partake in the lessons Aspasia offers to her young virgins and in eight lessons we read about body hygiene, particularities of the sexual organs, positions of lovemaking, the "auxiliary arts of Aphrodite" (fellatio, the relationship of desire and pain,

etc.), and about the various duties and prescriptions for the behavior of a courtesan. While these descriptions are highly entertaining, the text also includes various stories of sexual escapades, dispersed throughout the narrative and the author's intention is to present auto-reflective responses to his narrative. Perhaps of ironic dimensions is the description of the final scene of an orgy where participants include Aristophanes and Euripides. Aspasia is a complete hostess who satisfies all artistic and life desires of the event which includes members of the Spartan envoy to Athens. Instigated by Pericles, the hosts' objective is to subvert the resolve of the Spartans by engaging them in sexual pleasures in order to have them sign the Athenians' demands for a truce scheduled for the day after. Thus, the text connects the art of love and excesses of desire with politics and art to the common good versus war. The message is, of course, "make love not war," in 1923, an example of the ideas of the 1960s flower generation, here located in antiquity.

Other examples of the erotic novel in the inter-war period include Heinrich Wandt's *Erotik und Spionage in der Etappe Gent* [*Erotica and Espionage in the Headquarters at Gent*] (1929), a novel about the sexual escapades of a group of military officers. A novel of aesthetic quality as well as social and historical value is the autobiographical novel of Erica Fischer, *Aimee und Jaguar. Eine Frauenliebe* [*Aimee and Jaguar: A Women's Love Story*] (1943; rpt. 1994), a novel about lesbian love during World War II in Germany (the novel was adapted to film, directed by Max Farberbock [1999]). A prominent example of fetishist literature is Hanns von Leydenegg's 1932 *Der gestiefelte Eros. Lebensbeichte eines Schuhfetischisten* [*Eros with Boots: Confessions of A Shoefetichist*], illustrated by Paul Kamm, a text about transvestitism, flagellation, etc.

In the history of sexuality in general, the work of Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935) is of great importance. An early scholar of sexuality, Hirschfeld has published—primarily for scholarly as well as educational purposes—much work in the field, for example his *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes* [*Male and Female Homosexuality*] (1914), the annual of scholarship *Jahrbuch für sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (1899–1923), the learned journal *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft* [*Journal of Scholarship about Sexuality*] (1908–1913) as well as, with Maria

Krische, the educational magazine *Die Aufklärung* [Enlightenment; with the parallel meaning of sexual education] (1929–1930), and his principal work, *Die Geschlechtskunde* [Study of the Sexes] (1926). Further, Hirschfeld cooperated in the making of Richard Oswald's 1919 film about homosexuality, *Anders als die Anderen* [Different from the Others] and founded the world's first institute of research into sexuality, the Berlin Institute for Sexual Science (Institut für Sexualwissenschaft), 1919–1933. Hirschfeld frequented the avant-garde group of the "Friedrichshagener Dichterkreis" in the 1890s where many other writers, intellectuals, and artists congregated, such as Lou Andreas-Salomé, Max Baginski, Leo Berg, Max Dauthendey, Gerhart Hauptmann, August Strindberg, Rudolf Steiner, or Frank Wedekind for example, and many of whom have published various genres of texts with erotic or sexual content. In 1931, Hirschfeld went on an American lecture tour and at the time he was hailed as the leading expert of the field. A practicing homosexual, Hirschfeld supported the theory that hormones may be a source of homosexuality and his notions led other researchers to attempt to cure homosexuality with hormone injections. Hirschfeld died in exile in France and his Institute was destroyed by the Nazis. Among numerous other publications by Hirschfeld and his collaborators, the educational and scientific journal *Die Ehe* [Marriage], edited by Ludwig Levy-Lenz 1929–1932 is of note (the journal contained a large amount of nude photography). Founded in 1982, Hirschfeld's legacy is continued with the Magnus-Hirschfeld-Gesellschaft in Berlin. In a similar way, in the intersections of culture and erotic literature, the efforts and successes of feminist and pacifist Helene Stöcker (1869–1943) are to be mentioned because of her work in women's rights and women's sexuality: Stöcker's autobiographical novel *Liebe* [Love] (1922) contains many of her ideas about women's sexuality, for example. With the arrival of the Nazi government in 1933, all eroticism and of course sexuality and pornography, literary or other, have been banned and destroyed.

After World War II, the work of 1999 Nobel Prize recipient Günter Grass (1927–) — for example, *Die Blechtrommel* (1959) [The Tin Drum, trans. Ralph Manheim] (1962), *Der Butt* (1977), [The Flounder, trans. Ralph Manheim] (1985), etc. — are of relevance of the first order as

they contain numerous sexual and pornographic descriptions.

In the context of the sexual revolution it was, in particular, the business activities of one woman, Beate Uhse (1919–2001), who contributed much towards the acceptance of erotic culture in Germany, first via a mail-order company and later in sex shops, in cities throughout the country, where books and now, of course, videos and magazines of pornographic content are sold. The quality of printed material sold in the Beate Uhse shops is mostly in the category of popular/vulgar pornography. The Beate Uhse Erotic Museum in Berlin exhibits excellent material from the popular to the highly artistic: for instance, the museum's first catalogue *Sodom Berlin* (2002) is interesting as it contains an essay, "Sodom Berlin: Berlin as a Place of Eroticism and Erotic Art" by Hans Jürgen Döpp, and a series of reproductions of sexual and pornographic drawings by artists such as Charlotte Berend-Corinth (1880–1967), Michel Fingesten (1884–1943), George Grosz (1893–1959), Rudolf Schlichter (1890–1955), Erich Goldmann (1899–?), Otto Schoff (1884–1938), Hans Bellmer (1902–1975), and drawings by artists whose biographies are to date as yet unknown such as "Ernst Gerhard" and "Hildebrandt."

In the genre of popularizing knowledge about sexuality is the work of Oswald Kolle, who in the 1960s and 1970s published popular books and appeared in films where he attempted to explain the mysteries of relationships and sexuality (Kolle, in his '70s, lives in Amsterdam today). In the 1970s, the sexual prose about lesbian sadomasochism by Marlene Stenten (1935–) found a following with her novel *Albina. Monotonie um eine Weggegangene* [Albina: Monotony about One Gone Away] (1986) and in the 1980s Elfriede Jelinek's (1946–) novel *Lust* [Lust] (1989) and Brigitte Blobel's (1942–) collection of erotic short stories in *Venusmuschel* (1982) received acclaim as well as created debate and controversy. Of interest are also texts by Dorothea Zeemann (a.k.a Dora Holzinger, 1909–1993), theater critic, novelist, journalist, nurse, and author of two autobiographies *Einübung in Katastrophen* [Practice in Catastrophe] (1979) and *Jungfrau und Reptil* [Virgin and Reptile] (1982) where she describes in sexual detail her affair with the novelist Heimito von Doderer and author of the trilogy *Das heimliche Fest* [The Secret Celebration] (1986), *Eine*

*Liebhaverin [The Lover]* (1989), and *Reise mit Ernst [Travels with Ernest]* (1991), all with sections of sexual descriptions.

Visual texts of eroticism and sexuality published in the 1980s include Robert Lebeck's (ed.) *Playgirls von damals. 77 alte Postkarten [Playgirls of Past: Seventy-Seven Postcards]* (1987), Uwe Scheid's multi-volume book about nudes in photography, *Das erotische Imago [The Erotic Imagination]* (1986, 1991).

In the 1990s, Doris Lerche (1945–) who published the volume *21 Gründe, warum eine Frau mit einem Mann schläft [Twenty-One Reasons Why a Woman Beds a Man]* (1993) and Doris Dörrie's (1955–) collection of short stories *Bin ich schön? [Am I Beautiful?]* (1994; adapted to film in 1997) achieved some renown where a women's point of view and voice are stressed although sexual or pornographic descriptions are not to be found in her text; rather, it is the reference to such domains of life that make the text of interest. Dörrie has also achieved renown with her films and her interest in erotic and sexual matters in Germany with texts such as *Liebe in Duetshland: Deutsche Paare im Gespräch mit Doris Dörrie [Love in Germany: German Couples in Interviewed by Doris Dörrie]* (1995). Other examples of erotic prose of the 1990s include Ulla Hahn's *Ein Mann im Haus [Man in the House]* (1991), Marlene Streeruwitz's *Frauenjahre [Women's Years]* (1996), and Karin Rick's collection of short stories *Sex, Sehnsucht und Sirenen [Sex, Desire, and Sirens]* (1991) and Regine Nössler's collection of short stories *Wie Elvira ihre Sexkrise verlor [How Elvira Got Rid of Her Crisis of Sex]* (1996). Increasing acclaim is accorded to the erotic texts of Sophie Andresky who focuses on the female voice such as in her novel *Feucht. Erotische Verführungen [Moist: Erotic Seductions]* (2000) and in her collections of short stories *In der Höhle der Löwin [In the Cave of the Lioness]* (1998) and *Das Lächeln der Pauline [Pauline's Smile]* (1997).

As mentioned previously, it is translated texts that dominate German-language erotic literature of the period after World War II and up to the 1980s. At times, however, the translation of a canonical erotic text results in exceptional quality and in literary historical advance. For example, the Chinese classic, Chin Ping Mei's *The Adventurous History of Hsi Men and His Six Wives* (in mainland China only recently taken off the list of censored books), was published in

an unexpurgated German translation in 1967 (*Djin Ping Meh. Schlehenblüten in goldener Vase*, trans. Otto Kibat and Artur Kibat, rept. 1987) at a time when the novel's English translation did not include the text's pornographic sections. Or, already in the 1960s, translations appeared also of such texts as Guillaume Apollinaire's pornographic novel *Les Onze mille verges ou les amours d'un hospodar [Die elftausend Ruten]*, trans. Rudolf Wittkopf] (1970).

Texts of erotic literature were available for readers in communist East Germany to a much lesser extent than to readers in West Germany of course. An exception was the monthly *Magazin für Lebenskunst [Magazine of the Art of Living]* (founded in 1924, after 1945 published in East Berlin) that published photography, articles, and short stories of rather tame eroticism. However, nude photography, for example, otherwise hardly available in East Germany, appeared in this publication and thus its existence is of some importance in the history of East German literature and culture and represents an exception to the rule. A few writers, despite censorship, were able to write and publish texts with erotic and sexual content and language. Examples include Irmtraud Morgner's (1933–1990) feminist novels *Hochzeit in Konstantinopel [Wedding in Constantinople]* (1968), the trilogy *Leben und Abenteuer der Trobadora Beatriz nach Zeugnissen ihrer Spielfrau Laura [The Life and Adventures of Troubadura Beatriz According to her Ioculatrix Laura]* (1974, 1983; one critic calls the trilogy "socialist magical realism"), and *Amanda. Ein Hexenroman [Amanda: A Witchnovel]* (1983) and Gabriele Stötzer (1953–) who in her novels with a feminist outlook mixes German dialect, the lower-case writing of nouns, and sensual–sexual language when describing love and lovemaking.

Just before the collapse of communism, the East German government allowed, in 1988, the publication of translations of erotic classics such as by Octave Henri Marie Mirbeau and Andréa de Nerciat as well as *Josefine Mutzenbacher* and August Maurer's 1799 novel *Leipzig im Taumel. Nach Originalbriefen eines reisenden Edelmanns [Leipzig in Swing: The Correspondence of a Traveling Nobleman]*, a text with sexual and pornographic descriptions.

In the 1980s and 1990s, anthologies represent efforts by diverse publishers to market erotic literature. For instance, between 1986 and 1996 several editions were published of *Die*



*klassische Sau. Das Handbuch der literarischen Erotik* [*The Classic Sow: A Manual of Erotic Literature*] and its sequel *Die neue klassische Sau* [*The New Classic Sow*], edited by Eva Zutzel and Adam Zausel (pseudonyms). Texts in these volumes are not arranged by historical periods but thematically with selections from antiquity (Catullus, Ovidius), the Renaissance (Aretino), the eighteenth century (Cleland, Diderot, Restif de la Bretonne, de Sade), and, in volume two, focus is on contemporary literature where also some German authors such as Gottfried Benn, Robert Gernhardt, Eckhard Henschel, Elfriede Jelinek, Eugen Neter, Peter Rühmkorf, Cora Stephan, and Kurt Tucholsky are included. Material selected in these anthologies at times also include erotic texts from canonical literature such as by Flaubert, Joyce, Proust, and Musil. Other anthologies of interest include Hansjürgen Blinn's *ich will dich. Die hundert schönsten erotischen Gedichte* [*I Want You: One Hundred of the Most Beautiful Erotic Poems*] (2001).

The 1991 anthology put out by the publisher Haffmans, *Komm. Zieh dich aus. Das Handbuch der lyrischen Hoherotik deutscher Zunge* [*Come, Take Your Clothes Off: The Manual of German Erotic Lyrics*], contains texts of some interest (the volume appeared previously in a shorter form in 1970, entitled *Dein Leib ist mein Gedicht* [*Your Body is My Poem*]). It contains material from the Middle Ages (these are actually of lesser pornographic content and are more in the vein of the *Carmina Burana*) and selections of poems by Conrad Celtis, Johannes Secundus, Paul Fleming, and Hoffmann von Hoffmannswaldau. In the second volume where the focus is on the twentieth century, we find the erotic poetry of canonical authors such as Dehmel, Brecht, George, Rilke, Wedekind, Lasker-Schüler, Benn, etc., and examples of sexual word games by Arno Holz. However, these examples of German erotic poetry are either very low key or coarse rather than sexual or pornographic: a line in one of Berthold Brecht's poems illustrates this best: "Am besten fickt man erst und badet dann / [Best is to fuck first and bathe later] ("Sauna und Beischlaf"). An exception are the more sexual poems about lovemaking of Karl Krolow (1915–1999) although despite his light and popularizing style his poetry is with a serious tone.

An important role in the publishing of erotic literature is Claudia Gehrke's publishing house

Konkursbuch, founded in 1979. Based on principles of feminism and on the commitment to support new ways and forms of literature, Gehrke's support of erotic literature includes lesbian writing such as Cornelia Saxe's *ClitClip* (1994). The book is engaging aesthetically with photographs by Mayanne Konst. Similarly, the 1993 volume of verse by the Japanese-German author Yoko Tawada, *Das Bad* [*The Bath*] (1989), contains drawings of nudes of exceptional quality and her novel *Opium für Ovid. Ein Kopfkissenbuch von 22 Frauen* [*Opium for Ovidius: A Pillow of Twenty-Two Women*] (2000) is about female eroticism and sexuality, or, the novel about sadomasochism and love among lesbians by Regina Nössler, *Strafe muss sein* [*Punishment is a Necessity*] (1994) contains color photography of high aesthetic standards. Gehrke also publishes, first in 1982 and annually since 1988, *Mein heimliches Auge. Das Jahrbuch der Erotik* [*My Secret Eye: The Annual of Eroticism*]. The volumes contain uncensored texts of many types, prose, lyrics, essays, photographs, pictures of paintings, and drawings by renown and lesser-known authors. Aesthetically, the books are of high quality and of importance is that the books are a forum for new authors. For example, it is in these annuals that work by Alissa Walser, Dagmar Fedderke, and Sybille Szymanski first appeared. Fedderke has published several novels and collections of short stories with Konkursbuch such as *Pissing in Paris. Eine Reiseleiter* [*Pissing in Paris: A Travelbook*] (1994) and *Die Geschichte mit A.* [*The Story with A.*] (1993), a novel also taking place in Paris and a take on Pauline Reage's *The Story of O*. In Fedderke's novel, too, the story is about a woman's slavery to a man but here the events occur in every-day life rather than in privileged and secluded settings. The description of the protagonist's angst when participating in group sex, in a public establishment, or the ridicule of some male participants' bath robes are parts of the text as well as the description of the orgy itself. Of interest is that Fedderke employs the narrative strategy where she Germanizes the original French terms she has introduced at the beginning of the novel.

In twenty-first-century German-language erotic literature, instead of the description of sexual acts or that of erotic imagery, sexual desire is the dominant theme whereby it often appears as the focus of anthologies and so-called "erotische

Lesebücher" (a reader of erotic stories). An example of this genre is Susanne Rehlein's collection *Bitte streicheln Sie hier!* [*Would You Please Fondle Hier!*] (2000) of twenty-two short stories. The young authors of this type of erotic literature attempt to show that eroticism takes place in one's imagination rather than in physical and raw sex while at the same time the imagination is capable of exploding in the wildest fantasies. For example, Katrin Röggla, in her short story "Bettgeschichten" ["Bedtime Stories," in Rehlein's collection] uses few explicitly sexual or pornographic words with the effect that her descriptions appear analytical rather than erotic and certainly not pornographic. Thomas Hettche—who rendered Aretino's *Sonetti lussuriosi* in German—presents in his novel *Nox* (1995) a text where he describes the orgies of his protagonists in such a way that the textual characteristics of the narrative, together with the protagonists, attain a surreal and virtual quality. Thus, dissimilar to the consciously organized breaking of taboos in current French-language erotic literature (e.g., Michel Houellebecq, Christine Angot, Catherine Millet, or Philippe Djian), in contemporary German erotic literature attention appears to be on the aestheticization of narrating the sexual act and its surrounding imaginary, whereby the said aestheticization occurs mainly on linguistic levels. This is particularly evident in Thomas Lehr's *Nabokovs Katze* [*Nabokov's Cat*] (1999) or in Ulrike Draesner's *Mitgift* [*The Dowry*] (2002), for example. This turn to the aesthetics of the word is perhaps best exemplified in Norbert Kron's *Autopilot* (2002), where the narrative is distanced and analytical in the extreme in descriptions such as the protagonist's lovemaking with his girlfriend. Of note are Detlev Meyer (1950–1999) who wrote homoerotic texts such as the trilogy *Im Dampfbad greift nach mir ein Engel* [*An Angel Grabs Me in the Sauna*] (1985), *David steigt aufs Riesenrad* [*David Climbs the Ferris Wheel*] (1987), and *Ein letzter Dank den Leichtathleten* [*Last Thanks to Athletes*] (1989), and a volume of poetry, *Stern in Sicht* [*Star in View*] (1998) and Ralf König (1960–) who writes homoerotic comic strips, several of which were adapted to film. The trend in contemporary German-language literature to narrate sexuality continues and, for example, at the 2003 Frankfurt Book Fair, texts with descriptions of sexual and pornographic detail appeared in abundance

(e.g., Michael Lentz, *Liebeserklärung*, Alban Nikolai Herbst, Meere, Hans-Josef Ortheil, *Die grosse Liebe*).

A sub-genre of erotic literature is erotic science fiction and in German there are some examples of such as presented and discussed in Jürgen vom Scheidt's (ed.) *Sex im All* [*Sex in Space*] (1987).

As everywhere, also in German-speaking countries, the Internet is a medium where erotic material including pornography—visual as well as text—has exploded since the 1990s. It is thus not surprising that Web sites abound with erotic writing. New media technology allows for the presentation of text and visuals and thus there are many online sites where text is presented with paintings, photography, pictures of sculpture, and drawings. Similarly, the multi-media situation encourages the presentation of erotic texts with film and sound and while there are few such available as of yet, it is an obvious development yet to come. Also, Web sites include the presentation of the reading of texts similar to tapes or CDs with prose read by authors or actors. Web sites of interest where erotic literature, mostly short stories, can be found in German include *Das Literatur-Café. Erotische Literatur. Kurzgeschichten und Gedichte* (2002):

<<http://www.literaturcafe.de/>>,  *Erotische Literatur für Frauen* (2002): <<http://www.frauenerotik.de/literatur.html>>,  *Erotisches zur Nacht. Die Erotik-Vorleseshow in Berlin* (2002): <<http://www.erozuna.de>>,  *Erotik für Frauen* (2002): <<http://www.arte-erotica.de>>,  *Erotische Literatur Seiten* (2002): <<http://www.erotische-literatur-seiten.de/>>,  *Erosa. Das Online-Magazin für erotische Literatur* (2002): <<http://www.erosa.de>>,  *Erotische Geschichten.de* (2002): <<http://www.erotische-geschichten.de>>, or  *Aranitas erotische Geschichten* (2002): <<http://www.aranita.de/>>.

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# GERVAISE DE LATOUCHE, JEAN CHARLES

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1716–1782  
French novelist

The only positive attribution of *Histoire de Dom Bougre, portier des Chartreux* [*The Story of Friar Bugger, Porter of a Charterhouse*] to Jean Charles Gervaise de Latouche comes from the *Mémoires secrets*, often well-informed, for November 1782: "Monsieur Gervaise, author of the *Portier des Chartreux*, that famous book that caused him such trouble, has died." Whoever the author was, he had very good reason for trying to keep his identity a secret. As for

another book attributed to Gervaise in some reference works, *Mémoires de Mlle de Bonneval* (1738), all that can be said is that there is no known evidence for this.

The *Histoire de Dom Bougre* is perhaps, the most famous and infamous of all erotic novels of the eighteenth century. The first known edition was printed probably in December 1740. The name Bougre, a near-homonym of the English *bugger* or sodomite, was thinly veiled as *B<sup>1/4</sup>* or *B\*\*\** in the first editions; nineteen other editions have been listed in the eighteenth century, some under the variant titles *Mémoires de Saturnin*, *Le*

*Portier des Chartreux*, and *Histoire de Gouberdom*. It became paradigmatic for pornography in general; allusions to it are found everywhere, and there appears to have been an early English translation. Not the least scandalous aspect of the *Histoire de Dom B\*\*\** was the eighteen illustrations made for the first edition, two of them fold-outs; others followed in 1748 and later for subsequent editions.

Like *L'École des filles*, an anonymous work of 1655, and the sixteenth-century *Ragionamenti* of Aretino, the story of Dom Bougre takes the form of a process of sexual initiation. The narrator, Saturnin, is a monk and son of a monk whose awakening is first provoked when he accidentally witnesses, through a convenient hole in the partition, a monk joyously copulating with Toinette, the woman he believes to be his own mother, while her husband is off in the fields. So inspired, Saturnin undertakes to educate his putative sister, Suzon; she in turn relates her own introduction to many things sexual, while a pupil in a convent, by Monique, in the process quoting the latter's own story. Among Monique's discoveries during her unhappy convent days is the use of dildos, not to mention priestly lovers, among the nuns.

Although he never gets Suzon, all the other women Saturnin encounters in the first half of the book lust actively after him. The first is Toinette herself: "and so it was that my very first time, I cuckolded my putative father, but so what?" Toinette thinks it wise to pack him off to a monastery, and thus ends Part One: but not before he cavorts with Madame Dinville, Suzon's godmother, as well as the parish priest's mistress and governess Françoise, and their daughter Nicole. Others he can enjoy vicariously through masturbation: "Your imagination plays, skips about among all those who have charmed your eyes: the brunette, the blonde, the petite, the tall one: with a turn of the wrist you fuck anyone you want: your desires know no social barriers; you can go all the way to the throne, and the proudest beauties, forced to yield, give you whatever you ask."

The book does not want for style, most evident in portraits of apparently pious churchmen; but when it comes to sex everything is not only highly explicit but vulgarly blunt. Where some erotic novels resort to sometimes playful euphemisms, here it is just cunt, prick, fuck:

always the crude word; even the women say "Let's fuck" rather than something more delicate or roundabout. There are just enough mock-heroic metaphors to suggest a tongue-in-cheek approach to it all, such as the moment when Saturnin is caught with Nicole behind a locked door:

I said to Nicole that, since we had been discovered, there was no reason to hesitate. She approved this courageous resolution by her silence and, herself giving me an initial thrust of her loins and putting her tongue back into my mouth, challenged me to rise to the occasion. And like proud warriors who in the line of fire, defying deadly artillery aimed at them on a rampart, calmly continue their work and laugh at the harmless sound of the canon fire roaring overhead, we labored intrepidly to the sound of Françoise pounding against the partition.

Eight years later, in Part Two, when he has finished his training and is about to be ordained, Saturnin is initiated into the orgiastic rituals of his Benedictine monastery. Despite his name, Bougre is not attracted to men, though he delivers a limited apology of buggery: "everyone takes his pleasure where he finds it; mine is to empale a woman when I see one; but if a handsome lad appears, should I give him a foot in the butt? No, simpleton: a dick in the butt." Still, the only bugger explicitly mentioned is Father Casimir, of whom it is said that when he saw a handsome lad he "went into rut and whinnied." Saturnin learns that there are not one but two circles of debachery in the monastery, supplied with their own pool of women, not to mention plenty of fine food and wine. One, who invites him to mount her, admits to being his very own and still active mother, but he will not go that far. He is also the beneficiary of disculpatory speeches not only about Biblical precedents for incest, but more generally the desirability of providing ample sexual opportunities within the monastery, the better to maintain an edifying appearance austerly without.

Ultimately, Saturnin becomes so sated that he is unable to perform even when surrounded by lewd women. It is then that the elderly Father Simeon tells him of the joys of seducing sweet, pious women from his privileged position in the confessional. Indeed he quickly identifies a target, a most devout young woman who absolutely throws herself at him: she turns out to be Monique. But just as, having taken his private

pleasures with her, he is about to add her to the monastic harem, he is discovered, and expelled. In Paris, he is picked up by a prostitute who turns out to be Suzon; from her he contracts syphilis, during the treatment for which she dies and he is castrated. In this sorry state he appeals to a Charterhouse which takes him in and makes him its porter, whence the book's title.

Although inherently anticlerical or at least antimonastic, with its numerous unrepentant stagings of orgies in convents (Saturnin refers to monks as "sacred hogs, abundantly fed by the piety of the faithful"), the book has no ostensible religious or philosophical posture. Its single driving argument is for the naturalness and joy of orgasm and everything conducive to or associated with it. This motivation is equal among men and women, who live for virtually nothing else, without the slightest sentimental overlay. As Monique says: "when they say 'Monsieur is in love with Madame,' it's exactly as if they had said 'Monsieur saw Madame; the sight of her aroused desire in his heart, and he can't wait to stick his prick in her cunt.' That is the true meaning of the phrase: but since as decorum would have it, such things not be said, the custom is to say 'Monsieur is in love.'"

### Biography

The only three things we know about Gervaise de Latouche—that he was born in Amiens in 1716, that he was a secretary of the barrister Lambotte, and that he was one of the prime suspects for authorship of the *Histoire de Dom Bougre, portier des Chartreux*—all come from

police files. He was not among the dozen colporteurs or possible authors who were sent to the Bastille for some weeks or months in 1741 as the police tried to track down the culprits and quash the book, perhaps because he had a discreet and powerful protector.

PHILIP STEWART

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## GHAZALI, MEHEMMED

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Turkish poet  
c. 1460–1535

Ghazali was the pen name of a certain Mehemed, who was also known as Deli Bira-der [Crazy Brother] among the Turkish learned

circles of the early sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire. There is little information about this Ottoman poet's youth but he was probably born around 1465 in Bursa, in the northwest of what is today Turkey. He was educated in religion in Istanbul, the educational center of the

time. He taught in several Anatolian institutions of higher education, and he later attended the court of Sultan Bayezid II's son, the crown prince Korkud (1467–1513), in the provincial town of Manisa in western Anatolia. There he composed two works commissioned by Korkud's courtier Piyale Bey. When Prince Korkud was executed on the orders of his brother Selim I, Ghazali was assigned to a dervish lodge in his birthplace, Bursa, though he left this post to return to teaching. Upon retirement, he organized a fund-raising campaign in which he wrote panegyric poems for different patrons, using the money to found a mosque, a dervish lodge, a garden, and a bathhouse in Beshiktash, a small suburban district of Istanbul. Ghazali's bathhouse was most probably designed to serve sailors, since the Empire's naval forces were anchored on the shores of this neighborhood.

During the peak of his fame, Ghazali enjoyed the patronage of the state elite, among them the Grand Vizier Makbul Ibrahim Pasha and the bureaucrat Iskender Çelebi. In his later years, the gatherings in his bathhouse created an uproar in Istanbul, and eventually gossip about Ghazali and Memi Shah, a male attendant in the bathhouse, forced Ghazali to move to Mecca in 1531. Once in Mecca, using money he had raised through a second 'poetry campaign,' Ghazali founded a mesjid and a garden. Not long after, Ghazali died in the Holy City circa 1535, when he was approximately 70 years old.

Ghazali authored the first Ottoman Turkish literary composition on sexuality. Publicly suppressed and privately reproduced for centuries, this prose composition, embellished with several passages in verse, was presented to the aforementioned Piyale Bey. The work, titled *Dâfi'ü'l-gumûm ve râfi'ü'l-humûm* [*Repeller of sorrows and remover of anxiety*], is a mock sex manual. It classifies several illicit sexual practices grouped in seven chapters, the titles of which read as follows: (1) The benefits of marriage and sexual intercourse; (2) The war between the pederasts and the fornicators; (3) How to enjoy the company of boys; (4) How to enjoy the company of girls; (5) Masturbation, nocturnal emissions and bestiality; (6) The passive homosexuals; and (7) The pimps.

*Dâfi'ü'l-gumûm ve râfi'ü'l-humûm* was intended for the all-male learned circles of the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire. Throughout the work, constant reminders of the illicit

character of the sexual practices described are balanced with Ghazali's inclination to tickle the sexual passion of its readers. The titillating character of the work becomes apparent in the detailed depictions of sexual organs in the form of longish odes; the painstaking directions on how to seduce boys or girls; descriptions of the sexual positions, which yield maximum pleasure; and other such subjects. The alternation of funny stories and poems of mockery adds to the playfulness of this sexually impulsive work. In *Dâfi'ü'l-gumûm ve râfi'ü'l-humûm*, the conspicuous misogyny underpins the general pederastic discourse prevalent among the learned men in the Ottoman Empire. In this work, boys figure as the most prominent objects of sexual desire, primarily for reasons of accessibility—while women were excluded from the exclusively masculine public space of the sixteenth-century Ottoman Empire, boys moved freely in this public sphere. Short anecdotes, poems, and stories exploring pederasty all focus on sexual pleasure, and on ways of tricking unassuming boys into sexual acts, whereas the sections on adultery bear messages of caution, highlighting the discourse of 'the wiles of women.'

Here is an example of an erotic verse from the *Dâfi'ü'l-gumûm ve râfi'ü'l-humûm*:

With a glance the beloved roasted the bird of heart  
 you won't even eat it, the poor pigeon  
 Seeing the beloved it tumbles up to the sky  
 So that he would be attracted to the pigeon  
 O Gazali, the fire of your words burned its wings  
 It can't carry the message to the beloved, the  
 pigeon

In this three-verse lyric poem, the pigeon symbolizes the lover's heart, his sexual organ, and a messenger between the lover and the beloved respectively. However, the straightforward nature of the following selection that contains a comparison of vagina and anus from the same work is in stark contrast to the playfulness of the preceding one:

True, the pussy vomits blood once a month  
 But the anus always shits from its mouth  
 True, the pussy widens when it delivers  
 But any boy's anus with shit shivers.

While *Dâfi'ü'l-gumûm* refers to and relies on works in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish, and is referred to and quoted by subsequent Ottoman Turkish works, there is nothing comparable to it in the Ottoman Turkish literary tradition.

## GIDE, ANDRÉ

Of course, this apparent uniqueness may reflect the reductive modernist reconstruction of the Ottoman literary canon, which suppresses works of this character.

Apart from this forgotten text, Ghazali composed a religious treatise in verse. In a letter written while in Mecca to friends in Istanbul, Ghazali addresses them one by one, and mocks them jokingly, using sexual metaphors. This unruly Ottoman poet stands out among his contemporaries with his command of Ottoman Turkish prose and poetry, and his composition of a work, *Dâfi'ü'l-gumûm*, that gives expression to the suppressed erotic voice in this

particular early modern tradition (see Turkish Literature).

### Biography

Born in Bursa, Turkey, c. 1460. Educated as a religious scholar in Istanbul. Taught in various Anatolian educational institutions and attended the court of the crown prince Korkud, [1510s?]. Upon retirement, moved to Istanbul and constructed a mosque, a bathhouse, and a dervish lodge; relocated to Mecca in 1531 upon rumors of impropriety; died there in 1535.

SELIM S. KURU

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# GIDE, ANDRÉ

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1869–1951

French novelist. Nobel Prize in Literature (1948)

André Pul Guillaume Gide described himself as being simultaneously like a young boy having fun and a disapproving Protestant minister. This duality is found in many of his individual works (e.g., *Les nourritures terrestres* [*Fruits of the Earth*], 1897, expressing the symbiosis of sensuality and asceticism in lyrical prose) and in his literary output as a whole. In *Si le grain ne meurt...[If It Die...]* (1920) he records, among other details of his early life, his idealized love for his cousin Madeleine Rondeaux. He declared that she was the heavenly pole of his life, the antithesis to which was his own erotic Hell. This conflict informs the background to *L'Immoraliste* [*The Immoralist*] (1902), paired with *La porte étroite* [*Straight is the Gate*] (1909). Furthermore, *Si le grain ne meurt...* contains a description of his sexual liberation in North Africa, recording an encounter with an Arab youth in the dunes (1894) and visits with Oscar Wilde and Lord Alfred Douglas to a sordid male brothel (1895). This autobiography, which stops short at his marriage, is designed as a 'private' confession to run parallel to the public argument in defence of pederasty put forth in

*Corydon* (first, incomplete and limited edition, 1911; first full public edition, 1924). In *Corydon*, a series of four 'Socratic' dialogues, a homosexual doctor argues from the biological, ethical, and historical (mainly ancient Greek) standpoints that same-sex love, here restricted to male adult and adolescent, is not only natural but is in fact desirable. When it is controlled and does not entail excess, it is respectful of the masculine selfhood of each participant, reveres women, and, in the case of the youth, leads to successful marriage. The book denies that there is any truth in the then current medical model of 'moral disease,' takes issue with the feminization of the homosexual allegedly portrayed in Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*, and challenges the widespread hypocrisy and cowardice Gide saw among his contemporaries. Doubtless from his awareness of his own sexual nonconformity Gide developed a parallel interest in criminality and moral anarchy. These elements are also frequently present in his works, being used to orchestrate the irresolvable conflict between desire and self control, Nature and Culture, duty to the self and duty to society, freedom and repression. Seldom far removed from the theme of sexuality is the closely associated idea of education, this being again an element inherited from the tradition of

pederastic Greek love. An allusive example of this occurs in the play *Philoctète* (1899). Here the young Néoptolème is being taught the virtue of self reliance by the hero Philoctète, and, although there is nothing sexually explicit, there was enough to encourage Gide's friend Paul Valéry to half expect the youth would in due course be seduced. There are noteworthy homosexual elements in another of his plays of this period (*Saül*, 1903), but the case for including *Le roi Candale* (1899) is problematic. *L'Immoraliste* tells in confessional form the story of Michel who follows the path from sickness to health, from constraint to freedom, from sexual repression to the acknowledgement of desire. The book contains the portrait of an Outsider, Ménélaque, who has been ostracized by society and who was modeled partly on Oscar Wilde and partly on a close friend, Eugène Rouart. But more significantly Gide makes the link between nonconformity in general and healthy self knowledge. Michel is attracted to Arab youths, and the description of them is suggestive: indeed the text ends by expressing the thought that even after an affair with a local girl he finds her brother more attractive. The 'drama' of Michel's life is exacerbated by the love he bears his wife which is in conflict with his half-expressed desires and hope for freedom. As a contribution to the novels of the time with more or less overt homosexual themes *L'Immoraliste*, with its Nietzschean title, is among the best, allowing the moral issues it raises to transcend the particular nature of the hero's sexuality. More obviously subversive and outrageous are certain elements in *Les caves du Vatican* [*The Vatican Cellars*] (1914), where the youthful Lafcadio appears naked (in a photo), and receives an education from various uncles (friends of his mother's), some of whose attentions are ambiguous and 'comradely,' to borrow Walt Whitman's term. Lafcadio is urged by the arch-criminal Protos to use his good looks to blackmail his male admirers. The book contains innuendoes on a priest's liking for boys, which so offended the Catholic writer Paul Claudel that he broke off his friendship with Gide. On the whole, however, this is a burlesque story where suggestiveness forms only one strand of a complex web of anarchy. *Les faux monnayeurs* [*The Coiners*] (1926), originally conceived as a sequel to *Les caves du Vatican*, expresses a more mature and comprehensive treatment of sexual relationships than its

antecedent. The hero of the book, the novelist Édouard, is in love with Olivier, the close school friend of Bernard. A range of emotional situations is presented, and the feelings of both boy and adult are explored from subjective points of view. Apprehensive uncertainty that one's feelings may not be reciprocated is followed by episodes where Olivier deserts Édouard for Passavant (a rival, rather camp, author), and Bernard replaces him momentarily. The reconciliation and mutual declaration of Édouard's and Olivier's love is effected after the young man's suicide attempt on the brink of happiness (a Dostoievskian motif). Gide's achievement here is not to have written a gay novel, but to have explicitly presented a major homosexual subject in an innovative work about society, its complexity, and its open-ended eventfulness. A lesbian theme appears in *Geneviève* (1936), a novella forming part of the trilogy *L'École des femmes* [*The School for Wives*]. Taking the form of a schoolgirl's infatuation, the episode in question bears witness to Gide's intention to explore a woman's point of view under the influence of a group of feminist English friends who included Dorothy Bussy, author of the novel *Olivia* (sent to Gide in manuscript in 1933, but only published in 1948), which develops a similar story. In 1946, *Thésée*, a burlesque prose narrative, appeared, describing in a mythological and symbolic form the course of Gide's life. Although the hero Thésée declares himself to be uniquely interested in women, including the famous Phaedra, and Ariadne who is shown here as a nymphomaniac, the book includes a description of Cretan homosexual customs which are worked into the plot structure. Gide asserted that an understanding of his pederasty held the key to many of his writings. Overall, his treatment of erotic episodes and themes is suggestive, rather than explicit (the recent French editions of his *Journal* and *Si le grain ne meurt* have nevertheless published previously omitted material). He is careful to relate sexuality to more general issues of behavior, although this does not prevent him from often celebrating in various forms the joys and delights of same-sex relationships between adult and adolescent.

### Biography

Born 22 November 1869 in Paris. 1877, enrolled briefly at the École Alsacienne (Paris), but was expelled for 'bad habits.' His education was



## GIDE, ANDRÉ

thenceforward disrupted. He returned to the École Alsacienne in 1887 (Rhétorique). 1880 (28 October), death of father. 1888, Lycée Henri IV (Philosophie). 1891 (January), first substantial publication: *Les cahiers d'André Walter*, and (December) first met Oscar Wilde in Paris. 1892, rejected for military service on grounds of health (tuberculosis). 1895, death of mother and marriage to his cousin Madeleine Rondeaux. 1916, significant religious crisis (*Numquid et tu... ?*), the beginning of his love for Marc Allégret, the son of a Protestant minister, close friend of the family. 1918, traveled to Cambridge with Marc, finding on his return that his wife had burned all his letters to her. 1923 (18 April), birth of Catherine, daughter of Gide and Elisabeth van Rysselberghe (adopted after the death of Madeleine Gide). 1932, Gide became increasingly involved in Communist activity, culminating in his visit to the USSR (1936). He published his travelogue (*Retour de l'URSS*, 1936) and further criticisms (*Retouches...*, 1937). 1938 (7 April), death of his wife. 1947 (5 June), was awarded an honorary doctorate at Oxford University, and (13 November) the Nobel Prize for Literature. 1951 (19 February), died in Paris. Buried at Cuverville (Normandy), his friends objecting that a Protestant minister had conducted a religious service over him. 1952 (24 May), his complete works were placed on the *Index librorum prohibitorum* by the Catholic Church.

PATRICK POLLARD

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# GILGAMESH

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The longest and best known work in Mesopotamian literature was based on oral and written narratives concerning Gilgamesh, the king of Uruk. The standard version of the epic was discovered in the library at Nineveh (eighth–seventh centuries BCE). It incorporates some but not all known Sumerian Gilgamesh stories, episodes from the Old Babylonian version from the early second millennium, and completely new material. The colophon mentions the authorship of a scribe called Sin-leqqe-unini, a scholar who lived during the Kassite period, around 1500 BCE. The work is not primarily an erotic novel. The main theme is the problem of death and dying and the quest for immortality. It deals with heroism and kingship and the values of Mesopotamia's urban civilization. However, episodes describing sexual encounters and the ambiguous love between Gilgamesh and Enkidu raise fundamental and subtle questions about eroticism and human relationships. There is now a vast secondary literature about the epic, and numerous translations in different modern languages have appeared. The following summary inevitably reveals my own subjective understanding of the original text which is fragmentary in many places and thus still poses many unresolved difficulties of interpretation. Gilgamesh as introduced in prologue, is two-thirds divine (his mother is the goddess Ninsun) and one-third mortal. His vitality is likened to that of a rampant bull who gives no rest to the young men and women of Uruk. The gods answer the complaints of the people by specially creating a being that will match his ardour. This is Enkidu, shaggy-haired and wild, who lives far from the cultivated plains in the semi-desert. He eats and drinks like the beasts and destroys the traps of the hunter. He is thus described as the antithesis to Gilgamesh, who as king of the ancient city of Uruk, represents the values of urban civilization. The king hears about Enkidu and rather than sending a group of young warriors he dispatches Shamhat, the voluptuous one, a courtesan, to meet the beast-like creature. She lies down

uncovered, opens her legs and is encouraged to take wind of him, to do for him, the primitive man, as women do. Their love-making lasts for six days and seven nights and thereafter the wild animals turn away from Enkidu and he has lost the power of his legs to run as before. He realizes that he has been transformed and the courtesan takes him to the city, where Gilgamesh is perfect in strength which arouses Enkidu's desire to challenge him. Shamhat tries to modify his aggression towards Gilgamesh by revealing to him two dreams which Gilgamesh recounted to his mother who interpreted their meaning for him. Both dreams involve an object falling from the sky which he is unable to lift but which he loves as a wife and treats as equal. In both cases the word for the object can be construed as a pun referring to male and to certain cult personnel attached to Ishtar who may have had connotations with ambiguous sexuality. Shamhat reiterates Ninsun's interpretation that Gilgamesh is about to gain a male friend and advisor, a companion in strength, and that they will love one another. Enkidu completes his transformation by drinking beer and eating bread for the first time, having his hair cut and donning clothes. When he finally meets Gilgamesh, barring his way to father-in-law's house (where presumably Gilgamesh intends to claim his *droit de seigneur*), he bars his way and they wrestle in the public square until the doorframe quake. The text becomes broken here and when it resumes the two protagonists acknowledge each other's strength and qualities and seal their friendship with an embrace. Enkidu weeps, and again a gap on the tablet obscures why. The text then describes their first adventure, to cut down cedar trees in a forest sacred to the god Ellil. They succeed, having killed the guardian spirit monster Huwawa, and return triumphant to Uruk. The next episode concerns Gilgamesh and his relationship with the city-goddess Ishtar, who in Sumerian literature was described as the one whose love legitimized and blessed the ruler of the city. In the epic Ishtar's proposal of marriage

## GILGAMESH

is rudely rejected by Gilgamesh who recounts the miserable fate of her human and animal ex-lovers and expresses his fear that he would be treated in the same way. The goddess vows revenge but Gilgamesh and Enkidu kill the Bull of Heaven sent to destroy them. The heroes return to the palace where they lie down to sleep. Enkidu dreams that the gods had decided to punish him for the slaying of their creatures and that he will die. The dying Enkidu curses the huntsman and courtesan for bringing him to Uruk. She shall suffer deprivation and humiliation, to be slapped by drunkards and suffer homelessness. But he relents when he remembers that she had brought him to Gilgamesh and he blesses her instead, that she should grow wealthy and prominent in society, with husbands leaving their wives for her sake. Enkidu dies and the grief-stricken Gilgamesh leaves his city and begins his quest for Utnapishtim, the survivor of the great flood, to ask him how he obtained eternal life. The story then unfolds, incorporating numerous adventures as well as the flood-narrative. Gilgamesh realizes that human destiny is death and returns to his city, where he inspects the ramparts and orders his story to be written on copper tablets, thus securing another kind of immortality.

The erotic content of *Gilgamesh*, apart from the initial seduction of Enkidu, is marked by ambivalence. The homo-erotic tenor of Gilgamesh's love for Enkidu as communicated by the dreams and is more complex if one considers that Gilgamesh takes on the role traditionally held by female personages who marry the outsider or steppe dweller. The eroticized notion of the Other is here projected onto Enkidu, but their own identities undergo a profound transformation in the process. In the Sumerian narratives, the female representative of urban civilization brings about the assimilation of the outsider. Here, the value system of the steppe clashes with that of urbanism—Gilgamesh rejects Ishtar and turns himself into a creature of the wilderness in his quest for knowledge.

His failure to find the answer opens up the possibility of return to Uruk where he will complete his destiny on earth.

GWENDOLYN LEICK

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# GIMFERRER, PEDRO

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1945–

Spanish poet, novelist, essayist

The underlying poetics to all of Pedro Gimferrer's writings is the centrality given to language. For Gimferrer, literature is primarily an act of language, something that is created solely by language; consequently its only reality is linguistic. Contextual approaches to literature fail if they dismiss the importance of language. Thus the reader can understand his preference for writers whose devotion towards language is paramount, as well as his interest in literary movements that ascribe a central role to language, like Surrealism, or authors such as Lautréamont, Arthur Rimbaud, or Stéphane Mallarmé. Gimferrer's poetry is marked by the mentioned writers and movement, while at the same time shows its concern for decadent scenarios as can be read in *Arde el mar* [*Sea Burning*] (1966) or for the cinema in *La muerte en Beverly Hills* [*Death in Beverly Hills*] (1968). It can be perceived that his is an attempt to create a reality independent from everyday reality, based on an artistic past or on cinema. That is the reason why his journal, *Dietari*, does not contain any reference to himself but to the books he kept reading during those years.

Eroticism in Gimferrer's writings is present as a central theme and also as subordinate or supplementary. Sometimes it pervades the atmosphere that the poem creates, but in others it plays an active part. There are two different approaches to eroticism. In poems of an early period of his career, decadence rules over ambience, characters, and actions. Thus, it is a soft eroticism that is present as for example in "Oda a Venecia ante el mar de los teatros" [Ode to Venice before the sea of the theaters], it is easy to perceive that the ambient is charged of decadence and that the mention to the naked or dead body in line 19 intends to be part of the decorative setting of a poem in which the main subject matter is that of the remembrance and the loss of youth. "Cuchillos en abril" [Knives in April] also presents some features of a very soft and delicate

eroticism in which the poet declares his hatred by adolescents because of the physical distance between them. The loss of youth means also the loss of passion and the physical decay that the poet feels and makes him grow angry against young people.

Later on, in *La muerte en Beverly Hills*, there is a slight change and decadence is not that of *fin-de-siècle*, but the golden age of American cinema already vanished by the 1960s. Eroticism is present fragmentarily. It is desire that moves the narrator and creates a series of hallucinated images, some of them erotic, as I have said, with no relation to reality. There can be found female bodies stripped of their psychological features, since only physical indications are to be read in the poems. These bodily characteristics reinforce the impression of *femme fatales*, as were imagined when seen in films (see poem II). Eroticism in the book is linked to the loss of a paradise, that of adolescence, as can be seen in poem IV, and that of cinema, since for Gimferrer and other writers of his generation, cinema was so important that during some years they thought of the prevalence of cinema over literature.

Nonetheless, these are lesser examples of his erotic poetry. The other erotic current present in his poetry has to do with unconventional sex. In 1976, Gimferrer publishes *L'espai desert* [*Desert Space*] in which sexuality is present in unconventional forms. He acknowledges the subtle and indirect importance of William Butler Yeats's poem "Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop": "But love has pitched his mansion in / the place of excrement." Soft eroticism has turned into something less exquisite. Desire has left its place to unconscious impulses of death. In *Mascarada* [Masquerade], section 37, Gimferrer describes an act of coprophilia. He is describing a teenager's buttocks. There is a gap between the vulgar action and its exquisite description. *El callejón de la guardia prusiana* [*The Backstreet of the Prussian Guard*] is no doubt his best erotic text. It is a short novel written in 1969 but not published until 2001. The novella is a catalogue

of unconventional sexual practices such as coprophilia in the first chapter or masochism (Chapter 4), plus homosexuality (Chapter 6) during an uncertain early twentieth century in Middle Europe.

In general, eroticism is bound on the unconventional, as is Gimferrer's poetics and life. His clear preference for Surrealism, both in literature and life, makes him explore the dark side of sexuality. He moves from decadent eroticism towards hard porn, though always described by means of a literary language that can lessen its disgusting facets. The dissociation that the poet perceives between his self and society, and its consequent rebellion, is not expressed in political terms, but in terms of social costumes. Thus, the prevalence of unconventional sexual practices is the reflection of the poet's rebellion, different from the Romantics, though inspired by them and by the ideas of the early twentieth century, that is, by Surrealism and Sigmund Freud's essays on culture and sex.

### Biography

Born in 1945 in Barcelona, Pedro Gimferrer stands as the most gifted and important poet of the generation of 1970s, and the one who brought new life to Spanish poetry in the late 1960s. In 1969, he quit writing in Spanish in favor of his native Catalan. His activity as a reviewer, editor, and poet marked the path that Spanish poetry was to follow in the 1970s. Besides, he has written articles for journals, collected in *Dietari 1979–1980* (1981), [*Accounts book*], two novels, *Fortuny* (1983) and *El callejón de la guardia prusiana* (1999) [*The Backstreet of the Prussian Guard*] and a number of essays, *La poesía de J.V. Foix* [*J.V. Foix's poetry*] (1974), *Radicalidades* [*Radicalities*] (1978), *Lecturas de Octavio Paz* [*Readings on Octavio Paz*] (1980), *Perfil de Vicente Alexandre* [*Profile of Vicente Aleixandre*] (1985), *Cine y literatura* [*Cinema and literature*] (1985), among them. Nonetheless he is better known for his poetry.

SANTIAGO RODRÍGUEZ GUERRERO-STRACHAN

### Selected Works

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*Hora fosca* [*Dark hour*]. 1972.

*Foc cec* [*Blind fire*]. 1973.  
*L'espai desert* [*Desert space*]. 1977.  
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*La llum* [*The Light*]. 1990.  
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## GINSBERG, ALLEN

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1926–1997  
 American poet

Allen Ginsberg's many talents induced him to assume a variety of cultural roles in his lifetime, arguably more such roles than any other writer in the history of American literature. He was a social critic and scholar, a professor, a polemicist, an activist for both general and sexual politics, a religious and cultural guru, a literary critic, promoter, and publicist, a photographer, a counter-culture icon, a blues-pop-rock singer, a prosodist, and, of course, a poet. He began his career as a poet, and the other roles followed. His celebrity was such, however, that it rivaled and at times eclipsed his poetic achievements. This was in large part because his critical posture was not just insistently Left and anti-establishment, but also self-consciously transgressive. This synthesis informed his poetry and poetic theories, and frequently his poetry was the voice of his critique. In general, his stances were liberally to the Left of social norms, as they were in his satirizing polite "queer society" ("In Society," 1947), his lyricizing drugs and drug culture ("Paterson," 1949), his jeremiad against American materialism (*Howl*, 1955–1956), his parody of America's Red-scare, Cold War, homophobic, racist xenophobia ("America," 1956), his critique of the Vietnam War ("Wichita Vortex Sutra," 1966), his exorcism of nuclear reactors and waste ("Plutonian Ode," 1978), to say nothing of his paeans to bisexuality ("Love Poem on Theme by Whitman," 1954), homosexuality ("Love Comes," 1981) and various other "unnatural acts" over the years.

Ginsberg's transgressive stance persistently raised an interrogation of the individual's

relation to the social order. Whether his theme was war, pollution, CIA drug dealing, governmental malfeasance, censorship, sex, history, or love, his address was essentially to the individual and collective state of being. This was articulated succinctly in his early poem, "Metaphysics": "This is the one and only / firmament; therefore / it is the absolute world. / The circle is complete. / I am living in Eternity. / The ways of this world / are the ways of heaven." Notwithstanding the occasional patina of Buddhist or transcendental mysticism, Ginsberg's vision is anchored in this dialectic of the ways heaven reflects this world, rather than the other way around. And the ways of this world are often down and dirty. Accordingly, a near systemic use of obscenity is one, perhaps the most pervasive, function of transgression in Ginsberg's work. In "Wichita Vortex Sutra," for example, a poem of high seriousness indicting the Vietnam War, the prologue declaims the need that a new "Man of America, be born," with "No more fear of tenderness" as manifest in an image of bisexual eroticism, which is abruptly emphasized by varying an old epithet, "How big is the prick of the President?" And two lines later he further satirizes one of the most conspicuously vigorous American chauvinists, J. Edgar Hoover, with a punning version of a phallic joke, "How little the prince of the FBI, unmarried all these years!" A few pages later in that same volume, *The Fall of America*, he proposes resolutions to the Vietnam War, environmental abuses, and racism not so much via obscenity as meticulously calculated vulgarity in four precise lines under the title "Kiss Ass," "Kissass is the Part of Peace / America will have to Kissass Mother Earth / Whites have

to Kissass Blacks, for Peace and Pleasure, / Only Pathway to Peace, Kissass.” His inclusion of *pleasure* in so unlikely a venue is vintage Ginsberg, a satyric indication that even such noble causes as racial justice should not be all work and no play.

One aspect of Ginsberg’s *jouissance*, then, is the tactical deployment of more obscenity or less to vivify the appeal of his social critique, which often simultaneously functions as a validation of homosexuality. “America” is a paramount instance. In this raucous send-up Ginsberg brilliantly satirizes the paranoia of cold war chauvinism and concludes, “It’s true I don’t want to join the army or turn lathes in...factories, I’m nearsighted and psychopathic anyway. / America I’m putting my queer shoulder to the wheel.” In its adroit deconstruction by parody of normative assumptions about “perversity” and the good order of political economy this image is characteristic Ginsberg. Even where critique is not an object there is the frequent implication that celebrating hedonism is a political validation of it. In his 1974 song “Hardon Blues,” for example, he gets right in the reader’s face with his first line, “Blues is like a hardon comes right in your mouth,” winds on that motif for several choruses and concludes by widening his focus to include geriatrics, “If I don’t get it off right now, someday it’ll all be gone.” In *Howl*, madness and self destruction victimize a whole generation, caused by the cultural materialism symbolized in “Moloch.” Moloch’s dominance is countered by Neal Cassady, who has so “sweetened the snatches of a million girls trembling in the sunset” that the poem is essentially a tribute “to the memory of his innumerable lays of girls.” Be that as it may, the appeal of Moloch and madness is potent, so Ginsberg trains the tactical weapon of obscenity on both sexual politics and its cultural context.

For all of Ginsberg’s self conscious transgression of poetic and social norms, however, his work also has a distinctly erotic dimension, that is, one focused more on love than on obscenity. While *Kaddish*, his great lament for the death of his mother Naomi, is not erotic as such, it does imply via the degenerative state of his mother’s life a motif of cultural desexualization. Naomi’s madness subsumes her vitality, the sexual aspect of which is suggested by her youthful sensuous spontaneity, subsequently lost in

her alienation from her husband. The motif of psychic confusion and sexual dysfunction is at once substantiated and dispatched in the poet’s brief moment of Oedipal temptation when in the hospital Naomi’s gown slips upward revealing her vagina. This image is obliquely erotic and contextualized by what is in general a tender elegiac tone. This stance is in fact characteristic of Ginsberg’s erotic works although it is also informed by sexual longing or activity. “The weight of the world,” Ginsberg observed early on, “is love.” After an invocation of this “burden” and its “solitude,” in which he evokes images of sex where “the hand moves / to the center / of the flesh... and the soul comes / joyful to the eye,” he concludes “yes, yes, / that’s what / I wanted, / I always wanted... / to return / to the body / where I was born.” Love, for Ginsberg, is indeed, as the saint says, on the arm. “Love Poem on Theme by Whitman” is an explicitly sexual poem evoking bisexual eroticism, and “Many Loves” is yet more elaborately explicit a reminiscence of Ginsberg’s initial seduction by and of Neal Cassady, a passion he sustained and declaimed for a lifetime. Other poems describe Ginsberg’s sexual relations with various, usually young men, and some similarly address his relations to his longtime lover Peter Orlovsky, and one, “This Form of Life Needs Sex” (1961), is an idiosyncratic apologia for his homosexuality. Perhaps his most famous erotic poem, “Please Master” (1968), is simultaneously an elegiac love poem to Cassady and a celebration of masochistic submission. As so often with Ginsberg, it accordingly confers a double legitimacy on “perverse” pleasure with its implicit wink at the straight world and its interrogation of “normal” pleasures.

### Biography

Allen Ginsberg was born in Newark, New Jersey, the son of Louis—teacher and poet—and Naomi—a radical Russian emigree—Ginsberg, and both parents were to figure prominently in his work, especially his mother. The elder Ginsberg took the young Allen to neighboring Paterson and introduced him to William Carlos Williams, whose advice to leave off imitations of Renaissance poets and attend to the cadences of his own voice and ear became a touchstone for Ginsberg’s verse composition. Similarly, his

early exposure to socialist thought and causes, which permeated his extended family, profoundly impressed him and became the intellectual foundation of his life and work. While still in primary school his mother's mental health began to deteriorate, and much of the trauma of her agonistic relation to capitalist culture is evoked in his epic poem, *Kaddish*, published in 1961. He matriculated to Columbia University in 1944, the same year he met William Burroughs and Jack Kerouac. He was expelled briefly from Columbia in 1945 for drawing obscene graffiti, a pertinent foreshadowing of later years. He returned to graduate in 1948. He had a good academic record, but perhaps obtained his most vital literary instruction from Burroughs, who introduced him to such writers as Kafka, Celine, Rimbaud, and Kerouac, who encouraged him further along the lines of the spontaneous composition Williams had earlier recommended.

There followed a period of odd jobs and drifting, during which he was a merchant seaman, a dishwasher, and welder among other things. He went to San Francisco in 1953 and was for a time a market researcher, at which he had some success. By 1954, he had again met up with Kerouac and Burroughs there and had in addition met Kenneth Rexroth, Robert Duncan, Gregory Corso, Gary Snyder, Michael McLure, and Lawrence Ferlinghetti. This group of friends and acquaintances became the core of the "San Francisco Renaissance," the "Beat Generation," and its writers. His public reading of *Howl* in San Francisco in 1955 at once inaugurated the Beat movement and stamped Ginsberg as its foremost figure. When *Howl and Other Poems* was published in 1956, it was sufficiently popular to warrant Ferlinghetti's City Lights Books' publication of a second edition, which was indicted for obscenity. The trial exonerated the poem, its author, and its publisher, but in its course made all three icons of the Beat Generation and the "counterculture" it reflected.

With the publication of *Kaddish and Other Poems* in 1961, Ginsberg had added two of the most important poems of the post-war or postmodern period to the canon of American literature. Acknowledgment was by no means uniform, as the taint of obscenity clung to his works and was enforced for many by the flamboyance of his personality (e.g., removing his

trousers at a public reading of his works), his self-proclaimed homosexuality, his public apologies for hallucinogens, and his radical, confrontational style of politics. In addition to the two major works, by the end of the sixties Ginsberg had published *Empty Mirror* (1961), *Reality Sandwiches* (1963), and *Planet News* (1967), the latter two only slightly less popular than *Howl* and *Kaddish*. As the Vietnam war continued through the decade Ginsberg was a vocal critic and conspicuous protestor against it, most famously in Chicago during the 1968 Democratic convention.

By 1970, Ginsberg was an international celebrity and an index of countercultural potency. *The Fall of America, Poems of these States* was published in 1972, *Allen Verbatim*, interviews and conversations about poetics, politics, and such cultural institutions as the CIA's involvement in drug trafficking' in 1974, and *Mind Breaths, Poems*, 1977. After the United States withdrew from Vietnam in 1974, Ginsberg devoted considerable time and energy to the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics that he had founded in conjunction with the Buddhist Naropa Institute in Colorado. He was its director for many years, and under his aegis many of his old Beat comrades—including Burroughs, Corso, Snyder, Ferlinghetti, and others—came to teach there on occasion. His *Collected Poems* were published in 1984, and subsequent poems appeared in *White Shroud*, 1986, and *Cosmopolitan Greetings*, 1994. He died April 5, 1997 in New York City at the age of 70. A National Day of Remembrance was held in 25 cities across the United States and around the world on April 13, 1997.

PETER MICHELSON

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## GODARD D'AUCOUR, CLAUDE

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# GODARD D'AUCOUR, CLAUDE

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1716–1795

French novelist, satirist, playwright, and financier.

There is no known echo of *Lettres au chevalier Danteuil et de Mademoiselle de Thelis* (1742), or of d'Aucour's other early works. His *Mémoires turcs* of 1743, on the other hand, enjoyed some notoriety to which numerous subsequent editions testify. This novel is in some ways an imitation of Montesquieu's *Lettres persanes* (and of its imitations such as Poullain de Saint-Foix's *Lettres d'une Turque à Paris*), but clearly his model is even more Claude Crébillon, whose *Le Sopha* had appeared just the previous year. Composed in the form of a diptych (first the adventures of Dely, then the letters of Achmet), the novel features Muslim initiations into the loose sexual mores of Parisians, and other kinds of contrasts between amorous and religious ways of the Turks, Persians, and French. It is thus largely a piece of social satire, much of it directed at the Church and the clergy, none of which is particularly scintillating compared with d'Aucour's distinguished predecessors.

His only work that is at all remembered today is *Thémidore*, which was published clandestinely—that is, without authorization of the book police—in 1744. It is a fairly short novel, the witty story of a few months in the gamboling life of a handsome libertine magistrate (*conseiller au Parlement*) of twenty-four, and rife with allusions to contemporary Parisian life. Thémidore enjoys all the insolent privileges of rank, including that of having his enemies locked up when needed. The protagonist's dissolute behavior

appeared on several counts to reflect that of the real Alexis Dubois d'Anisy, also a *conseiller au Parlement*, whose father, a powerful judge, had the police seize the book and send the bookseller, named Mérigot, off to a fortnight in prison.

These adventures (mainly amorous), which make no claim other than to entertain, are described at the outset as being written with discretion: in other words, crude language is always avoided in favor of metaphorical suggestion; but nevertheless “sometimes risqué and apt to provoke coquettish thoughts.” Nevertheless, “love” in this book never refers to anything other than sexual desire, and denotation of sexual activity is more explicit than anything one would find in Crébillon or Duclos. The emphasis is not on seduction but on variety and performative prowess; one variation on the lovers' virtuosity is to copulate through the grill of a convent parlor where Thémidore's father has had Rozette confined.

Less laden with hedonistic philosophizing than many other erotic novels, this one is notable for its unusually frank lyricism about sexual pleasure: “How often, amidst these delights one can only feel, did I wish to be consumed in what I was feeling! Why has nature limited our strength, while extending our desires so far? Or rather, why do they not come in equal proportion?” The protagonist has no principles, but also no doctrine.

There is, however, a sort of mechanistic theory at work. “You can make men do what you wish, once you have discovered the art of setting

in motion certain springs that power their whole machine." Like other literary libertines in the wake of Versac (in Crébillon's *Égarements du cœur et de l'esprit*), Thémidore claims perfect knowledge of women and can therefore explain specific events through general rules: "Tears are contagious: if one woman weeps, another will too, as well as any others who happen along, ad infinitum." Even the pious have their particular sensual vulnerabilities (echoes of Marivaux's *Le paysan parvenu* and Crébillon's *Le sophia*); indeed Thémidore recommends devout women to any friend who is "sensual, delicate, and refined in his pleasures."

The text is rich in metaphors so graphic that they are almost not metaphorical at all: "She frolics with pleasure, but she holds it back as long as she can from its true destination: what an unusual taste, to prefer caressing a good fruit to squeezing out its juice!" Watching Laura play the flute, Rozette protests the "indecent" way it is done: "she objected to the tonguing, and insisted that a woman should never touch a flute in company." Indeed much of the book's humor, and good humor, lies in its frankly joyful metaphors: "We had promised each other to wait until that night; but unmindful of that, we borrowed against the future. She led me from one pleasure to another, and strewed with flowers the avenue to the palace, where I was received with full honors." One could almost call it a comic novel, such is the levity and gaiety that temper its licence.

Another notable feature of the work is the expectation of expertise on the woman's part. Rozette is technically accomplished and knows how to modulate her roles to maximize pleasure: "Rozette knew the map of my journey; she had seen me point to the spot where I intended to go, and had decided to provide me some entertainment along the way." It may be that some of her delaying tactics hint at the art of awaiting moments of infertility so as to limit her own exposure to risks of pregnancy. An original aspect of this skill is the erotic function of decor: the mirrors and violet sofa, not to mention the lace Rozette wears and the heady perfume filling her boudoir and, are integral parts of the sensual

atmosphere, in this way foreshadowing Vivant Denon's *Point de lendemain*.

### Biography

Claude Godard was the son of a cloth merchant and civic leader in Langres; he took the name d'Aucour from Jean Barbier d'Aucour, perhaps his uncle, a member of the Académie Française who had died in 1694. In his youth, determined to succeed as a writer, he produced a flurry of works in several genres, particularly plays and satires; but he did not pursue. In 1747 he made a rich marriage to Claire Poisson (distant cousin of Madame de Pompadour) and became a highly successful financier, trading at first in foodstuffs and military supply, and finally a Fermier Général (partner in the national tax franchise) in 1754. He was ennobled in 1756, and acquired the title of Marquis de Plancy in 1764. He joined a Masonic lodge in Paris called "Les Amis Réunis" in 1776 and managed somehow to survive the Revolution.

PHILIP STEWART

### Selected Works

*Mémoires turcs, avec l'histoire galante de leur séjour en France*, 1743. *Thémidore*, 1744.

### Editions

The original text of *Thémidore* is included in two anthologies: *Romanciers libertins du XVIIIe siècle*, edited by Raymond Trousson (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1993), and vol. I of the Pléiade edition by the same name, directed by Patrick Wald Lasowaki (Paris: Gallimard, 2000). The former, like a separate edition of 1980 (Paris: Lattès), bears a dubious subtitle, *Mon histoire et celle de ma maîtresse*, which is not found in editions prior to 1781.

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# GOMBROWICZ, WITOLD

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1904–1969

Polish novelist and playwright

## Pornografia

Gombrowicz's third novel, *Pornografia* [*Pornography*], was written in 1958 and published in 1960 by Kultura, Paris. It is representative of the intense eroticism without sex which permeates Gombrowicz's writing. In his preface to *Pornografia*, the author describes it as a "noble," "classical," "sensually metaphysical novel" (9). "Man, as we know, aims at the absolute. At fulfillment. At truth, at God, at total maturity (...) [In *Pornografia*] another of man's aims appears, a more secret one, undoubtedly, one which is in some way illegal: his need for the unfinished... for imperfection... for inferiority... for youth..." (5). This peculiar twist on Socrates' understanding of eros in Plato's *Symposium* is dressed in an absurdist plot and poetic imagery.

The action of *Pornografia* takes place in Poland, during World War II. Fryderyk and Witold, who before the war were men of theater and letters, are visiting acquaintances at a country estate. There they become fascinated with the teenagers Karol and Henia and, in particular, with the undeveloped potential for a sexual attraction between the two youths. Starving for creation, but deprived of their normal creative means, the two guests immediately recognize in the young people perfect material for molding and fall into a passionate fictionalizing of reality. They make the teenagers perform a series of symbolic acts that are supposed to rouse the latent erotic urge between them: from Henia's turning up Karol's trousers to performing an erotic pantomime designed for a single voyeur, Henia's official fiancée Waclaw, to committing a murder together.

The four characters form a quadrangle of half-admitted, half-suppressed erotic magnetism: Henia and Karol are attracted to each other only in so far as they are watched and dominated by the two directors of the performance. They are

obedient and at the same time playfully aware of their erotic power over Fryderyk and Witold: "(...) if the Older is submitted to the Younger—what darkness! What perversity and shame! How many traps! And yet Youth, biologically superior, physically more beautiful, has no trouble in charming and conquering the adult, already poisoned by death" (Preface, 9). The two elderly men are embarrassed to communicate directly about this, and exchange secret letters to compare notes on recent events and design their plot. From the very beginning of the novel, there is a sense of suppressed homoerotic attraction between them that is vented through their shared watching of the young couple.

The voyeurism in the novel is described by Witold as "żerująca pornografia"—pornography that feasts on the object of desire. The exact object of desire remains, however, obscure. Nothing really happens between the two young people. It is precisely the potential relationship between Henia and Karol, and between themselves, that keeps Fryderyk and Witold aflame. A painful and sweet sense of blockage escalates toward a series of absurd deaths in the end of the novel.

Lady Amelia, Henia's would-be-mother-in-law, is the first to die. The last pillar of propriety in the novel, under Fryderyk's influence she loses her decorum and fights with a farmboy caught in the pantry. Fatally wounded by him with a kitchen knife, she dies, indifferent to the crucifix, with her eyes fixed on Fryderyk. Three more homicides follow with no tragic significance whatsoever. According to Witold, killing is "no less sensual, no less guilty, no less ardent than love" (188). In the eroticized world of the novel, the murders have the relieving function of orgasms. This pattern—essentially a parody of tragic death in drama—can be observed also in Gombrowicz's plays *Iwona, Księżniczka Burgunda* [*Iwona, Princess of Burgundia*], *Ślub* [*The Marriage*], and *Operetka* [*Operetta*].

"I do not believe in a nonerotic philosophy. I do not trust any desexualized idea," the author

confesses in his *Diary*. In *Pornografia*, as well as in his other novels, Gombrowicz explores erotic desire as a creative force. Pairs of creator figures similar to that of Fryderyk and Witold, and linked by a relationship of erotic attraction and uncertainty, appear in *Trans-Atlantyck* [*Trans-Atlantic*] and *Kosmos* [*Cosmos*]. This model can be traced back to Gombrowicz's first novel, *Ferdynand*, in which the grotesque relationship between the teacher and his thirty-year-old student has sadomasochistic overtones. In *Trans-Atlantyck*, Witold, a fresh exile in Argentina, observes Gonzalo's game of seduction. Its object is a simple-minded adolescent Polish boy. The act of observation and Witold's role as a narrator, however, gradually lead to a symbolic collaboration with Gonzalo whose first aim is to liberate the boy from the authority of his father and fatherland. The foreign and the strange are presented as a source of irresistible erotic appeal. The relationship between Fryderyk and Witold in *Pornografia* is less asymmetrical, but the creative initiative remains in Fryderyk's hands. In *Kosmos*, Witold takes over. He both generates the plot and narrates it, while his partner and roommate Fuks, is a passive, but needed witness. Significantly, in this novel Witold tends to divide himself into an acting and narrating consciousness, none of which is fully aware of the causes and meaning of the events (for example, he himself hangs a cat and afterwards wonders who of the other characters could have done this). As the story progresses, the narrating voyeur Witold becomes more and more fascinated with the acting Witold's erotic perception of the world. Witold falls in love with himself—a kind of narcissism both admitted and parodied in the *Diary*. Thus, paradoxically, the mechanism of the novel's creation is exhibited to the reader, but appears to be a mystery to its creator. By undressing the devices of his own literary imagination, in *Pornografia* and *Kosmos*, Gombrowicz seduces the audience into a voyeuristic participation in his creative process.

### Biography

Born August 4 1904 in Małoszyce, Poland. Studied at Warsaw University, 1922–1927; law degree, 1927. Studied philosophy and economics at the Institut des Hautes Études Internationales, Paris, 1927. Contributed to Warsaw newspapers,

from 1933. In 1939, visited Argentina and remained there until 1963. Wrote for Buenos Aires newspapers, from 1940. Secretary, Polish Bank, Buenos Aires, 1947–1953. In 1963, moved to Berlin, then to Vence, France, 1964–1969. Married Marie-Rita Labrosse, 1969. Awards: Kultura Prize, 1961; International Literary Prize, 1967. Died in Vence, 25 July 1969. Author of five novels, short stories, four plays, and a *Diary* (1953–1966).

KATIA MITOVA

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## GOVARDHANA

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Twelfth–Thirteenth century  
Sanskrit poet

Govardhana composed one work that we know of, the *Āryāsaptaati* (The Collection of Seven Hundred Verses in the *Āryā* Meter). Apart from this we have only a handful of stray verses in the anthologies. The anthology the *Saduktikar-amata* [*The Ear-Nectar of Good Verse*] compiled at the court of his patron contains the majority of these, but verses are also to be found in an anthology from the Cāhamāna court, the *Çār gadharapaddhati* (c. fourteenth-century Rajasthan) as well as Ropa Gosvām's *Padyāvali* (c. seventeenth-century Bengal).

The third verse of Jayadeva's *Gotagovinda* lists and praises the prominent poets of the literary salon of Lakṣma'asena's court. While Jayadeva says of himself "only Jayadeva knows the perfection of verbal arrangement," he remarks that Govardhana "has no rival for his crafting of true subjects of supreme erotic sentiment." *Āryāsaptaat* verse 39 is a panegyric to Lakma'asena. Thus we have positively conclusive evidence for placing these poets together. Verses of all the Sena court poets abound in the *Saduktikar'āmata*. This is one of a handful of such conclusively documented literary salons in the history of Sanskrit letters, and the poets bore in common a commitment to intense and finely crafted eroticism.

Govardhana's poetry is well known for its explicit, even risqué description of sexuality.

The sex scenes of his poetry are embedded in ironic vignettes of rustic life.

Govardhana is an exquisite commentator on the contradiction between rural and urban modes of comportment. He mocks the context-sensitivity and potential absurdity of Sanskrit ideals of feminine allure in a sardonic verse:

Straighten your gait. Leave off, girlfriend, all your  
urban ways. Here, thinking you a witch, the village-  
head will beat you just for casting crooked glances.  
(140)

The sidelong glances so basic to erotic communication in Sanskrit poetry, lose their eroticism in the village; they are deprived of their august universality, and revealed to be *nāgara* "urban." In the wrong locale, a woman could be identified as a witch, when she is simply trying to seduce—a hilarious sequence of events.

The precedent for this style of rustic erotic description was originally set in the third century by the Prakrit poet and Sātavāhana king Hāla who composed his *Sattasa* in Mahārār Prakrit. Hāla's collection contains seven hundred some odd verses, and the sections, arranged alphabetically, are called *Vrajyā*-s. These are elements Govardhana adapted to his Sanskrit composition. He himself comments on his Prakrit antecedents:

Speech whose flavor is suited to Prakrit has been  
forcefully drawn into Sanskrit, as if the Yamunā,  
whose waters naturally flow downward, were  
drawn forcibly to the firmament of the sky.

(1.52)

What Govardhana had dragged into Sanskrit from below was also a frank and bawdy mode of depicting sexuality, verging on the vulgar (what in Sanskrit literary theory is referred to as “*grāmya*” ‘of the village’). He is fond of puns and this punning verse even verges on the pornographic:

Pressed to her ample thigh, your hand making the shape of an elephant with extended trunk; like an elephant butting against a riverbank, *gāra*[eroticism/red decoration made on elephants’ bodies] adorns you.

(505)

In the introductory and closing portions of his poem, Govardhana reflects on his art, characterizing his poetic departure; at one point valorizing a poetic nakedness:

Naked for the erotic style, like a beloved naked for lovemaking, is pure language full of aesthetic emotion conducive to pleasure. Language without aesthetic emotion, but replete with rhetorical figures, is unpleasant like a lifeless, ornamented doll.

(1.54)

Govardhana’s poetry often conforms very much to what he has to tell us about it. His pithy and realistic descriptions abandon the often-stereotyped character of classical Sanskrit poetry and he is at pains to define the matter of poetry as unalloyed worldly experience:

A *sotra* is composed by the crooked glance of a young girl. The corner of a wanton lady’s eye composes a commentary thereon. Poet-boys study the sense from the sub-commentary strung together by her messenger-girl.

(1.50)

He goes as far as to advocate a hands-on approach for poets:

Only of a poet who has tasted the nectar of a beloved’s lips are the verses sweet. A cuckoo does not sing a sweet tone without tasting the mango blossom.

(1.49)

He likewise defends the relevance and practical importance of his worldly poetry:

Those proud-minded men who lack respect for this *Āryāsaptaat*, like men who lack a female go-between, they do not enter the heart of a lover-girl.

(1.53)

Lakma’asena’s kingdom was invaded in 1204/5 by the Turkish conquistador Muhammad

Bakhtiyar Khalji, ushering in a new era in Bengal and South Asia as a whole. The Delhi Sultanate was founded in 1206, eclipsing the sovereignty of the regional states of the medieval period. A new era had likewise begun in the Sanskrit poetry of this period. At the Sena court an unprecedented poetic experimentation took place, characterized by a mixing of the high and the low, courtly and rustic varieties of eroticism. Govardhana was the practitioner and commentator *par excellence* on this new variety of erotic verse and that he was among the cleverest Sanskrit poets of the tradition is attested by his title “*ācārya*” master. Some of the greatest scholars of a later period of Indian intellectual history were to compose commentaries on his work, including such luminaries as the grammarian Nāgeabhaa and the scholar of law and custom [*dharmāstra*] Anantapa<sup>a</sup>ḍita.

That Govardhana was widely read in the wake of his lifetime is attested by the broad diffusion of manuscripts of his work. There have been some works modeled on the *Āryāsaptaat*, including Bihār Lāl’s *Hind Sattasa* (c. seventeenth century) and Viçvevara’s *Sanskrit Āryāsaptaat* (c. eighteenth century).

### Biography

Flourished in the latter half of the twelfth century CE at the court of king Lakma<sup>a</sup>asena of Bengal (present India/Bangladesh).

JESSE ROSS KNUTSON

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## GRAINVILLE, PATRICK

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1947–  
French novelist

### *Les Flamboyants*

From his early “mythical biography,” Patrick Grainville has drawn attention to the luxuriance of his vocabulary, and to the wealth of his metaphors. His novel *Les Flamboyants* reveals a use of sensuous images, particularly vivacious when the king Tokor and his mistress Helen are describing men or women. Helen is portrayed through Tokor’s desire, her legs are compared to “sweet whips.” At this moment, his style becomes vigorous like Claudel’s verve. Provocative women form the bulk of the splendours of Tindjili Palace: they are compared to water flowing from one room to another; they become like “fetishes” with manes of hair, tufts, bush, and perfumes. Some are “tall,” “carnal,” or compared to mermaids, daurades, or fleshy fruits. Tokor, the “king of women,” wants to be named “the great Analogist,” and his words are lush and fertile: Helen is a female Python, a “pythonne,” and “La Méza” is “the great Cantharid.” Helen decides to cast a refined and gourmet eye on reality, and it is the principle in which the whole novel has been written.

The location of the novel, an African and equatorial country, enables the author to draw the main outlines of an erotic, violent, and lively society. The novel begins with a hurricane, like a kind of Nature’s climax above the capital of Mandouka. Its people are at the same time animated and voluptuous, with a huge, muddy, and stinky shantytown. Most of the novel is located in the “completely naked Hourla, fur-lined with massive green,” and hypnotized characters leave the capital to penetrate the “flesh of the Yali country.” Tokor dreams about the bush as if it was a hairy female body. African nature seems to be ruled by animal forces and sexual impulses, like the night violated by sudden yells. Tokor dreams of a “phallocratic Arcadia” on the river-side of Maloumbé. In the Toura villages, a

sexual ritual initiation between teenagers is described in a visual and ethnographic way.

An intense excitement, linked to animality, lifts up the story, with wild imagination fired by the tropical aspects of nature and by the strange behavior of king Tokor.

He is well known for his “pansexualism,” his passion for rape, and frolicsome games, like swallowing hummingbirds and expelling them through his anus, half alive. Tokor is much like an animal, unlike his guest, William, compared to an angel. The king of Yali loves lying in the mud of Maloumbé, being licked and tramped by wild animals who come to drink at night. He loses consciousness and is assaulted by carnal and humoral sensations. Just like what used to happen when he was alive, King Soloa dies covered by thousand of butterflies. Nicknames enable the metamorphosis of some characters into animals: Lucy is called “dragonfly” and Moanda the “serpent-eater.” The “female forces” of the shantytown are compared to “antilopes,” and the Méza is an “animal queen” with an exciting fur. The countryside is often compared to animals, like the savannah crossed by fugitive furs. Exotic animals suggest sexual images, like girafes, compared to “telluric necks,” or to “golden phallus.”

One reason for the omnipresence of nature and animality in this novel is that eroticism is regarded as sacred in a dionysian sense. The Yali country, a carnal abyss, is often compared to flesh. The five hundred special guards are virile and naked: in order to prepare for war they are kept prisoners of the fleshy and soft embrace of flowers for two days. A woman called “la Bou-boubou” is compared to a volcano, and a lake turns into a real volcano which Tokor enters, like “the rapist of the Prometheus fire.” The king introduces himself as “the great Concupiscent of the kingdom.” When he desires to sleep with Helen, he does so “tellurically,” and everybody around him goes into raptures over his telluric ecstasy. The Yali country is considered as sacred, and even the teenagers of the slum

dream of lying naked in the dust, in a sort of intercourse with Earth. King Tokor is so excited that he strokes the impalas and sits among them as if he were on a sofa. He then, of embracing the stellar heaven mass, pierced by stellar splinters after having shared saucy stories with his officers. The dionysiac eroticism culminates with the Diorles, a tribe hidden in the equatorial forest.

They are seen bathing, naked, clasped in each other's arms, before they are massacred by the "yulmatian bestiality." They glitter with golden mud; men hold their genitalia in a small purse, whereas females exhibit shared vaginas with an artificially erected and painted clitoris. More astounding are the Ludies met by William at the end of the novel: they have thin thighs, fair skin, and only exhibit pure emotions. Androgynous, they have a clitoris that can be used as a penis, and practice all manner of sexual, oral, anal, and incestuous relations, until they die at the age of eighteen. They do what they want with their bodies and symbolize a longing for a lost Eden, located in the Hourla. This place is at the same time real and part of a fairy-tale. Tokor is perhaps too crude to see them, but he is pointed out as "the king of the Hourla and of the Diorles," or as the "uncounscious" of the Yali country. Therefore, his dead body is cut into different pieces put in various points of the

Hourla, to be eaten and swallowed by wild beasts.

The lost paradise represented in this novel can be found in the forest with the young Diorles, and with the licentious creatures called Ludies, but the ultimate and extreme love of Tokor for Helen is part of it too. Their love is compared to "a vast fireplace of eternal embers."

### Biography

Born in 1947, at Villers (Calvados), he is a certified art teacher. He published his mythical biography in three volumes. Received the Prix Goncourt for *Les Flamboyants* (1976).

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## GRANDES, ALMUDENA

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1960 –  
Spanish journalist, novelist, and short-story writer.

Grandes' literary career was launched in 1989, while still working at a publishing house when her first book won the XI *La Sonrisa Vertical* prize for *Las edades de Lulú* [*The Ages of Lulu*] (1989). Powerfully written, Grande's debut novel had immediate impact: it has not only been translated into 21 languages but also adapted for film by Spanish director Bigas Luna that same

year. In 2002, Grandes won three prizes for her *Los aires difíciles*; the XI Premio Arzobispo San Clemente, the Premio Salambó and the IV Premio Julián Besteiro de las Artes y de las Letras. *Los aires difíciles* debuted at the top of the Spanish bestseller lists when it was published in February 2002, and remained on the lists until June. Since then, translations have been published in Italy, France, Germany, Israel, and the Netherlands.

Grandes is known for her journalistic work; she frequently writes for the Sunday magazine of



*El País* newspaper, but her greatest renown comes from her fiction. Grandes mainly concentrates socially and geographically in Madrid—the city background often becomes an essential part of the story—painting a colorful picture of the life of the bourgeois family, particularly the sexual, romantic, and familial relationships. At times, the characters and the atmospheres Grandes writes about could be compared to the Spanish social novel of the 1960s, although Grandes avoids moralistic comment or judgment. Grandes' main characters are usually women, whom she often presents as almost asexual. These protagonists tend to tackle the constant allusions to their somewhat unfavorable physical aspect with a positive attitude, acceptance of personal appearance, sense of humor, and irony which usually pays off, as they never fail to find sexual and sensual balance.

*Las edades de Lulú* [*The Ages of Lulú*] is an intensely erotic novel chronicling the sexual awakening and subsequent sexual adventures of María Luisa Ruiz-Póveda y García de la Casa. Brought up in a middle class family in Madrid, Lulú, her family nickname, foreshadows her precocious sexual awakenings. Deprived of her mother's love and affection, Lulú turns to her older brother Marcelo who would never be without his best friend Pablo, the person who would trigger Lulú's obsession, longing, and relentless search for validation and acceptance.

It is Pablo, who is 12 years older than 15-year-old Lulú, who inspires Lulú to explore her own sexual fantasies so deeply that by the end of the book she will reach unfathomable depths.

Pablo decided not to take her back home after a concert. Instead, he leads her to his apartment and then prepares her in a way he finds suited to her age. Pablo disappears and when he comes back he is "bearing a bowl of lather on which a mirror and a razor lay crossed." Pablo's obsession with a lack of pubic hair, school uniforms, and the look of innocence will become a trademark: "...He took off my knickers, pulled me abruptly towards him, [...] 'Why are you doing this?' 'Because you don't have a little girl's cunt. And I like little girl's cunts, especially when I am about to debauch them.'"

The book begins with an explicit description of a gay porn video Lulú is watching at home. A series of flashbacks reveal the protagonist's

torrid sexual adventures. Led by the hand of sexual mentor Pablo, first boyfriend, then husband and father of her only daughter, Lulú's darkest desires are fostered by him who enjoys and promotes the ludic sexual hunting that depicts Madrid's most obscure night life: their cruising includes gay bars, pick up joints, and illegal brothels.

Pablo would be her corruptor and eventually her savior; Lulú's thirst for sexual discovery takes them through voyeurism, homoeroticism, and the power-plays of incest and degradation. As years go by, Lulú becomes more perverse, becoming addicted to sodomy not only dominated by Pablo but also by other men including a threesome: Pablo induces the blindfolded protagonist to her own brother Marcelo. Other heterosexual partners become her usual exercise, more often than not preferring homosexuals and transvestites which become Lulú's fascination.

Lulú's obsession with gay multi-partner sex continues even after their marriage with Pablo has collapsed: she sets out on her own in an even darker, at times frightening, quest to satisfy her insatiable desires. Lulú, now cruising solo, takes part in all sorts of orgies introducing the reader to a most peculiar S/M Madrid community. Her new friends, a bunch of transvestites, gigolos, and taxi boys offer her to take part in "little parties" they would hold. At the beginning these would be just for the sake of having some fun for free: Lulú's financial situation was beginning to decline as a result of her expensive sexual practices as she would hire two or three people at a time.

Yet, this last time, Lulú is invited to take part in a mega party that would be sponsored by an unanimous, perverse, rich gentleman—an invitation she cannot turn down but which will almost kill her.

At the time *The Ages of Lulú* was published, Grandes was already working on her second novel *Te llamaré Viernes* (1991) followed by *Malena es un nombre de tango* (1994) and a short story compilation *Modelos de mujer* (1996) representative of Spanish postmodernism about seven women that give an overview about the way in which different generations of Spanish women act and interact in a society that witnessed historical changes. *Atlas de geografía humana* (1998) and *Los aires difíciles* (2002) came out next. Her most recent work is *Castillos de cartón* (2004).

Other stories by Grandes have also been taken to the cinema: *Malena*, a film based on her *Malena es un nombre de tango* (1996, dir. Gerardo Herreo) and *Aunque tú no lo sepas* (2000, dir. Juan Vicente Córdoba) based on “El vocabulario de los balcones” were produced.

In March 2002, Grandes was awarded the IV Julián Besteiros literary prize in recognition for her work as a writer and journalist.

### Biography

Almudena Grandes Hernández was born in 1960 in Madrid, Spain. Grandes studied History and Geography at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid. A “daughter of Franco,” as women of her own generation who were brought up under Franco’s regime are usually called, Grandes was reborn after the *Generalísimo*’s death, in 1975, when Spain awoke to a radical change in uses and customs.

CAROLINA MIRANDA

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# GRANDVAL, FRANÇOIS-CHARLES RACOT DE

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1710–1784

French actor and dramatist

In 1752, Grandval acquired a property in the rue Blanche and had it joined to the house that his mistress, Mlle Dumesnil, a tragedienne at the Comédie-Française, had purchased some time previously. It was in this place, designated the *Barrière Blanche*, that the two actors founded a private theater where, it is widely held, several of Grandval’s erotic pieces were staged or otherwise recited. Because of the clandestine nature of Grandval’s works, questions surrounding their origin persist to the present day. There are, however, eight pieces of which he is the undisputed author.

The originality of Grandval’s dramatic work stems in large part from the spirit of burlesque that informs each of his plays. A pervasive, strictly sexual eroticism together with a raunchiness of dialogue sometimes bordering on the scatological are used to parody seventeenth-century writers and, in particular, the great tradition of French classical tragedy. Grandval’s theatrical experience had given him a thorough knowledge of drama, enabling him to rewrite famous scenes and celebrated tirades in an erotic and parodic context. Based on a borrowing of some of the best-known verses of the classical tradition, this poetics of ironic and playful imitation reveals a wish to discredit the prestige of the tragic genre, and indeed of tradition in general. Accordingly,

Grandval's erotic plays are unforgiving in their criticism of all forms of authority, a theme at the core of Enlightenment thought. This point of view is particularly conspicuous in four of his most important pieces.

*Les Deux Biscuits* (*The Two Cookies*), a one-act tragedy in verse, takes the audience to the kingdom of Astracan and into the palace of Abusef. We first learn that Dilazal, son of the late king of Astracan, is hiding under the bed of the princess Abusef. Gaspariboul, a usurper who has cuckolded all the husbands in the kingdom, is courting the princess without knowing that Dilazal, her lover, is still alive. The play opens with the princess awaking from sleep as Dilazal leaves his hiding place, irritated with his mistress for having showered Gaspariboul with her favors the previous evening. But the princess defends herself well. Yes, she had organized a supper with Gaspariboul; Dilazal had, despite himself heard everything from his hiding place. However the pastry-cook, Rissole, had prepared two cookies for the occasion: "L'un était composé de mouches cantharides / Qui redonnent la force aux amants invalides, / Dans l'autre dominait l'opium et le pavot" [One was made of Spanish flies / Which return strength to impotent lovers / In the other were mainly opium and poppy seeds]. Abusef had simply eaten the wrong cookie. Satisfied, Dilazal asks the princess to organize another meeting with Gaspariboul in a tone that calls to mind Act II, Scene III of Racine's *Britannicus*: "À travers ce rideau je verrai votre foi / Madame, en lui parlant, songez que je vous voi." [Through this curtain I will see how true you are / Madame, while you speak to him, remember that I am watching.] Gaspariboul is deceived, and the lovers then decide to emasculate him as punishment for his career as a cuckold. A critical element underscores the association with this extract from Racine's play. Finally, the acrostic formed by the names on the list of actors removes any doubt as to authorship by allowing Grandval to sign his work with brio.

For Grandval, the main function of eroticism was its use as a tool for spoofing—and so further subverting—seventeenth-century values. This is clearly the case in *La Nouvelle Messaline*, a one-act burlesque tragedy in verse. The play features a heroine so debauched that her lovers are incapable of satisfying her sexually. Disappointed, she feigns a call to the religious life in order, she

affirms, to "tâter du moine" [try out the monks] in a Carmelite convent. Before proceeding with her plan, however, the lady curses the inadequacy of her lovers by crying out in fury: "Ô rage ! ô désespoir ! ô Vénus ennemie !/ Étais-je réservée à cette ignominie ?/ N'ai-je donc encensé ton temple et tes autels/ Que pour être l'objet du faible des mortels ?" [O fury! O despair! O hostile Venus! / Have I then been destined for this ignominious fate? / Have I worshipped at your temple and your altars / Only to end up an object of mortals' feebleness?] This borrowing from Corneille's *Cid* (1636) and, notably, from the monologue of Don Diego, one of the most celebrated tirades in classical drama, highlights the function of eroticism in Grandval's works: the erotic element adds to the parody and so helps overturn and criticize the authority enjoyed by the tragic genre a century earlier. This "ô rage! ô désespoir!" also appears in *La Médecine de Cythère*, a two-act vaudeville show.

Corneille's *Cid* is again a target for parody in *La comtesse d'Olonne*. Inspired by an episode concerning the countess in the *Histoire amoureuse des Gaules* (1665) by Bussy-Rabutin, this short piece falls within the same subversive vein. The sleeping Madame d'Olonne (Argénie) dreams she sees the ghost of the Duke of Candale, her first lover. Upset at having been deceived so many times, he announces that "un chancre confondra [s]on con avec [s]on cul." [a canker will confuse her cunt with her arsehole.] In the following scene, we learn that the countess is in love with the Count de Guiche (Bigdore) but is in doubt as to his sexual orientation. She asks advice of the Countess de Fiesque (Gélonide) who knows him well and is told that the Count "par inclination,[...] est un branleur de pique." [The Count "...has a liking [...]for jerking off dicks."] Nevertheless, Madame d'Olonne is determined to offer herself to him. Scene III is a parody of Act II, Scene II of the *Cid*. Here, certain famous passages from the *Cid* are caricatured as follows: "Je suis jeune, il est vrai,/ À peine ai-je vingt ans, mais aux couilles bien nées,/ La valeur n'attend pas le nombre des années." [I'm young, it's true, / Not yet twenty, but to well-born balls, / Value's not measured by the count of years.] Unfortunately for Argénie, the count remains impotent. In the last scene, however, he returns and acquits himself successfully: "Je fais des cons aux culs beaucoup de différence, / Et si jusqu'à présent j'ai mieux

aimé les culs, / Reine, c'est que les cons ne m'étaient pas connus." [I definitely distinguish between an arsehole and a cunt, / And if until now I have preferred arseholes, / Majesty, it's because cunts were unknown to me.] Here again, eroticism is used in the service of parody to overturn the Cornelian heroic ethic.

### Biography

François-Charles Racot de Grandval was born in Paris on October 23, 1710, the son of Marie Macé and Nicolas Racot de Grandval, a harpsichordist and dramatist. The younger Grandval first made a name for himself as an actor. His career began on November 19, 1729 when, under the name Duval, he performed the title role in the tragedy *Andronic* by Campistron. On December 31st of the same year, he was admitted to the Comédie-Française, where he remained until 1762. As an actor, Grandval excelled in the role of *petit-maître*; he was so good that his work served as a model for interpreting this type of character. He returned to the stage on February 6, 1764 to play Alceste in *The Misanthrope* but left for good in 1768, apparently because of the "dégoût que son grasseyement inspirait au public, dont il avait été l'idole" [the disgust his throaty manner of pronouncing the "r" inspired in the public, which had at one time idolized him"] (Mlle Clairon). He died in the rue Blanche, Paris, on September 24, 1784.

MARC ANDRÉ BERNIER

### Selected Works

*La comtesse d'Olonne*. Comédie en un acte, en vers. 1738.  
*L'Eunuque ou la fidèle infidélité*. Parade en vaudevilles, mêlée de prose et de vers, Montmartre, 1750. [Brenner: Représentée chez Mlle Dumesnil, 1749]  
*Sirop-au-cul ou l'heureuse délivrance*. Tragédie héroï-comédique, 3 actes en vers. Au Temple du Goût, 1751.  
*Les deux biscuits*. Tragédie traduite de la langue que l'on parloit jadis au royaume d'Astracan, et mise depuis peu en vers français, 1 acte, se vend à Astracan, chez

un Libraire, 1752 [Brenner: Représentée chez Mlle Dumesnil, 1749]

*La nouvelle Messaline*. Tragédie, 1 acte, en vers (par Pyron dit Prepucius). A Ancone, chez Clitoris, librairie rue du Sperme, vis-à-vis la Fontaine de la Semence, à la Verge d'Or, 1773 [1752].

*Léandre-Nanette ou le double qui-pro-quo*. Parade en un acte, en vers et en vaudevilles, achevée en 1755. A Charlotte de Montmartre, Clignancourt, 1756.

*La médecine de Cythère*. Parade, 2 actes en vaudeville, tirée des fastes de Syrie. Clignancourt, 1756.

*Le tempérament*, tragi-parade, traduite de l'Egyptien en vers français et réduite en un acte. A Charlotte de Montmartre, en octobre 1770. Au Grand Caire. [Brenner: en octobre 1755. Au Grand Caire, 1756].

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## GRASS, GÜNTER

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1927[-]

German novelist, dramatist, poet, essayist, and artist

One of Germany's most prolific and political authors, Günter Grass is perhaps best known for the Danzig trilogy of *The Tin Drum*, 1959, *Cat and Mouse* [*Katz und Mouse*], 1961, and *Dog Years* [*Hundejahre*], 1963. *The Tin Drum*, while certainly controversial, is the least erotic of these works, focusing on a self-proclaimed savant named Oskar who purposefully stunts his growth at the age of three so that he can avoid entering the world of adults. The work has achieved its greatest notoriety through Schlöndorff's Oscar-winning 1979 film, which purportedly shows a pre-teen male performing oral sex on a teen girl. On the basis of this scene, an Oklahoma County district judge ruled in 1997 that the film constituted child pornography (a decision that was overturned in the following year). In the latter two works, erotic imagery is explored more directly through male characters caught in the transition from adolescence to adulthood, and from peace to war, each embodying the extremes of virility, violence, and impotence. An extraordinarily political author, Grass uses these characters metaphorically to examine Germany's own right of passage from the beginning of World War II through its conclusion.

Like *The Tin Drum*, both *Cat and Mouse* and *Dog Years* are presented through the eyes of unreliable narrators. Grass creates polarized male friendships in each of these works, with one figure being especially virile and the other largely impotent. The narrator of *Cat and Mouse*, Pilenz, comes to idolize his best friend, Mahlke, when the latter transforms from a sickly youth who is unable to swim or ride a bike into the strongest diver (and overall athlete) of their group. In the work's most erotic, and homoerotic, scene, Pilenz and Mahlke join their male friends in group masturbation on an abandoned minesweeper. At first Mahlke does not take part in the ritual, but he is spurred on by Tulla, a young

girl who is also present (and who reappears as a sexually promiscuous adult in *Dog Years*). The other adolescents, and Pilenz in particular, are awed by both Mahlke's pronounced physical endowment and the strength of his orgasm. It is noteworthy that Mahlke remains, according to the untrustworthy narrator, uncomfortable around females and dedicated to one unattainable female figure: the Virgin Mary. This brief, defining scene of male masturbation later contrasts Pilenz's admittedly unsuccessful attempts at love-making, and magnifies his own hero-worship of the reportedly chaste Mahlke. Indeed, Pilenz's impotence is attributed to his having been the sexual object of a priest, which intensifies his interpretation of Mahlke as a religious but sexually potent figure.

Few critics have considered the relationship of Pilenz and Mahlke from a primarily homoerotic perspective, perhaps in part because it can be difficult to reconcile this interpretation with the heterosexual Grass's tendency to construct characters based upon his personal and political background. This aspect of their relationship is best symbolized by the abandoned minesweeper, an image that frames the story and signifies the suppression of those potentially explosive emotions that should not be detonated. Of particular note, the minesweeper is partially submerged and contains a radio room that is above water-level, but only accessible through a prolonged and dangerous dive. Mahlke is the only one of the adolescents capable of making this dive. As a sexual metaphor, he is therefore the only one who can enter this otherwise forbidden area, and, once inside, radio contact-emotional, verbal communication-are no longer possible.

Just as the two friends began their emotional journey on the minesweeper, they are brought back to it for the conclusion. They are separated when Mahlke steals a soldier's medal and is transferred to another school by the principal, Dr. Klohse. A few years later, Mahlke returns as a successful soldier with his own medal, but Klohse will not allow him to speak at his former

school. Mahlke slaps him across the face, and chooses not to return from his military leave. At the urging of his childhood friend, Mahlke agrees to go briefly into hiding, returning to the scene of their group masturbation and Mahlke's earlier diving triumphs. Mahlke and Pilez are once again on the minesweeper, but this time Pilez seems to be the one in control. He encourages Mahlke to dive again into the radio room, and he gives him provisions so that he can stay submerged for a long period of time. The story ends ambiguously, however, and Pilez reports that Mahlke never resurfaces. In the mind of Pilez, Mahlke is completely consumed within the minesweeper, much as Pilez is consumed by telling the story of the great Mahlke.

In *Dog Years*, Grass moves beyond the stunted childhood of *The Tin Drum* and the pained adolescence of *Cat and Mouse* into the adulthood of post-War Germany. Themes of guilt, trust, and retribution are explored through the long, complex friendship of Eddi Amsel and Walter Matern. Their relationship spans several decades and is characterized by a subtler current of homoeroticism than that which connected Pilez to Mahlke, with Grass focusing here on the balance of the introspective, creative male artist (Amsel) and the hyper-masculine, destructive soldier (Matern).

Although they begin as literal blood brothers, the two are consistently brought into conflict by the ideologies around them. Matern alternately protects and bullies Amsel, who is half-Jewish, at one point leading a Nazi gang in beating his friend so severely that all of his teeth must be replaced. Yet his volatility is tied explicitly to his virility: at the conclusion of the war, Matern seeks vengeance against all ex-Nazis (except himself) largely by sleeping with their daughters, wives, and girlfriends. In contrast, Amsel's sexuality seems suppressed into the creation of terrifying sculptures and scarecrows. The name "Matern" appears naturally and ironically tied to "maternal," but it is Amsel who evokes the image of a mother, giving birth to his art. It is significant that their aspect of the narrative concludes with a ceremonial bath that cannot cleanse them from the past.

Much literary criticism centers on Grass's political statements and artistic struggles. However, he also infuses a number of his works with an erotic (and often homoerotic) undercurrent that is inextricably tied to the violent and

sexualized masculinity that defined much of Nazi Germany. The dangerous and forbidden male friendships of Pilez/Mahlke and Amsel/Matern, in particular, should also be analysed within this erotic context.

### Biography

Born in Danzig, October 16, 1927. Attended elementary school (*Volksschule*) and high school (*Gymnasium*) in Danzig, 1933[-]1944. Member of the Hitler Youth (*Hitlerjugend*), 1937[-]1941. Served as anti-aircraft gunner and soldier in World War II and visited Dachau concentration camp [*Konzentrationslager*], 1944[-]1945. Studied sculpture at Düsseldorf Academy of the Arts, 1948[-]1951. Traveled to Italy and France, 1951 [-]1952. Continued study of sculpture at Berlin Academy of the Arts, 1953. Married Swiss ballet dancer Anna Schwarz, 1954 (divorced 1978); three sons and two daughters. Befriended Willy Brandt and supported the Social Democratic Party (*Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands*), 1961; officially joined the Social Democratic Party, 1983. Elected to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, 1970. Controversial film version of Grass's first novel, *The Tin Drum* [*Die Blechtrommel*], directed by Volker Schlöndorff premiered, 1979. Married German organist Ute Grunert, 1979; no children. Elected president of the Berlin Academy of the Arts. Major awards and honors: Berlin Critics' Prize, 1960; Berlin Fontane Prize, 1968; honorary doctorate from Harvard, 1976; honorary doctorate from the University of Poznań, 1990; honorary doctorate from the University of Gdańsk (formerly Danzig) and honorary Polish citizenship, 1993; Literature Prize of Bavarian Academy of Fine Arts, 1994; the Nobel Prize for Literature, 1999.

WALTER RANKIN

### Selected Works

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## GRAY, ALASDAIR

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# GRAY, ALASDAIR

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1934–  
Scottish novelist

Sexuality is a recurring theme of Gray's fiction. Two of his novels, *1982 Janine* and *Something Leather*, are especially erotic.

### *1982 Janine*

*1982 Janine* consists of the sexual fantasies and reminiscences of Jock MacLeish which take place during a night he spends at a hotel in Greenock, a small town outside Glasgow. Jock is an alcoholic with a failed marriage who has not been with a woman for many years. In order to beat chronic insomnia and sexual frustration, he resorts to masturbation.

The first ten chapters of the book present Jock's fantasies. These involve various plots. In the first fantasy plot Janine has a job interview at an exclusive millionaires' club in Scotland. She is dressed in revealing clothing. During the interview, one of the members of the club makes sexual advances towards her, but the fantasy has an anticlimactic ending which brings no satisfaction to Jock.

The same premature ending characterizes the second fantasy plot, set somewhere in America. Superb intends to meet her lover. But her all-powerful policeman husband has her arrested and brought to a police station, where she is tortured and raped by Big Momma. The two fantasy plots are combined in a third one. Here, Helga is a director of erotic films in which the other women of Jock's fantasies appear.

The unresolved fantasies and the depressing recollections drive Jock to a suicide attempt. But an inner voice, referred to as God, helps him pull through. After this turning point, Jock reviews his formative years and by dawn he is a new man, determined to quit his job and seek out Denny, his first love.

It is also Gray's most overtly political novel. The date *1982* of the title points to the specificity of Jock's experience. The night that the novel unfolds is set around the time of the Falklands war. Jock has a vested interest in voting for Thatcher, yet he hides the fact because of his uneasy moral conscience. He justifies his crypto-conservatism by adopting the winner-versus-loser dialectic which also underlies his sexual fantasies. Gray does not so much parody Jock, as sympathize with his struggle to escape the vicious circle of the domination logic which is manifest in masturbatory fantasizing and in Thatcherite politics. At the end, Jock is transformed into a new man.

### *Something Leather*

*Something Leather* is written from the points of view of women. In the first chapter, June is shopping for a leather outfit. She comes across a specialist shop "The Hideout." In a photograph album of patterns, June sees provocative pictures of a woman which excite her. Later, Donalda, an employee of "The Hideout," delivers June's order and seduces and handcuffs her. Donalda summons her accomplices Senga and

Harry to June's apartment. The chapter ends at the point "where the reader was likely to be most intrigued."

Gray provides flashbacks to the stories of the four women whose lives have converged. Harry's aristocratic mother neglected her. When a Scottish nanny was found smacking Harry, the mother sent her to boarding school. Harry viewed the smacking as the only act which took her into account, so she tried to have someone whip her again. When this failed, she devoted all her energy into art, particularly her "bum garden" project. Eventually she became a famous artist.

June is a clever and attractive woman who was always entangled with self-promoting, egotistical men. Her marriage collapsed when she realized that her husband was intent only upon his own satisfaction. Donalda and Senga came from poor families in Glasgow. They both have had failed marriages. Donalda was forced to prostitute herself. They both ended up distrusting men and eventually team up in "The Hideout" business.

Harry came to Glasgow in order to prepare an exhibition as part of the European Cultural Capital shows—an event which really took place in 1990. The Glasgow accent reminded her of her nanny and the spanking experience. So, Harry hired Senga to fulfil her fantasies. It was Senga who organized the capture of June in order to satisfy Harry.

Chapter 12 continues the story from the end of chapter 1: Harry, Senga, and Donalda sexually torture June—they hang her from a swing, cane her, shave her hair, and Harry tattoos bees on June's back and face. But June is not really hurt because all of the women show her affection. When June wakes up alone and is longing to meet them again, she realizes that she feels gratified. She is now a new June, converted to new erotic practices and excited to start a relationship with Harry.

Gray's juxtaposition of Queen's English and the Glaswegian accent is witty and entertaining. *Something Leather* can be read as a satire of the Englishness of the remodeled Glasgow as "Europe's Culture Capital." But below the surface humor, there is Gray's pessimistic denial of any real progress or change. Thus, the revamped Glasgow is only a temporary makeover which hides the squalor, repression, and desperation of its citizens. And, like Glasgow, June's conversion to S&M and homophilia, does not signal a deeper transformation: June is attracted to

Harry, who, like June's old husband, is self-centered and quick to use people to further her ends.

Gray does not outright condemn his characters. He is happy *for* June, because she has found individual satisfaction in her niche of erotic pleasures. And, at the same time, Gray is unhappy *with* June's individualism and un-self-awareness. *Something Leather's* open end relies on this ambivalence, which engenders the unresolved opposition of private versus public satisfaction.

### Biography

Born in Glasgow, December 28, 1934. His first novel, *Lanark*, was published in 1981. He graduated from the Glasgow School of Art in 1957. He has written novels, poetry, plays, short stories, an historical-political book, and has edited a collection of prefaces. All are illustrated by himself. He was awarded the Whitbread Novel Award and the Guardian Fiction Prize for *Poor Things* in 1992. The University of Glasgow appointed him Professor of Creative Writing in 2001.

DIMITRIOS VARDOULAKIS

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## GREEK ANTHOLOGY

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The *Greek Anthology* ('bouquet') is a collection of some 4000 epigrams written between the second century BCE and about 900 CE. The history of the transmission of the texts is complex: the *Anthology*, as we now have it, is composed of the 'Garland' of Meleager of Gadara (Syria), who died on the island of Cos in about 100 BCE, together with the 'Garland' of Philip (collected in the reign of Nero in the first century CE) and other groups of poems composed by Asclepiades (about 300–270 BCE), Strato (third century CE), Paulus Silentiarius and Agathias (both sixth century CE), and a number attributed to Anacreon (sixth century BCE) but written in the second century CE. In about 900 CE, Constantine Cephalas, a Byzantine, made a major collection of the foregoing material to which he added more. Another, enlarged, version of his edition was put together shortly afterwards, and it is this which is known as the *Palatine Anthology*. But in 1301 a Byzantine scholar, Maximus Planudes, produced a reduced version, probably based partly on previous abridgements, which omitted some heterosexual erotic items as well as the pederastic poems which constitute book XII of the Palatine collection. Planudes's *Anthology* was first printed in 1494 and was the standard text for the Renaissance. The full *Palatine Anthology* was not rediscovered until 1606 and was only completely published early in the nineteenth century (selections from Strato's 'Pederastic Muse' were first published separately in 1764 and 1774). Although there are some differences in the sequences of poems according to the variations in the manuscript tradition, the contents of the *Anthology* are divided into fifteen books: Christian epigrams (I), descriptions of statues (II), temple inscriptions (III), the prefaces of Meleager, Philip and Agathias (IV), curses (VI), epitaphs (VII and VIII), oracles, riddles and problems (XIV), and miscellaneous topics (IX, X, XIII, and XV). Book XI, which contains a number of erotic subjects, is composed of two parts: sympotic (1–64) and satirical (65–442) epigrams, while book V is devoted to mainly

heterosexual erotic epigrams and book XII contains poems uniquely relating to the love of boys and youths. In the latter, some 94 epigrams in two substantial sections can be attributed to Strato, the rest belonging to Asclepiades, Melager, and others, making a total of 258. They are presented in no particular order or grouping. 'Some of the epigrams of Strato are elegant and clever,' wrote Philip Smith in a widely used handbook of Greek biography and literature in the nineteenth century, 'but nothing can redeem the disgrace attaching to the moral character of his compilation.' These pederastic epigrams cover a variety of situations, but they do not idealize their subject matter or give it a spiritual or philosophical disguise reminiscent of Plato or Socrates. The object of one poet's passion is an adolescent (12–18 years old), whose loss of attractiveness is confirmed by the sprouting of a beard (e.g., epigrams XII.24 to 27: Polemo's lover had promised to make a sacrifice if his beloved boy should return safely from his travels, but when he comes back bearded the lover retracts his vow. XII.30: Nicander is told his legs are getting hairy, and if his backside does likewise he will have fewer lovers). Some boys play hard to get, some ask for payment, some are only too happy to agree immediately. Youths are considered to bring more pleasure than women, for, in addition to being more natural in their behavior and appearance, they are vigorous, candid, straightforward, and smell honestly of the gymnasium. This does not mean that they can be relied on to be faithful, however, and the poets often complain about their fickleness. Praise and blame of this sort was, in fact, a commonplace in the Alexandrian period (third century BCE to second century CE) in debates on the relative merits of the love of women or boys. The poems celebrate the boys' bodies: lips, smooth buttocks (XII.37, 38), Diocles's cock seen at the baths (XII.207), or Alcimus's—once like a little pink finger, it now resembles an enormous arm (XII.242). Eyes dart flames (XII.110), or flash like stars (XII.196). Boys are dangerous tempters (XII.139), and dishes worthy of the gods

(XII.68). The rapacity of the beloved is such that he can only be caught by a well-baited hook (XII.42), or perhaps he acts as if arse means gold (XII.6). The love of boys is fleeting, and fades like roses in the heat (XII.195). The lovers are jealous, become impatient, are enslaved, fall regretfully out of love. They engage in combat with the beloved, enjoy his kisses, and during drinking and feasting (the 'symposia' and the 'comoi') they celebrate him with wine and song. Several epigrams in books XI and XII are aimed sarcastically (and perhaps sometimes rather enviously) at teachers who take advantage of their pupils (XII.34, 219, 222). Others are more simply scurrilous (XI.225—three men on a bed make four if you count the middle one twice; XI.272—on passive males). The love of boys is described as fire, tempest, and wounding in battle, while the pursuit of them is variously compared with hunting and snaring. Among a certain amount of conventional imagery, the pederastic poems of the *Anthology* often convey their message with realism, wit, and pointed plays on words. The situations they describe may now seem to us daring, but this adds to their vigorous charm. The 310 erotic poems of book V are, with few exceptions, heterosexual and are addressed to women who may be the poet's beloved, his adored sexual object, his difficult mistress, his unattainable ideal beauty. The occasions tend to be described more conventionally than in book XII, and there is less room given to naturalistic elements. The reason for this may well be that the poets are imitating models of sophisticated dalliance and sensual love, so that we may often doubt whether particular poems are expressions of real feelings rather than exercises in rhetoric. There are certain similarities with the gallant poetry of seventeenth and eighteenth-century England and France. The names of the beloved women are often conventional, and so,

too, is the range of imagery used: night, moon, shipwrecks, arrows of desire, the dawn arriving all too soon, and so on. So we read that Doris has chained the poet with a strand of golden hair (V.230), and that Asclepias's eyes are blue like the sea and invite him to sail on waves of love (V.156). Despite this, many poems avoid banality, while, together with several epigrams in the satirical section of book XI, some are frankly obscene: Lydia says she can satisfy three men simultaneously (V.49); Conon's wife is taller than him, so in bed where are his lips when their feet are level? (XI.108); on cunnilingus (XI.329); the poet advises sodomy if the beloved is pregnant (V.54). With its wide range of subjects and variations in tone and style, the *Greek Anthology* can justly be ranked among the great books of Western literature.

PATRICK POLLARD

### Further Reading

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# GREEK: MODERN

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For a long time Modern Greek writers faced the difficult task of incorporating in their works the heritage of ancient Greece with that of Byzantium, which has decisively shaped post-classical Greek experiences. To a certain degree this struggle, especially when done consciously, dominated and often suppressed the free expression of erotic feeling. Inextricably intertwined with Greek history, Modern Greek literature often chose to channel eroticism through reflection on national issues. Lyric and gentle tones of tender desire, allusions, and youthful memories often suffice in order to relate the erotic experiences of a nation preoccupied with preserving its identity. The yearning for the beloved is often compared with the desire for freedom; explicit sexual descriptions, especially in works relating the foreign occupations suffered by the Greeks, tend to carry negative connotations, often associated with lack of modesty or crimes that fuel the anger of the enslaved people. On the contrary, sanctioned relationships undergo consummation amid passionate descriptions of feelings; explicit references are limited to the physical changes that the enamoured witness on their bodies. In addition, during the few carefree moments that the Greeks celebrated in their recent history, they gave precedence to a humorous approach of love, which allowed the writers to become slightly more descriptive and even obscene. In addition, in all their literary history Greek writers, almost unanimously, praise youthful love and the first erotic experience, perhaps because reality and social pressures were soon to impose their pace on the erotic mood of the individuals. It could be said that by way of continuing the Hesiodic notion of Eros, Modern Greek writers still classified love, romantic or more sensual, as the unwanted affliction that tortures the body and the mind with reminders of a short-lived youth and social issues that often remain unresolved.

Nevertheless, in more recent years, eroticism found more substantial expression in Greek literature and indeed produced some excellent

descriptions of sensual fulfilment. In particular the feminine erotic experience found its voice in the works of Freddy Germanos' (1934–1999) such as his *Tereza* of 1997, in Mara Meimaridi's *Magisses tis Smirnis* (2001) and in Kostas Karakasis' *Athina* (2000). These novels, among numerous others, focus on the exceptional stories of unusually strong women that succeeded in a masculine world of different social norms. The heroines' search for love and pleasure becomes the mirror for the customs of their epoch which they set to overcome. In the following pages the history of Modern Greek Erotic Literature is reviewed chronologically with emphasis given on the more recent centuries.

## The Byzantine Heritage

The fall of Constantinople in 1453 arguably signifies the start of Modern Greek literature, sealed with the epic of *Digenis Akritas* and the chivalric romances of the fourteenth century. This tradition is believed to continue unbroken until 1669 when Crete fell to the Turks.

*Digenis Akritas*, published in 1875 from a manuscript at Trepizond (K.N. Sathas and E. Legrand), survived in five more versions: two from Andros, from Grottaferrata near Rome, from Oxford and Escorial. The middle of the eleventh century is a *firm terminus ante quem* for the original text. The main hero is Vasilis Digenis Akritas: the first three books talk about his origin; the other five relate his adventures and his love story, an elopement, with the girl's cooperation. In book six (Grottaferrata ms.) or seven (the other mss.) Digenis narrates his duel with the Amazon Maximo with erotic overtones. Sexual references are frequent and explicit in a celebration of youthful virility and passionate bravery.

From 1204 to 1261, Constantinople was occupied by Frankish Crusaders. Despite their short stay, they exercised a strong influence in literature from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century. Under the influence of the *Chronicle of the*

*Morea*, a series of Romances of Love and Chivalry were produced: they typically depict the separation of two lovers, who suffer trials and adventures until they are happily united. Unlike the *Epic of Digenis*, the romances represent a more romantic orientation in Modern Greek reminiscent of the French roman courtois and the ballads of the Arthurian cycle. The erotic element is dominant, with its melancholy and oppression, but also with its sensual fulfilment. The love of adventure and the fairytale motifs, employed profusely, indicate a strong eastern influence. The writers also knew the romances of the Second Sophistic from which they borrow their long and detailed descriptions (ecphrasis). In some romances we find *katalogia*, apparently independent demotic songs of the time. Five romances came down to us: *Libistros and Rodamne*, probably written in the fourteenth century in demotic Greek; *Kallimachos and Chrysorrhoe* by Andronicus Palaeologus with its abundant legendary elements dates between 1310 and 1340; and *Belanthros and Chrysantza*, with its sensual tone, distinguished for its demotic language. The two other romances are adaptations of popular western originals of the twelfth century: *Imperios and Margarona*, a version of the French *Pierre de Provence et la belle Maguelone*, and *Forios and Platziaflora*, a recension of the French romance *Floire et Blanchefleur*. The Greek adapter, who wrote just before the middle of the fifteenth century, drew directly on a metrical Tuscan version of the early fourteenth century, *Il cantare di Florio e Biancifiore*. His focus on youthful love and the spiritual affinity between the couple seems to herald a new spirit. These romances introduced the Greek public to then contemporary European notions of love, although the endless and often unnecessary adventures of the couple, tend to be tiring for the reader. Once more, love gradually falls into the background as the incentive that fuels the tenacity of the enamoured couple, often leaving essential issues of sexual maturation and compatibility unanswered. In a way, these works carry back to Greek speaking audiences the spirit of Menander, mostly evident, in cases of lost children who are finally recognized and have their social status reinstated.

Krumbacher also referred to 'romances with a national subject' such as the *Life of Alexander*, a metrical version of the well-known Hellenistic romance of Pseudo-Callisthenes dated in 1388.

The *Tale of Achilles* or the *Achilleid* of the fifteenth century is a love romance about the mythical hero Achilles. Despite their intentions, these romances fail to persuade the reader in the emotional depth of the passions they describe.

In the places which remained in Frankish domination after 1453 (mainly on the coasts and islands) literary production was little affected by the great disaster. There in the second half of the fifteenth century, Byzantine tales gradually gave way to erotic lyric songs, both demotic and more artistic. The earliest (ca 1450) and most remarkable collection, the *Erotopaignia*, survives in a British Museum manuscript and paves the way for the poetry of the second half of the fifteenth century. It may be a collection of entirely demotic lines or, possibly, the original works of a learned poet.

The autobiographical poems of S. Sachlikis date in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth century and draw on his rather prodigal life. *Kastro or Chandax* (nowadays Heraclion) features his quarrels with courtesan Koutagiotaina, while his *Strange Story* satirizes the courtesans. His lines revive the underground life of this great harbor, a then colony of Venice. Interestingly, his exaggerated images are more convincing, perhaps because he focuses on realistic figures rather than dainty daughters of the nobility. Marinus Falieros wrote two similar poems distinguished for their original erotic imagery and their allegorical mood: the poet sees in his dreams (one of the poems is entitled *History and Dream*) his beloved together with Destiny and Pothoula (personification of love). An important, yet anonymous, erotic composition appears to have been *The Rimada of the Girl and the Youth* (which Legrand called *La séduction de la jeune fille*), a lyric work distinguished for its narrative skill and genuine demotic expression. Its sensual realism, full of freshness and grace, shows close affinity with demotic love songs.

At the same period in Cyprus, a series of exceptional lyric love-poems was produced under the spell of Petrarchism. The poems were written in the Cypriot idiom, the Italian hendecasyllable (instead of conventional decapentasyllable) and in a variety of Renaissance forms: sonnets, octaves, terzinas, even canzones, sestinas, ballades, barzelettas etc. The Italian influence on these poems is marked; some are direct imitations of Petrarch and his followers (J. Sannazaro and P. Bembo); others full of the

spirit of Petrarchism. The love-poems of Cyprus are one of the highest points of Renaissance literature in Greece, but had no sequel after 1571 when Cyprus fell to the Turks.

In 1570, almost the only Greek lands left under Venetian domination were Crete and the Ionian islands. Both were to play an important role in literature, Crete at once, the Ionian islands later. Cretan literature of the late sixteenth and of the seventeenth centuries is a Golden period in the history of Modern Greek literature. The writers of this period elevated the demotic idiom to pure literary language. Theater, which returned to Europe only under the free spirit of the Renaissance, was introduced in Crete by George Chortatsis, a near contemporary of Shakespeare. His earliest work, *Gyparis or Panoria* (c.1585–1590), was a pastoral play modeled on *La Calisto* of Luigi Grotto (Venice, 1583), a typical Italian tragicommedia pastorale, with the exception that the plot involves two pairs of enamoured shepherds: Gyparis loves Panoria and Alexis, Athousa. The shepherdesses scorn their love and prefer to live hunting in the woods. Chortatsis' *Erofilo* (c. 1585–1600) was based on the Italian Classical *Orbecche* of Giambattista Giraldi (1547), which he handled with complete originality: the secret marriage of Erofilo and Panaretos is tragically brought to an end when her father, king Philogonos, kills the groom and serves his limbs to Erofilo, who commits suicide. The chorus of girls kills the king. Between the acts four intermezzi dramatized the episode of Rinaldo and Armida from the *Gerusalemme Liberata* of Torquato Tasso. In Chortatsis' works love becomes the incentive for extraordinary adventures and amazing turns of fortunes that can transform with its magic the dull lives of his young protagonists. In addition, in correspondence with literary movements in the west, love becomes the tool for exploring novel literary forms. His two other tragedies that survived are later than *Erofilo* and inferior in poetic worth. *King Rodolinos* by Joannes Andreas Troilos of Rethymno, printed in Venice in 1647, drew on the late dramatic work of Tasso, *Il Re Torrismondo* (1587), which relates the conflict between love and friendship. Chortatsis also engaged with erotic themes in his most popular comedy *Katzourbos* (c.1595–1600) which originates in the Italian *comedia erudita* of the sixteenth century. *Fortounatos* of Markos Antonios Foskolos is clearly indebted

to *Katzourbos*. *Stathis*, an anonymous play written before 1648, is akin to Shakespeare's *A Midsummer's Night Dream* and revolves around the erotic adventures of two couples.

All the works of this period are dramatic, apart from the early *Voskopoula* and the more mature *Erotokritos*. *Voskopoula*, first printed in 1627, was popular despite its naïve treatment of pastoral love. *Erotokritos* by Vitsentzos Kornaros has been characterized as a love poem but Politis insists on calling it, a verse-romance. In his introduction the poet states his subjects as 'power of love' and the 'troubles of arms.' The poem relates in five parts and 10,000 lines the love of Erotokritos and Aretousa, their toils and troubles until the final happy ending. The tale could be seen as the most successful epilogue to the romances of the early Byzantine period, now fully adjusted to the Cretan reality of the seventeenth century; long descriptions convey the yearning of the two lovers and their unbreakable devotion to each other in almost lyric tones. *Erotokritos*, written c. 1640–1660 at Sitia and Kastro, takes its theme from a medieval French romance of chivalry by Pierre de la Cypède, *Paris et Vienne*. The Turkish occupation of 1669 begins a decline in poetry for a century and a half. After 1669, the tradition of Cretan literature was preserved in the Ionian Islands, but it was not continued. The 150 years between 1669 and 1821 (Greek Revolution) may be divided in two main periods, the division coming c. 1770–1780. In 1774, the Russo-Turkish treaty of Kutchuk Kainardji gave special privileges to the Greeks in the Turkish Empire, thus ensuring the rise of a new, prosperous urban class. During the next fifty years, a new energy was manifested in all fields and of course, in erotic composition. Greek Enlightenment entered into its peak in the last decades of the eighteenth century.

All along these centuries, the demotic song that defies chronological classification was continuously popular. It flourished for the last time just before the War of Independence, chiefly in mainland Greece. The demotic *paraloges*, songs more artistically accomplished, often treated the themes of love and marriage. The marriage songs are closely connected with the wedding ritual, but the love songs are distinguished for their lyricism and grace. They are often confined to distichs, *lianotragouda* or *amanedes*, *patinades* or *mantinades*, but many are longer ballads.

In most songs the erotic element appears suppressed by the war-like environment of the heroes; yet the widespread ballad of *Chartzianis* or the *Sun-born maiden* introduces erotic themes along with transvestism. Baud-Bovy places it in the Dodecanese in the twelfth century. Here and more generally in the islands of the Aegean, a whole series of love songs had its origin. They belong to the time of the Frankish occupation, from the thirteenth to the fifteenth century, the age of the romances of love and chivalry, among which we find many *katalogia*. The Frankish influence is strong; their lyrical tone is reminiscent of the *Erotopaignia*. Among the love-songs, Baud-Bovy distinguishes a group evolving around the unconventional figure of the mistress or the unfaithful wife. These songs bring to mind the poems of Sachlikis; their origin must be Crete, from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries (the earliest songs) to the sixteenth. Demotic songs will continue to be written and reproduced throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth century favoring detailed physical descriptions in order to convey eroticism: the eyes, the way she walks or dances, her elaborate clothing, the beloved's beauty spots, all excite the pain and impatience of the lover in a pastoral environment that exhibits pathetic fallacy for his suffering.

### The Nineteenth Century

The last decade of the eighteenth century and the first two of the nineteenth were most critical for modern Hellenism. The Greek nation was slowly but surely approaching a new unity and was nearing the final liberation. Rigas Velestinlis or Pheraios, born c. 1757 in the Thessalian village of Velestino, published in Vienna after his arrival in 1790–1791. Rigas was devoted to the national cause and became, after his murder in 1798, the first martyr of Greek liberty; however, his first work, *The School for Delicate Lovers* (Vienna, 1790), was a collection of six short love-stories, the first in modern Greek literature. A translation, apparently, from Restif de la Bretonne, a less known French author, it had considerable success. In 1792, also in Vienna, an unknown writer published a similar work, *The Results of Love*, three original tales that drew more on the Greek social life of Constantinople and Wallachia, where flirting was fashionable among the youths of the elite. A new class of

wealthy traders enjoyed for the first time the luxury of playful, feminine company in an ambience of almost Parisian eroticism. The unknown writer inserted in his stories short popular poems which combine eastern melancholy with a premature and confused romanticism.

Athanasios Christopoulos, born in 1772 at Kastoria, published his *Lyric* in 1811, thus inaugurating a new period in Modern Greek poetry. At first glance, his 'Erotic' and 'Bacchic' songs (his own division) belong to the realm of contemporary European classicism. The 'Bacchic' songs, for which his contemporaries called him the 'new Anacreon,' were imitations of the numerous post-classical anacreontics. He sings of love and wine, and represents himself as continuously lovesick; his love is never a grand passion, but rather a sport or amusement. His poems, full of mythological details, lack passion, as critics often pointed out. Yiannis Vilaras, born in 1771 at Ioannina, published in 1814 the *Romaic Language* which included erotic verse. Dionysios Solomos was born in 1798. He had an Italian education, but upon his return to Greece in 1818 at the age of twenty, he taught himself to compose poetry in Greek. His themes are full of the revolution of the Greeks against the Turks and he wrote the National Anthem. In 1834, a large part of his poem *Lambros* was published in the Ionian Anthology: Lambros, a minor Don Juan, who seduces young Maria, is wicked in conduct but great in soul. At the time of composition, Solomos was tormented with romantic visions, but the piece was later reworked. Solomos' poetry remained fragmentary and never reached completion. We have a sketch of *La Donna Velata*, his one real love-poem. Generally the Heptanesian School initiated with Andreas Kalvos (born in Zakynthos in 1792) was far too preoccupied with national and social problems to produce erotic verse. Antonios Matesis (1794–1875), a friend of Solomos, wrote a drama called *The Basil Plant* (1830) commenting on social contrasts at the beginning of the eighteenth century: a young man from the second-best families loves a girl from the best. Julius Typaldos in his *Divers Poems* (1856) also produced some erotic verses. Aristotelis Valaoritis from Leucas (1824–1879), a politician and poet, was inspired by the romanticism of Victor Hugo.

After the establishment of the Greek state, intense intellectual and literary activity was

developing side by side with political life. Romanticism dominated French and soon Greek literature around 1830–1840. Greek Romantic poets opted to compose in the Katharevousa. Their erotic visions like their language often seems restrained and lacks sincere passion and vivacity. Panagiotis Soutsos (1806–1868) wrote lyric, erotic poems in the manner of Christopoulos. In 1827, he wrote the *Traveller in Greece*, published in 1831. The two protagonists, the Traveller and Ralou, meet again, fail to recognize each other, faint, suffer delusion, commit suicide, exchanging with their last breath the most heart-rending words of love. In 1835, he published the poetic collection *Guitar* including love-poems. Alexandros Rizos Rangavis (1809–1892) was of a noble Phanariot and a cousin of Soutsos. Among his work that amount to 19 volumes, *Dimos and Eleni* (1831) combined Byron's Romantic structure with an overlay of Greek culture. George Zalokostas (1805–1858) from Epirus wrote some erotic poems. Demetrios Vernadakis (1834–1907) and Spyridon Vasiliadis (1845–1874) wrote romantic plays in classical speech forms. Achilles Paraschos (1838–1895) represents the end of Romanticism in Greece. In his love poems, the *Myrtles*, included in his Complete Works (1881) romanticism almost collapses into a parody of itself.

In the nineteenth century, important writers of fiction like Emmanuel Roidis (1836–1904) with his *Pope Joan* (1865), Alexandros Papadiamantis (1851–1911) with his *Fonissa* (1903), and Georgios Vizyinos (1849–1896) with *My Mother's Sin* touch upon issues of gender and social oppression. Here again sexuality and procreation are depicted as harshly imposed by social norms that the individuals never questioned; mute suffering and self-inflicted guilt do not allow for any romantic escape from a miserable, disorientated life. Only tragic highlights signify the rotten side of sexual occurrences. Other writers of the period include Ioannes Papadiamantopoulos, a symbolist writing under the name Jean Moréas. He influenced several writers such as Konstantinos Hadzopoulos (1868–1920) and the poet Miltiades Malakasses (1869–1943). The eroticism of their works is often reduced to an exploration of feelings, while sensual innuendos linger in the misty weather as painful memories. Georgios Souris (1853–1919) was a political satirist in the tradition of Aristophanes but also wrote humorous, obscene rhymes.

## The Twentieth Century

Until the middle of the twentieth century Greek literature was preoccupied with social issues; hence, Andreas Karkavitas (1866–1922), known for his sea tales, published only two erotic stories, the *Lygeri* (1890) and the *Old Loves* (1900). Argyris Eftaliotis (1849–1923), influenced by Shakespeare, wrote his *Words of Love*, a series of sonnets addressed to his wife. In his verses love and conjugal affection overcome sexual passion. The novelist Gr. Xenopoulos (1867–1951) recognized as his masters, realists Balzac and Zola, along naturalists Dickens and Daudet. Some of his novels were: *Margarita Stefa* (1893), *Laura* (1915), *Anadyomeni* (1923), and *Teresa Varma Dakosta* (1925). From all his works, *The Secrets of Countess Valeraina* (1904) and *Stella Violanti* (1909) were most influential. At the end of his life, using demotic for the first time, he wrote the lyrical novel *First Love* (1920) drawing on his early memories of Crete. Yiannis Vlachogiannis (1867–1945) wrote in demotic prose erotic stories such as *The Cock* (1914), distinguished for its psychological nuances. On stage, for about ten years from 1888 a new kind of play, the Comidyll, became a popular vehicle of eroticism; it was a kind of comedy with songs introduced, which hoped to escape Romanticism. The first real such musical is the very popular *Fortune of Maroula* by D. Koromilas (1850–1898). The erotic element functions almost complementarily in a play that evolves around a central erotic theme, indeed the paradox of most of Greek literature. On stage as in literature, love is chosen to exemplify and ridicule oppressive social norms. In 1891, Koromilas wrote a dramatic idyll, the *Lover of the Shepherdess*, in bombastic decapentasyllables, offering a beautified picture of pastoral life in the mountains.

Kostas Krystallis (1868–1894) published two collections, *Poems of the Fields* (1890) and the *Singer of the Village and the Pasture* (1892) attesting his strong influence from the demotic songs. After his death sonnets became particularly popular, under the sway of Parnassianism. Lorentzos Mavilis of Corfu (1860–1912) wrote his most successful sonnets around 1895–1900. Ioannis Gryparis (1870–1942) also made a triumphant appearance in Modern Greek poetry with a series of sonnets, under the title *Scarabs*. The influence of Heredia or Theophile Gautier

(they belong to Parnassianism) is evident both on his *Scarabs* and the *Terracottas*. But in *Inter-media* (1899–1901) he favored the technique of symbolism. One of the most popular lyric poets in the early part of the twentieth century was Georgios Drosines (1859–1951). His work includes the poetic volumes *Photera skotadia* (1903–1914) and *Klista Vlephara* (1914–1917). The poet Maria Polydouri (1902–1930) also gained renown for her intense, love lyrics. The eroticism of her verses is a fresh breath of uninhibited sexual gratification.

Palamas (1859–1943), born in Patras, is one of the best known Greek poets of the twentieth century. His death in 1943 during the German occupation was attended by thousands. He published *The Songs of My Fatherland* in 1886 and his *Lambs and Anapaests* in 1897. His best poetry is contained in *Asalephti Zoi* (1904). His long poem *Phloyera tou Vasilia* (1910) presents a pageant of Byzantine history; his epic masterpiece *The Twelve Words of the Gypsy* (1907) relates the aspirations of Modern Greeks. His poetry is full of subtle eroticism associated with a classical concept of beauty. While Palamas was at his zenith in Athens, Konstantinos Kavafis (Cafavy) (1863–1933), who succeeded him in importance, was working at Alexandria, an isolated area of Hellenism. His first publications in katharevousa begin in 1886; their romantic and pessimistic tone is close to the poetry of Dimitrios Paparrigopoulos (1843–1873), with clear influences by Hugo and Musset. In 1891, Kavafis published in a pamphlet the *Builders* and in 1896 he wrote the *Walls*, poems synonymous with his unique style. The corpus of his acknowledged poems amounts to 154 given that he disowned much of his work. His poems divided in philosophical, historical, and erotic, are short and were often circulated in small pamphlets. Much has been written about his homosexuality and the role it played in the composition of his poems, but later criticism drew attention on other elements of his work. His purely erotic poems are few, although the figure of a beautiful youth, or most typically his memory, is omnipresent in his poetry. Fundamentally Kavafis is preoccupied with transmuting his erotic sentiment into poetry. Dinos Christianopoulos (1931–) found in Cavafis a model of homosexual expression. Angelos Sikelianos from Leucas sprang from the tradition of the Heptanesian School. His early works, influenced

by late Parnassianism and Symbolism, were omitted from his Collected Works, the *Lyric Life* (1946). His first real poem, *The Light-Shadowed* of 1907, was published in 1909. Sikelianos' obsession evolved around the identification of the poet with nature, a theme anticipated in his early *Hymn of the Great Return* and his long composition, *Prologue to Life*. In 1915–1917 he published four parts, each entitled Consciousness —of the earth, of race, of woman, and of faith (the fifth, the consciousness of personal creativity, was published much later). Sikelianos conceived in his poetry a universal vision of a world evolving around love. He wished the erotic element to claim its place in the universe and allow for an 'erotic,' a cosmic union between the poet and divine creation. In his *Study of Death* (1936–1939) he appears as searching for the primal essence of the feminine and for an identification of body and soul, which could eventually conquer mortality. He also wrote a series of lyric poems called *Orphic* (1927–1942), the *Sacred Way* (1935) and the *Attic* (1942). Sikelianos' search for the primordial feminine element is a recurrent theme in Greek literature, typically associated with classical nuances of fertility and motherhood.

Nikos Kazantzakis (1883–1957), a contemporary of Sikelianos, reflected in his numerous works on social immorality and the hypocrisy of the clergy. Love and lust, described with vivid detail, are seen as covered with the guilt society attached to them. Kazantzakis always envisioned the liberation of man through his own humanity and sensual love is for him a most powerful expression of our mortal boundaries. Among his most popular novels, are *Zorba the Greek* (1943), *The Greek Passion* (1948), and *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1951). Other novelists that contributed to the literature of this period are: Elias Venezis (1904–1973) with his realistic descriptions in *Galene* (1939), *Aioliki Gi* (1943), *Number 31328* (1924), Dido Sotiriou (1909–2004) with *Matomena Chomata* among other works, Stratis Myrivilis with his romantic charm in *The Teacher with the Golden Eyes* (1932), *Vasilis Arvanitis* (1934–1943), *Small Flames* (1942), and *The Mermaid Madonna* (1955) are inspired by the Greek disaster of 1922 in Asia Minor. First loves are doomed to remain unfulfilled due to the Turkish massacre and ensuing mass migration or sadly coincide with the introduction to the German Resistance.



## GREEK: MODERN

Kosmas Politis with his insight into the character of women in his *Lemonodasos* (1928), *Hekate* (1933), and *Eroica* (1938); George Theotokas (1905–1968) with his *Demon* (1938) and *Leonis* (1940) also celebrates the first love which in classical mode afflicts the limbs as well as the mind of the enamoured. Kostas Varnalis (1884–1974) introduced in poetry a spirit of destruction that was to characterize poets of the First World War, like Romos Filyras (1889–1942), the pseudonym of J. Ikonopoulos, who published his first works in 1911. Despite his eroticism and idealism, his poetry is ruled by grief and a sense of loss. Nostalgia for lost prospects is also expressed in the poetry of neo-Romantic Kostas Ouranis (1890–1953) while melancholy and despair dominates the mature works of Napoleon Lapathiotis (1888–1943). The greatest representative of this movement is Kostas Karyotakis (1896–1928) with his *Pain of Man and Things* (1919), and *Nepenthe* (1921). Just before his suicide he published the *Elegies and Satires* (1928); his poetry expresses an overflowing desire for life in stark contradiction with a sense of vanity. Tellos Agras (the pseudonym of Evangelos Ioannou, 1899–1944) belonged to the same world.

At the same period, I. Dragoumis (1878–1920) produced samples of psychological writing in his *Booldof Heroes and Martyrs* (1907), *Samothrace* (1909), and *Those Living* (1911). Penelope Delta (1874–1941) wrote historical novels such as *The Time of the Bulgar-Slayer* (1911) and *In the Secret Places of the Lagoon* (1937). In these the erotic element is lurking powerfully in the background, but never finds clear expression or fulfilment. Desire and erotic promises keep the soldiers dedicated to the cause; sexual crimes excite their revenge instincts. Like most of the nineteenth-century Greek writings, in these novels the feminine embrace is the place where national heroes are born and raised; sexual memories only underline the yearning of soldiers, miles away from home, unable to materialize a simple life. Another major obstacle in the free expression of eroticism in Greek literature was the fact that authors often wrote under the spell of a European literary movement, which often meant that they were more preoccupied with ‘belonging’ to a specific school of writing rather than exploring love in an imaginative way. K. Christomanos (1867–1911) brought to Greece the climate of the European fin de siècle

and the aestheticism of Oscar Wilde with *The Wax Doll* (1911); here again sexual consummation is related with an ill-fated wedding and a sense of guilt in seeking a new erotic partner. Kostas Chadzopoulos (1870–1920) wrote the novels *The Tower of Akropotamos* (1909) and *Love in the Village* (1910) on social issues. In *Autumn* (1917), under the influence of Scandinavian literature, he describes the emotions of his characters by suggestion, thus introducing symbolism into prose. His work was very influential in the decade 1920–1930 on young writers like Constantinos Theotokis (1872–1923) who also had social interests (*The Convict* [1919], *Life and Death of Karavelas* [1920]).

Giorgos Seferis (real name Seferiadis) was born in 1900 in Smyrna and died in Athens in 1971. In 1931, he published the *Strophe* wishing to break free from the overshadowing figures of Palamas and Karyotakis. The collection, influenced by the style of Valéry and Mallarmé, is dominated by a long poem, *Erotikos Logos*, written in the tradition of the seventeenth-century *Erotokritos*. His second work, the lyrical *Cistern* (1932) is influenced by T.S. Eliot. His *Muthistorema* (1935) with its fusion of Modern Greek history and classical mythology is considered the most representative text of Greek Modernism. Seferis, who had a recognized diplomatic career, expressed in his poems many of his political experiences such as the Metaxas dictatorship (1936), the German occupation, his flight, along with the Greek government to South Africa and Egypt, the civil war that followed (*Book of Exercises* and *Logbook I* [1940], *Manuscript 41*, *Logbook II* [1944]). In 1947, he published his most mature work, *The Thrush*, a three-part ‘musical’ composition, where personal and erotic memories are freely interwoven with the traumatic memories of WWII and the tragedy of the Civil War. In 1953, Seferis discovered Cyprus and published his *Logbook III* (1955) inspired by the long history of the island. In 1963, he became the first Greek author to be awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature. His funeral, during the military junta, turned into one of the largest mass demonstrations against the regime.

Odysseus Elytis (real name Alepoudelis, 1911–1996), who won the Nobel Prize in 1979, was one of the few Greek surrealists along with Andreas Embeiricos (1901–1975) and Nikos Engonopoulos (1910–1985). His major works include *The Sovereign Sun* (1943) and *Axion Esti*

(1959). Although his war experiences dominate his work in many poems he captures young love in collections such as *Ta Ro tou Eroti* (1972) and *Eros, Eros, Eros* (1998). His erotic verse is characterized by the youthful and carefree energy that Love inspires to his victims; his poetry oozes a bursting joy in which nature participates. Again the eternal theme of beauty acquires a central role in Elytis' celebration of love. From this tradition sprang Nanos Valaoritis (1921–) who composed under Andre Breton.

Numerous novels were written about the Greek Resistance movement and the ensuing civil war while Thanasis Valtinos (1932–) in his *Deep Blue Almost Black* (1992) and the poet Manolis Anagnostatis (1925–) relate the Greek experiences from the dictatorship of 1967–1974. Yiannis Ritsos (1909–1990) was mainly inspired by communistic thought, but his 1982 *Erotica* celebrate love and life in lyric tones. Erotic longing as well as loss, which often intermingle in Greek poetry, are described with great warmth, almost as if the poet whispered the words to his beloved. Novelists such as Stratis Tsirkas (1911–1980), Costas Taktis (1927–1988), and Vassilis Vassilikos (1934–) focused on post-war Greek society. With regards to theatrical production, from the 1950s onwards plays of younger writers dealt with contemporary problems. In the late twentieth century, Modern Greek prose diversified to incorporate new perspectives. More women writers appeared, more writers challenged tradition in their works, and more authors focused on the present rather than the past. Margarita Karapanou's *O ipnovatis* (1986) challenged the status quo of the upper middle class in contemporary Greek society. Fiction writer and poet Rhea Galanaki wrote the historical novel *Life of Ismail Ferik Pasha* (1996), based on a nineteenth-century Cretan revolutionary. Meanwhile, a group of women lyric poets have gained distinction, including Victoria Theodorou (1928–), Angeliki Paulopoulou (1930–), Eleni Fourtouni (1933–), and Katerina Anghelaki-Rooke (1934–). These poets rendered erotic desire from a feminine point of view, touching upon sensitive issues of unfulfilled expectations, sexual and more. Several novelists began, in the 1950s, to turn away from fiction specifically about the war and its aftermath to novels dealing with other aspects of existence. Antonis Samarakis (1919–2003) wrote of individuals caught in the pressures of

modern society, as in *The Flaw* (1965); Galatia Sarandi dealt with the contemporary psychological stress of women and her 1982 collection *Elene*, emphasized family and love relationships. Nikos Gatsos (1911–1992) and Nikos Kavadias (1910–1975) provided the lyrics for several popular songs in which erotic experiences shape people's lives and characters, haunting our memories and hopes for ever. Our deepest needs come to the front of our consciousness like sea waves that never cease coming in visions that often mingle sexual desires with the sailor's undying love for the sea, yet another common pattern of Greek poetry and thought, here rendered with novel freshness. Man is powerless in front of the sea, like he is in front of love; the ancient admiration for the power of love on men's minds and bodies is attributed here to a cosmopolitan overlay due to the foreign travels of the two poets. Nikos-Alexis Aslanoglou (1931–1996) wrote erotic poetry in melancholic tones while Andreas Anghelakis is distinguished for his prosaic and erotic style. Nikiforos Vrettakos (1912–1991) composes on love and peace while Olga Broumas (1949–) writes homoerotic poetry in the Sapphic tradition. Miltos Sahtouris (1919–) with his dark poetry, and Kiki Dimoula (1931–) are considered two of the greatest living poets of Greece.

EVANGELIA ANAGNOSTOU-LAOUTIDES

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## GREEK, ANCIENT: PROSE

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### Elephantis, Heracleides of Pontus, Longus, Lucian, Plutarch, Milesian Tales, Philaenis

The Greek-speaking authors of antiquity wrote a wide variety of literary prose that might be categorized as erotic. Forms ranged from full-length romance narratives with love as their central theme to bawdy novellas, from dramatic dialogues satirizing sexual mores to technical but still literary writing such as sexological works or astrology manuals. The earliest erotic prose works date to the Hellenistic period in the third century BCE, but their production peaked during a revival of Greek literary culture in the second and third centuries CE, the so-called 'Second Sophistic.' With their emphasis on romance, seduction, sexuality, and the erotic development of individuals, the writers of the Second Sophistic are among the first to make the sexual self a field of enquiry, and so their works now tend to be characterized *prima facie* as erotic literature. However, the extent to which all the types of writing outlined above would have been called erotic by their original authors and readers is debatable. Greek literary conventions allowed erotic and sexually explicit material to be present in many different kinds of writing, so a work's erotic content did not automatically assign it to a genre called 'erotica.' For example, a quasi-literary work like Artemidorus of Daldis' *Oneirocritica* (second century CE, *On Dream Interpretation*) refers constantly to every kind of sexual activity while not being a piece of erotic prose any more than its most famous derivative, Sigmund Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900).

In fact, modern critics have had difficulty trying to define what ancient Greek readers regarded as erotic literature, becoming entangled in speculation about what kind of works might have aroused them sexually. It may be more helpful to think about Greek erotic writing in terms of *ta erotika*, the Greek root of the word 'erotic,' meaning all things related to love, desire, and the emotions in general. Accordingly,

literary works such as Plutarch's *Dialogue on Love* (second century CE, *Moralia*), which sets out a romantic conception of male–female relationships, could be defined as erotic literature, even though it was written as a rhetorical tour-de-force rather than to titillate. Also in this category could come the treatises on women's virtue attributed to Pythagoras' female followers, such as Perictione's *On the Balance which is Becoming in Women* (third century BCE?). This discusses how women may attain sexual and emotional harmony through controlled personal behavior. It is also worth including Greek pseudo-scientific writing, such as physiognomic manuals and the astrological or magical texts. The last could certainly be seen as pieces of erotic literary prose in their own right. Some types of spells intersperse ritual instructions with literary passages, especially the so-called 'leading spells for attraction' (*agogai*) and 'genital unlocking spells' (*physikleidia*).

This capacious notion of erotic literature had another aspect: the ancient Greeks seem to have had little sense that reading it or listening to it might have bad moral or psychological effects. On the contrary, some erotic prose works were praised for their medical benefits, because they could stimulate impotent men and enable them to have sex normally. The idea of erotic prose as medicine is a reminder of how differently the ancient Greeks conceived literature. It is true that in ancient times certain books were censured for being excessively licentious, among them the short stories by Aristeides of Miletus known as the *Milesiaka* (second century BCE, *The Milesian Tales*), and the sexological work attributed to the mythical prostitute Philaenis. However, criticisms of these books are usually embedded in broader critiques of excessive or unbalanced behavior, and an interest in *erotika* is not singled out as being especially bad *per se*.

Such criticisms probably did not represent ancient opinion on a wider scale. Indeed, the numerous papyrus texts containing fragments of previously unknown Greek erotic works

show just how many of them must have circulated at one time. Knowledge of erotic prose in Greek, especially romantic fiction, has been greatly augmented by these papyrus books, preserved in the dry climate of Egypt. Fragments of at least 24 prose romances or ‘novels’ are now known from papyrus, and almost certainly others wait to be identified. One of the most tantalizing narratives revealed in this way is Lollianus’ *Phoinikika* (second century CE, *The Phoenician Story*), which seems to be a picaresque tale with an ego-narrator. Among the surviving parts of the story are scenes of a woman sexually initiating the hero, a riotous festival, and a human sacrifice followed by a communal sex orgy. Another interesting papyrus contains scraps of the so-called *Iolaos* (author unknown). Here a young man tries to get access to the secluded women’s quarters by masquerading as a eunuch priest who poses no sexual threat, but is caught up in awkward situations of mistaken identity. Both of these works are too fragmentary to yield much more than vignettes of their plot and action. None the less, more is known of *The Phoenician Story* and *Iolaos* than of many once-famous Greek erotic works that are now lost entirely, such as Aristides of Miletus’ *Milesian Tales*. Others survive only when quoted or referred to by other ancient writers who still had access to the texts. At all events, knowledge of ancient Greek prose erotica is still extremely patchy, despite the papyrus finds.

One of the erotic prose works most frequently mentioned by ancient authors was attributed to Philaenis, a legendary courtesan from the island of Samos who is supposed to have lived in the third century BCE. Early Christian bishops singled out Philaenis’ book as an illustration of the worst extremes of pagan sexual folly, and it was thought to have been destroyed, but research into the papyrus finds has yielded its scrappy remains. These provide a glimpse into an almost vanished sub-genre of ancient Greek prose: *pornographoi*, literally ‘writings about prostitutes.’ Again these works elude any single modern literary category. They incorporate at once pseudo-scientific, biographical, antiquarian, and even quasi-medical elements, because prostitutes were thought to know as much as doctors about the inner workings of the female body. Various quasi-legendary women were supposed to have authored other such books, from famous

prostitutes like Cyrene, Lais, and Elephantis to Astyanassa, Helen of Troy’s maid. Although supposed to be the last word in erotic sophistication, Philaenis’ book seems as matter-of-fact as an information manual. Philaenis outlines her intent in a brief introduction. She will give advice to men in need of instruction so that they will not have to waste time in sexual trial and error. She proceeds immediately to giving tips on how to make successful advances, one of which is that men hoping to seduce women should look untidy so that they will not be thought unduly keen. Philaenis also supplies examples of chat-up lines appropriate for various types of women: plain women should be flattered as the equal of the goddesses, old women as young girls, and ugly women as fascinating. The surviving text breaks off just after a section entitled ‘How To Kiss.’ From what the ancient sources tell of the rest of the book, it continued systematically with lists of different positions for heterosexual lovemaking, also arranged according to different female types. Some copies of these erotic manuals may have had illustrations. The Roman Emperor Tiberius (reigned 14–37 CE), a notorious erotomaniac, is supposed to have displayed a *de luxe* copy of Elephantis’ manual which could be referred to when some sexual inspiration was required.

Prostitutes like Philaenis and Elephantis, writing from the viewpoint of their own extensive sexual experience, were obvious figures to instruct inexperienced Greek men about making love. Sexual initiation of both women and men was clearly of great interest to Greek prose writers, to judge from the frequency with which it appears in the full-length prose romances where Greek erotic fiction found its most elaborate and sophisticated form. The romances developed from diverse branches of Greek literature, not only comic poetry and love lyrics, but also prose forms such as rhetorical composition, which was an important part of elite male education in Greek. Rhetoric suffuses the five prose romances that have survived more or less intact: those of Chariton (mid-first century CE, *Chaereas and Callirhoe*), Xenophon of Ephesus (mid-second century CE, *A Tale of Ephesus*), Achilles Tatius (late second century CE, *Leucippe and Cleitophon*), Longus (c. 200 CE, *Daphnis and Chloe*) and Heliodorus (third or fourth century CE, *An Ethiopian Tale*). Not much is known

about any of these authors, and even the dates when they wrote are quite uncertain. Artful, rhetorical, and full of literary allusions, the romances were perhaps intended as lighter reading for the educated. Since reading in antiquity was usually done aloud, however, they must have reached a wider audience than the literate who could read them for themselves. Although these five romances have very different situations, characters and plots, they share a certain number of common elements that also appear in the fragmentary ‘novel’ texts. These common elements are integral to developing the narratives’ erotic component and to making love and sex their motivating themes. The centrality of love, desire, sex and, emotions to these romances is reflected in the ancient Greek term for them as a genre. They were apparently known as *erotikas hypotheseis*, perhaps translatable as ‘romantic stories’ or ‘narratives of love.’

While not in any sense formulaic, the prose romances observe certain conventions of plot and characterization. Their heroes and heroines are young, virginal, and aristocratic. They fall in love and prepare to marry, but are parted in some melodramatic way just before they can do so. The adventures that follow put their mutual sexual devotion to extreme tests. In Xenophon’s *A Tale of Ephesus*, for instance, the protagonists Anthia and Habrocomes take vows of chastity and fidelity when they are about to be separated. Anthia is eventually sold into slavery abroad. She is bought by a brothel keeper and forced into prostitution, but avoids sex with the clients by pretending to have epilepsy. This is not the first time that Anthia had struggled to save herself for Habrocomes. Earlier in the story, she drank poison rather than marry another man, but the poison only put her into a coma and she recovered - to have her virtue tested again. The apparent murder or suicide of the heroine, later revealed as a subterfuge, is another trope of the prose romances. It enables the writers to explore the poignancy and eroticism that Greek culture attached to the deaths of young women who die virgins. Instead of a living bridegroom, the only lover they will know is death. Alternatively, the heroine’s false death may be accompanied by ritualized sexual violence that now seems disturbingly misogynistic, and is perhaps still concerned with the young heroine’s defloration. For example, Achilles Tatius describes how his heroine Leucippe is kidnapped and bound to

posts before being disembowelled and having her heart ripped out. The killers then eat her entrails in an orgiastic communion.

The hazardous separation of the hero and heroine also involves them traveling to one or more of the eroticized spaces of antiquity, especially Egypt, the ancient world’s site of sensual visioning *par excellence*. This journey is a suitable backdrop for meetings with various characters who discourse on sexual conduct and erotic life in general. Sometimes the relative merits of heterosexual versus male–male relationships are discussed, such as the set-piece debate Achilles Tatius puts into the mouths of his hero Cleitophon and the traveler Menelaus. Cleitophon says that women’s bodies are more appealing and that their beauty lasts longer than that of boys. Also, women can be used sexually like boys, allowing men two possible avenues for pleasure. Menelaus counters with the argument that women are sexually false and their beauty is all artifice: only boys are honest, both physically and emotionally. Love of boys therefore belongs to a higher emotional order. This comparison of sex with women and boys is a rhetorical trope that occurs in quite a number of ancient Greek works, and indicates how far the romance authors were influenced by training in the rhetorical schools. This form of Greek erotica, then, may be regarded as a kind of rhetoric. Despite Menelaus’ defence of male–male homosexuality, erotic relationships between men and women are the central focus in the prose romances. That of the hero and heroine is paradigmatically perfect, but there are also relationships with sexually experienced women who teach a male character about love. The romance authors are much more ambivalent about the quality of these relationships. In Longus’ *Daphnis and Chloe*, the eponymous hero is seduced by an older woman, Lycaenion. Daphnis’ encounter with her is good in that it gives him the sexual expertise to optimize the sexual relationship he and Chloe will eventually enjoy. Achilles Tatius suggests the same thing in an episode when Cleitophon has sex —one time only— with the rich widow Melite. However, the romances imply that too much sexual involvement with experienced women is dangerous because they are likely to turn out to be predators who consume men. Lycaenion, the name of Daphnis’ seducer, hints at this: it means ‘she-wolf.’ And in Heliodorus’ *An Ethiopian Tale*, the traveler Kalasiris

describes how he became infatuated with the vampish courtesan Rhodopis and was subsequently ruined.

After all these sexual trials and discussions of erotic behavior, the hero and heroine will eventually be reunited. The novelists make it clear that their devotion to each other will be rewarded by the promise of a mutually affective and satisfying sexual relationship. The emphasis on romance and mutually enjoyable erotic relationships between men and women seems new to Greek prose writing and may reflect the changing sexual ideology of the time. How this ideology was different becomes clearer if Philaenis' assumptions about sex are compared with those of the novelists writing several centuries after her. Philaenis assumes that men only need to know about sex in order to please themselves; the novelists assume that men need to know in order to please both themselves and their wives.

An alternative view of sex and relationships from the refined and cultured discourse of the prose romances comes in the anonymous Greek novella known as *Lucius or the Ass*. This is sometimes attributed to the prolific writer and satirist Lucian of Samosata (c. 115–180 CE), but its authorship is uncertain. Much shorter than the romances, its tone, vocabulary, and content is more frankly sexual and its picaresque plot totally different. Generically, *Lucius or the Ass* probably has more in common with Aristeides of Miletus' lost *Milesian Tales*, and may even have been intended as a parody of the *erotikas hypotheseis*. Certainly it contains some of their conventions, such as the hero's journey into an eroticized foreign space. *Lucius or the Ass* takes place in Thessaly, a wild border area of Greece famed for the skill of its witches. The hero, Lucius, travels there on business, but is more interested in the region's magical and supernatural associations than work. In Thessaly he stays with Hipparchus, whose wife is an expert witch. In order to find out more about her magical powers, Lucius seduces her maid Palaestra ('gymnasium'), and their intercourse is described at length in a parody of technical terms from athletics. With Palaestra's help, Lucius watches Hipparchus' wife change into an owl after stripping and rubbing herself with magic ointment. Fascinated, he tries the same experiment on himself, but the wrong ointment is used and he changes into an ass. That same night, robbers

steal him and a series of degrading adventures begins when various cruel and degenerate people purchase him. His owners include eunuch priests of the Syrian goddess Cybele, who prey on young village boys. Lucius' adventures culminate in a beautiful woman paying to have sex with him while he is still in his animal shape. She is compared to Pasiphae, the mythical Queen of Crete who gave birth to the Minotaur after having sex with a bull—an illustration of how myth was part of the cultural currency of sexual relationships in antiquity. The long description of Lucius' animal-human sexual encounter is uncomfortable for modern readers but may not have been so in ancient times, when the human and animal worlds were less demarcated than they are now, and animals were sometimes worshipped as the incarnations of gods. This scene may also be part of the satire on prose romances. Generally, *Lucius or the Ass* pokes fun at their polite sensibility and emphasis on sexual restraint by describing the excesses of human sexuality, which here exceed the boundaries of humanity. After this episode, Lucius regains human shape by magical means. The satirical point about sexual extremes is forced home when the woman who enjoyed sex with Lucius as an ass rejects him when she sees him in his human form.

Whether or not Lucian of Samosata was the author of *Lucius or the Ass*, his satirical dialogues give a similar worm's eye perspective on sexual relationships. Lucian was a great stylist who prided himself on writing correct and elegant Greek, but the satiric form enabled him to present sexual life in a way that is impossible in more self-consciously high-art genres like the prose romance. Both humans and the gods were Lucian's targets. In *Dialogues of the Gods*, Lucian satirizes the myth of Zeus' abduction of the boy Ganymede, who cannot understand why Zeus should want to have him as a bedfellow because he wriggles. In *Dialogues of the Prostitutes*, Lucian's lively satirical treatment of low-life female stereotypes like old madams, mannish lesbians, and naïve call-girls gives an insight into male fantasies about the sexual world of women. His presentation of women as sexually insatiable and deceitful is the conventional Greek literary one, but *Dialogues of the Prostitutes* still contains all sorts of interesting details not found elsewhere, such as the use of sex toys like leather dildos. Lucian's satires, along with the romances

## GREEK, ANCIENT: VERSE

of Heliodorus, Longus, and Achilles Tatius, were much read and translated during the European Renaissance and early modern period, with a consequent influence on western authors.

DOMINIC MONTSERRAT

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## GREEK, ANCIENT: VERSE

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### **Aristophanes, Agathias, Alcman, Anacreon, Archilochus, Asclepiades, Meleager, Paul the Silentiaru, Philodemus, Sappho, Sophocles, Sotades, Strato**

For the poets of ancient Greece, the erotic experience was thought to have two very distinct configurations. In one incarnation of *eros*, or erotic desire, two lovers share a reciprocal feeling of harmonious love. This type of love, with its mutual consummation of erotic longing, is described by the Greek poets as a singularly pleasurable experience and celebrated in lines of joyous verse. But it is the second type of *eros* that is much more frequently represented in the verses of the ancient Greeks, that is, the

unrequited desire a lover feels for an absent or unresponsive beloved. This *eros* suggests an unfulfilled and perhaps even unfulfillable feeling of erotic desire, and is denoted by the absence of the beloved, the lack of satisfaction, and the impossibility of erotic realization. In this kind of *eros*, ubiquitous in the erotic verse of the ancient Greeks, the lover's desire is difficult, painful, and ultimately devastating.

Implied in the Greek poets' literary representations of love is the concept of absence, insufficiency, and deficit. The Greek terms *eros* "desire," *himeros* "longing," and *pathos* "yearning," all indicate this notion of want for something missing. The poets of ancient Greece characterize this feeling of lack attacking both

gods and mortals equally, as no one is invulnerable to the troublesome and agonizing pangs of love. *Eros* is a dangerously compelling force that imposes itself on the lover from an external position of power, and from there controls the lover's miserable fate. The images the Greek poets employ in their verses to portray the disturbing and eventually overwhelming experience of erotic desire all emphasize these detrimental effects: love is like war, disease, madness, and even death.

The Greek poets figure the torment of unsatisfied erotic desire as a uniquely corporeal suffering, and they often depict *eros* assaulting the lover's body, inflicting severe physical pain and robbing the limbs of health and substance. With the body so weakened under the onslaught of erotic desire, the mind of the lover is also exposed to attack: the poets delineate in almost clinical detail the loss of normal mental capabilities as *eros* assails the lover's organs of thought and reason. Thus a metaphorical language emerges from this idea of destructive love: *eros* is a *nosos* ("sickness") and a *mania* ("madness") afflicting the unsuspecting lover. The ancient Greek poets tend to focus on the harmful qualities of erotic desire, and it is this negative experience that they most often illustrate in their verses with images of physical trauma, wounding, bodily dissolution, and mental incapacitation.

Greek poetic conceptions about *eros* began to take shape in the earliest literary documents that survive from their civilization. The idea that erotic desire is a kind of physical attack is first articulated in the Homeric epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, orally composed epic poems attributed by tradition to Homer and probably written down sometime in the eighth century B.C. Although the Homeric poems do not focus on love in the explicit way that some later Greek poetry does, they offer several early accounts of how *eros* can have an effect on the bodies and minds of lovers, and how the feeling of erotic desire can influence the lover's course of action. In this respect, certain important erotic episodes deserve particular attention. Homer's *Iliad* narrates the events in the tenth and final year of the Trojan War, a conflict initiated by one of the most powerful erotic incidents of Greek legend, the seduction of the beautiful Helen of Sparta by the Trojan prince, Paris, with the help and persuasion of the Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite.

In Book 3 of the *Iliad*, Aphrodite recreates their initial love affair, as she coerces Helen and Paris to come together in their bedroom at Troy for an afternoon of passionate lovemaking. Paris graphically describes how he is "seized" by sexual longing for Helen, and how his senses are "completely veiled" by the sensation of *eros* (*Iliad* 3.441–446). The gods themselves are not immune to the uncontrollable feeling of erotic desire, as evinced by the episode in Book 14 of the *Iliad*, the *Dios Apate*, or "Seduction of Zeus," arguably the most erotic passage in the entire poem. When the goddess Hera decides to lure her husband Zeus away from the Trojan battlefield, she does so by planning and accomplishing a sexual conquest of the great god: she adorns herself in beautiful clothes and jewelry, and borrows a love-charm from Aphrodite (*Iliad* 14.160–223). Upon seeing her, Zeus is overwhelmed by *eros*: his wits are "veiled," his heart is "melted all around," and he is "seized" by sexual desire for his wife (*Iliad* 14.294–328). Both of these erotic scenes describe the effects of a forceful *eros* that is about to be satisfied and comprise interludes in the continual warfare that is the primary theme of the *Iliad*. The *Odyssey* also presents the theme of *eros* waiting to be fulfilled, in the depiction of the intense longing of Odysseus and Penelope for each other over a twenty-year separation. Odysseus is described as "wasting away" as he yearns for his wife (*Odyssey* 5.151–158), and Penelope is constantly portrayed as weeping and longing for her missing husband (e.g., *Odyssey* 11.181–183, 16.37–39, 19.204–209). Finally, the epic allows for the satisfaction of their deep erotic desire when the couple is blissfully reunited at the end of the poem (*Odyssey* 23.205–343). The way these episodes in the Homeric poems portray the feeling of *eros* in both language and imagery had a significant influence on later Greek poets' depiction of the erotic experience as a strong physical force that attacks, occupies, and overcomes the body and mind of the lover.

The two narrative poems of the archaic Greek poet Hesiod, the *Theogony* and the *Works and Days*, belong to the same Ionian tradition as the Homeric poems, and were probably composed late in the eighth century B.C. Like the Homeric epics, Hesiod's poems also describe the erotic experiences of both gods and mortals, illustrating human as well as divine reactions to the feelings of love and longing. While the poems



of Hesiod embrace the Homeric conception of a violent and powerful *eros* that can conquer the lover, his verse offers a further exploration of how erotic desire can be experienced as it invades the lover's body. In the genealogical lists of the *Theogony*, a poem that explains the genesis of all the Greek gods, Hesiod depicts the heavenly couplings of various immortals with language reminiscent of the Homeric images for the might of *eros*, but with a bold and personal characterization of the forces at work in the feeling of erotic desire. The god Eros is one of the four original deities in Hesiod's account (*Theogony*, 116–122). As a primordial entity, Eros is introduced at an early point in the poem in order to unite the many generative pairs essential to Hesiod's genealogical model: without erotic desire, Hesiod says, the cosmogonic structure cannot emerge and take its divine shape. Eros is described as “the most beautiful among the deathless gods” (*Theogony*, 120), but he is also dangerous to the physical and mental well-being of lovers: “he loosens the limbs, and subdues the mind and sensible thought in the breasts of all gods and all humans” (*Theogony*, 121–122). This vigorous and masterful Eros, together with the personified Himeros, or ‘Longing,’ are later depicted as the companions of Aphrodite, as the goddess of erotic desire is born from the seafoam awash around the severed genitals of the Sky god, Ouranos (*Theogony*, 201–202). Aphrodite is also accompanied by the Charites, or Graces, daughters of Eurynome, whose erotic beauty is portrayed by Hesiod in a striking description: “From their glancing eyes dripped *eros* the limb-loosener, and beautiful was their glance from beneath their brows” (*Theogony*, 910–911). In this passage, erotic desire emanates in a liquid manifestation from the eyes, a place where the power of love in Greek poetry is traditionally thought to reside. Here the images of desire and desirability are confounded, as the alluring look of the Graces' eyes, melting with *eros*, arouses longing in the limbs, dissolving and destabilizing those who meet their gaze. The appearance of the first female, Pandora, narrated by Hesiod at length in his other poem, the *Works and Days* (42–105), also offers an erotic crisis of interpretation: she is “an evil men will enjoy embracing” (*Works and Days*, 57–58). Pandora is endowed with exquisite grace and beauty by the goddess Aphrodite, as well as “painful yearning (*pothos*) and cares that devour

the limbs” (*Works and Days*, 65–66). As in the figure of the beautiful god Eros, Hesiod contrasts the outward loveliness of the woman Pandora with the underlying erotic perils that her beauty masks, an alluring exterior that arouses strong physical desire, both painful and pleasurable. Through the story of Pandora and the deadly dowry of evils stored in her jar (*pithos*), Hesiod proposes an erotic mythological explanation for the existence of suffering among humankind, where the woman herself is the embodiment of the experience of intense sexual longing.

The *Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite* was composed probably in the eight or seventh century CE by a poet using a poetic language similar to Homer's; and like the Hesiodic poems, the *Hymn* represents a shift towards verse about mythological subject matter. As a story of seduction, the *Hymn to Aphrodite* contains many elements of structure and language that are parallel to those shaping epic scenes of sexual encounters, yet the primary theme of the *Hymn* is specifically and explicitly erotic. The *Hymn* narrates the sensual love between the goddess and her mortal lover, the Trojan prince Anchises, using images of *eros* as a violent force that subdues almost all who experience its power. Aphrodite is described as the instigator of erotic desire in the world: she “stirs sweet longing (*himeros*) in the gods and subdues the races of mortal men” (*Hymn* 2–3). But her ability to cause *eros* does not protect her against its effects: when the goddess sees Anchises in the midday sunshine, “strikingly longing (*himeros*) seized her heart” (56–57). The Trojan youth experiences a similar violent onset of love upon seeing her, cleverly disguised as a young virgin, as the poet says “*eros* seized Anchises” (91), but Aphrodite feels compelled to make certain the job is done right: “the goddess hurled sweet longing (*himeros*) in his heart, and *eros* seized Anchises” (143–144). This erotic trajectory, with its emphatic repetition of phrases, culminates in their lovemaking, followed by an exhausted post-coital nap (153–170). When they awaken, Anchises is astonished to find he has just had sex with the divine Aphrodite (181–190), but she assures him he is in no danger, and in fact promises him a glorious line of descendants through their son, the brilliant hero, Aeneas (196–197). The *Hymn to Aphrodite* portrays the elemental essence of an erotic desire that leads ultimately to a particular kind of immortality for the lovers, human and goddess.

The lyric poets of the Greek archaic period (c. 700–500 BCE.) described the pangs and passions of erotic love using imagery familiar from earlier epic and mythological narrative poetry: love is depicted as a powerful force that seizes and possesses the lover, leaving him wounded, weakened, and gasping for breath. But in the genre of personal lyric poetry, where the main purpose is to grasp and articulate succinctly the immediacy of individual experiences and emotions, the nature of this violent and compelling *eros* enjoys a conspicuous position and figures prominently as the explicit focus in much of these poets' verses. The tendency of the lyric mode towards the expression of the lover's direct confrontation with erotic desire is exemplified in the poetry of Archilochus of the island of Paros (c. 680–640 BCE.). The extant fragments of his verses occupy a unique status in the Greek poetic tradition, as they represent the earliest surviving examples of the work of a monodic lyric poet. Although Archilochus was most famous in classical antiquity for his poems of invective, the target of which was apparently the family of a certain Neoboule, the woman who was said to have jilted him, a few fragments of his poetry reveal his deliberate interest in describing the effects of sexual longing. The poetry of Archilochus gives first-person voice to stricken lovers, who delineate the languid yet overwhelming physical control they experience under the onslaught of erotic love. In one fragment, Archilochus describes how "limb-loosening" desire (*pothos*) "conquers" the speaker (Fragment 196); in another fragment, again *pothos* attacks a paralyzed lover, who says he is "wretched, breathless" and "pierced right through the bones" because of longing (Fragment 193). The invasion of the lover's body is dramatically represented in another verse, where *eros* is "coiled up beneath the heart" of the lover, and steals out of his breast "the soft wits" (Fragment 191). The innovation of Archilochus in the language of erotic poetry is to concentrate and enumerate in his verse such vivid images of the destructive power of unsatisfied sexual desire.

Like Archilochus, the Spartan poet Alcman was active during the seventh century BCE. While Alcman was primarily a composer of choral lyric poetry, including hymns to gods and heroes as well as ritual songs designed for choirs of voices, a few fragments of his verses remain that belong to the category of personal love

lyric. These fragments suggest Alcman's intention to explore the debilitating effects of erotic longing upon the mind and body of the lover. In one fragment, Alcman personifies the god Eros as a playful but "insane" child, trampling down the delicate meadow grass, where an anxious speaker seems to be fearful of the mad god's boisterous and potentially harmful arrival (Fragment 58). The physical damage done by *eros* is represented as being more subtle in another fragment of Alcman's love poetry: here the poem's speaker depicts erotic desire as being "sweet," while it "drips down" and heats his heart (Fragment 59a), in a complex synthesis of images for warmth and liquidity. In a choral fragment, the young female singers describe the beautiful gaze of one of their group: "with limb-loosening desire (*pothos*), she glances more meltingly than sleep or death" (Fragment 3.61–62). Alcman suggests that the contiguous ideas of sleep and death simultaneously express both the dangerous and enticing qualities of the erotic experience.

The Greek archaic poets of the sixth century BCE continued the portrayal of *eros* as an aggressive, unpredictable, and ultimately inescapable force. The representation of erotic desire in these poets' fragments assumes the character of an elemental power: love has the power of a storm, wind, or fire, first assaulting its victims with unexpected violence, and then proceeding to drown, parch, melt, or bum them in their vulnerable condition. Bruised and battered by contact with this extrinsic outburst of natural energy, the lover's weakened body is then effortlessly possessed by the irresistible feeling of erotic desire. The poet Alcaeus (c. 620–550 BCE) lived in the city of Mytilene on the island of Lesbos, near the coast of Asia Minor, an area famous for its poetic tradition as well as its luxurious Eastern lifestyle. Although the outstanding feature of Alcaeus' poetry is its political character, in verses intended for performance during the communal experience of the *symposium*, a few passages of his poetry also indicate a concern for the capricious and threatening nature of *eros*. In a fragment of a drinking song, Alcaeus describes the sizzling heat of the Dog Days of summer as the time when "women are most lustful, while men are fragile" (Fragment 347), and recommends the refreshment of wine as a cure for the harmful effects of parching sexual fever. Elsewhere, in a few lines on a scrap of papyrus, Alcaeus retells the erotic

causation of the Trojan War, and depicts the mental state of a love-struck Helen as she sailed off from Sparta with her lover, Paris: “in her breast her heart was shaken, and she was driven mad by the Trojan man” (Fragment 283.3–6). While the references to erotic experience in extant Alcaean fragments are few, they are consonant with other early Greek literary and lyric descriptions of the damaging effects of the onset of *eros*.

Contemporary with Alcaeus was the poet Sappho (c. 620–550 BCE), whose poetry is unmistakably and graphically erotic. Sappho was also born on the island of Lesbos, although unlike Alcaeus, she shows scant interest in recording the tumultuous political events of the period in her verses. According to tradition, Sappho lived most of her life in relative peace and urbane comfort in the city of Mytilene, surrounded by an intimate circle of female mends for whom she composed her lyric poetry and with whom she celebrated its performance. Although she also wrote wedding songs, hymns, and other mythological verses, Sappho’s poetic specialty appears to have been the short monodiclyric poem, in which the first-person expression of intense personal emotions is most prominent: it is in these lyrics that the destructive passion of love finds an exalted and profound articulation. Throughout her poetry, with its explicit focus on the erotic experience, Sappho uses traditional poetic elements to describe the dangerous power of *eros*, yet she boldly applies original images and metaphors in her verse that reveal her brilliant conception of love’s immediacy and potentially toxic effect. Sappho was famous in antiquity as a prolific lyric innovator, and an analysis of her sharp poetic language and lucid imagery reveals a complex melodic design and an intricate rhetorical structure that tends to contradict any romantic idea of her work’s simplicity or naiveté. As a poet, Sappho controls every aspect of her art: it is only her poetic persona that exhibits itself as mad, unrestrained, and abandoned to the ravages of erotic desire. For Sappho, the fulfillment of love is blissfully sweet, while the longing of an unsatisfied desire or the pain of separation from an absent beloved destroys the mind and body of the lover. In one fragment, she describes desire (*pothos*) as having the power to subdue (Fragment 102); in another, *eros* “pours over” the face of a beautiful bride (Fragment 112.4);

still another fragment depicts *eros* as the “limb-loosener,” and vividly, “a sweet-bitter irresistible creature” (Fragment 130). A number of Sapphic fragments portray the urgent assault of erotic desire upon the individual lover: a speaker complains that *eros* “shakes my wits like a wind” (Fragment 47), while another speaker describes the arrival of her beloved fanning the flames in her yearning heart “on fire with longing (*pothos*)” (Fragment 48). In a hymn to Aphrodite, almost certainly a complete poem, Sappho herself summons the goddess to be her ally in the warfare of love, and to protect her from the deleterious and overpowering effects of erotic desire (Fragment 1). But nowhere in Greek poetry is there a more striking and detailed description of the devastation of *eros* than in Sappho’s fragment 31: in this poem, all the possible physical disorders induced by sexual desire are exhaustively indexed in what has been called the definitive catalogue of the symptoms of lovesickness. One by one a distressed first-person speaker lists her reactions to the sight of her beloved in close conversation with someone else: her heart pounds, she can’t speak, her skin feels feverish, her vision blurs, her ears buzz, she is seized by cold sweat and trembling, and her skin pales, until she says, “I seem to be a little short of death” (Fragment 31.15–16). The experience of erotic desire is terrifying, crippling, even near fatal, yet the pain and wreckage can be overcome: the lover portrayed in Sappho’s lyric verses recuperates and lives on to pursue another love.

Such imagery to portray the harmful consequences of desire can also be found in the erotic verses of the western Greek poet, Ibycus. Born in the Greek city of Rhegium in southern Italy, Ibycus eventually went east to Samos, where he joined the artistic circle financed by the wealthy tyrant Polycrates; the ancient tradition about his life and work places his poetic activity securely in the second half of the sixth century CE. Ibycus wrote two types of poetry, arranged later in the Alexandrian period into seven books: long narrative choral poetry on mythological themes, and personal erotic lyric verses celebrating the beauty of boys. In the few fragments that remain of his love poetry, Ibycus combines striking expressions and lavish sound texture to describe the destructive elemental power of erotic desire. One fragment, which may be a complete poem, dynamically contrasts the calm regularity of the

arrival of spring with the fitful disorder of elemental *eros*: while the flowering season brings with it predictable and welcome growth, for the agitated speaker of this poem, the feeling of erotic desire never changes its intense momentum and offers no quiet symmetry, “for me *eros* is at rest during no season” (Fragment 286.1–7). Ibycus then equates the attack of this restless *eros* with a blast of Boreas, the exceptionally turbulent North Wind, depicted as “shadowy and undaunted,” who “with parching fits of madness masterfully and thoroughly batters my senses” (Fragment 286.8–13). Like the violent gust of wind, love is a harsh natural force, swift, sudden, hostile, resulting in physical injury and mental confusion. In another piece of Ibycus’ erotic verse, again perhaps a complete poem, a first-person voice figures *eros* as a dangerously attractive youth with dark, seductive eyes, who “with spells of all sorts drives me into Aphrodite’s inextricable nets” (Fragment 287): the image of being entangled in an erotic ambush proves love’s overwhelming physical control over the enthralled lover. In these two poems, Ibycus confirms and expands the Greek lyric conception of the devastating primal force of erotic desire.

The erotic verses of Anacreon (c. 560–480 BCE), Ibycus’ contemporary in the late sixth century, also portray the pure violence delivered by sexual desire, and continue to delineate an ever more specific vocabulary of arresting images to describe love’s harmful effects. Anacreon was born in the Ionian town of Teos on the coast of Asia Minor, and is said to have been entertained at the courts of the Samian tyrant Polycrates and the Athenian tyrant Hipparchus. The main focus of Anacreon’s poetry is the conviviality of wine-drinking at the *symposium*, along with the love affairs and erotic intrigues that take place in such a setting. As is the (usually undeserved) fate of other poets whose work deals with such themes, Anacreon acquired a reputation in antiquity that capitalized on his poetic persona: he was thought to have been a self-indulgent drunk and sexual libertine. In the remaining fragments of his five books of poetry, Anacreon displays a meticulous lyric style colored by a subtle spirit of irony and a tone of intellectual refinement. Yet there is nothing inhibited about this poet’s voice: the fragments of Anacreon present an innovative and imaginative portrayal of the risks inherent in

the game of love. Anacreon’s *eros* is often personified as a robust contender, throwing a ball at the lover (Fragment 358), engaging the lover in a boxing match (Fragment 396), or gambling at dice (Fragment 398). The natural aggression of this athletic *eros* accords well with other Greek literary representations of the erotic experience as one full of jeopardy: *eros* offers a taunting challenge, and the lover can expect either a physically exhausting escape or a painful defeat. In other fragments, Anacreon describes the feeling of sexual desire as one of inebriation, “drunk with love” (Fragment 376); he calls love “melting” (Fragment 459) and a “subduer” (Fragment 357); and he compares *eros* to a blacksmith who strikes him with a hammer blow (Fragment 413). More than any other lyric poet, Anacreon emphasizes the psychological effects of erotic mania, dramatizing in his verses the convulsive state of a mind confused by sexual longing (Fragments 359, 398, 429). All the erotic fragments of Anacreon explore the consequences of contact with the hostile power of *eros*: intoxication, madness, and competitive struggle.

Later Greek poetry continued to echo and develop the vocabulary of images describing the erotic experience in terms of its extreme dominance over lovers. During the late sixth and early fifth centuries in Attica, dramatic festivals were instituted at which tragedies and comedies were performed in celebration of the god Dionysus. In the fifth century, the Athenian playwrights composed dramas for performance in an outdoor communal setting for a sophisticated audience of citizens and political allies. Although the principal themes in the genres of Athenian drama were not exclusively or even explicitly erotic, a few of the extant plays presented on stage in a dramatic context the visible spectacle of individuals under the influence of uncontrollable erotic longing. The performance of tragedy in particular, with its primary focus on the individual in the grip of an overpowering destiny, offered a unique forum in which to explore the consequences of frustrated *eros*. The tragedian Sophocles (496–406 BCE) was famous both as a model citizen and soldier of the Athenian democracy, and also as one of the three canonical Attic playwrights. One of Sophocles’ earliest surviving dramas is the *Trachinian Women* (c. 450–440 BCE), a play that deals with the devastating effects of erotic desire in the axes of passion between the great

hero Heracles, his wife Deianira, and his new captive, Iole. When Deianira discovers that her husband sacked the city of Iole's father only to possess the girl, for whom he has incurred a violent lust (*Trachiniae* 351–374), the hero's wife decides to win back his love by means of a secret remedy, drops of blood given to her long ago by the centaur Nessus (531–587). But the love charm turns out to be a fatal poison, a ruse by the dying beast to exact revenge on Heracles, who killed him as Nessus tried to rape Deianira (672–722). The centaur's thwarted *eros* for Deianira is made manifest in the toxic charm, which the queen administers out of a desperate passion for her husband, who has aroused her suicidal anguish because of his fierce sexual desire for the younger girl. Infected with a virulent sickness (*nosos*), Heracles is exposed onstage, ranting and raving (971–1043), and is delivered from his agony by being carried off in the final scene to be burned alive (1259–1278). Throughout the play, Sophocles draws a close network of images with *eros*, the poison, the wild *nosos* of Heracles, his cruel madness, and the brutality of beasts. The pernicious power of this agonistic *eros* is personified by the chorus of the *Trachinian Women* in the figure of Aphrodite, as both victor and umpire in the contest of love (497–498, 515–516), and the goddess is named “the clear instigator of all these things” (860–861).

The playwright Euripides (c. 480–406 BCE) treated the theme of love's contamination most memorably in his *Hippolytus* (428 BCE), in which two distinct levels of action, divine and human, are evident. Aphrodite, powerful and pitiless as the force she represents, reveals in the prologue that she will punish the young Hippolytus, son of the hero Theseus, for his rejection of sexual love, by making him the object of his stepmother's erotic passion (*Hippolytus* 1–57). Out of shame, Phaedra tries in vain to conceal her desire, but when her lovesickness (*nosos*) overwhelms and threatens to kill her (170–267), an anxious and well-intentioned Nurse tries to secure the sexual favors of Hippolytus as a remedy for Phaedra's wasting disease, but he violently refuses (601–615). Phaedra resolves to commit suicide to preserve her reputation as the king's wife (680–731), as she realizes, “I am beaten by bitter love” (727); but to avenge the extremism of her chaste stepson, she leaves a note for Theseus accusing Hippolytus

of raping her (856–886). Mad with grief, Theseus curses his son and casts him into exile (1045–1101), where he is attacked by a monstrous bull sent by Poseidon and is carried back onstage to die in torment; but at the end of the play the goddess Artemis appears *ex machina* to explain the truth to Theseus, that the terrible events were directed solely by Aphrodite (1282–1341). The fatal network of tainted *eros* binding the human characters, Hippolytus, Phaedra, and Theseus, is dramatically framed by the divine conflict between the two opposed goddesses, yet the victory over those who would deny her essential power goes unequivocally to Aphrodite, who “drives the unbending heart of gods and mortals” (1268–1269). The notion of a destructive and irresistible *eros* is a dominant motif in the *Hippolytus* and the *Trachinian Women*, as it moves through both of these plays with relentless tragic force.

The power of *eros* to sway the course of human action is well represented in the *Lysistrata* (411 BCE), a play by the greatest of the Athenian comic poets, Aristophanes (c. 448–c. 380 BCE). In this famous comedy, the women of Athens and Sparta, dismayed that the men have failed to bring an end to the Peloponnesian War, band together under the leadership of Lysistrata (“Dissolver of Armies”) to impose peace with a two-pronged strategy: first, they seize and occupy the Acropolis, the civic heart of the city where the treasury is located, and second, they refuse to have sexual relations with their husbands until they reconcile with the Spartans (*Lysistrata* 1–253). The play offers a basically hedonistic calculus, starkly contrasting the deficiency of sexual relations caused by the war, with the restoration of erotic satisfaction in peacetime. As Lysistrata says, “We want to get laid, to put it briefly” (715). Aristophanes indulges in a great deal of visual comedy and humorous banter in this play, easily capitalizing on the many opportunities for sexual innuendo inherent in the plot. In one scene, a chorus of feeble and impotent old men try to take back the Acropolis by ramming the gates with logs they can barely lift, and by setting siege fires they can't keep lit (254–386); in another scene, Myrrhine teases her sex-starved and obviously ithyphallic husband, Kinesias, by promising to sleep with him, running off to obtain a series of erotic enhancements, then abandoning him still unsatisfied (837–958).

Finally as the men and women are reunited, the comedy suggests that peace is restored through an act of war—the sex-strike—and reinforces the concept that although erotic love can be a struggle, the mutual fulfillment of sexuality, of gratified *eros*, is a stabilizing force in society.

During the Hellenistic period (c. 323–331 BCE), the Greek poets carry on the notion of erotic damage as they concentrated on a new group of literary genres, in particular epyllion (short epic), mime, pastoral poems, and epigrams. The most detailed and compelling depiction of the power of *eros* comes in the third book of the *Argonautica* by Apollonius of Rhodes (c. 295–215 BCE). An epyllion in four books, the *Argonautica* narrates the tale of Jason and his journey to acquire the Golden Fleece; Book 3 recounts the explicitly erotic events in Colchis where Jason is loved by the princess, Medea, and is then aided in his quest by her gifts of sorcery. Hoping to secure help for her favorite, Jason, Hera asks Aphrodite to persuade her son Eros to make Medea fall in love with him (*Argonautica* 6–166); the winged god shoots her, “and the arrow burned inside the girl, deep down under her heart, like a flame” (286–287). Throughout this episode, the poet uses vocabulary and images that evoke the tangible immediacy of earlier Greek poetic descriptions of harmful *eros*, especially the erotic language of Sappho and the lyric poets, and adds to that the dramatist’s interest in exploring the ethical consequences of such a crushing sexual desire. The result is an intimate psychological portrait of a destabilized Medea that presents her fatal longing for Jason as an attack on her judgment, as she realizes, “My mind is entirely at a loss” (772): *eros* deprives Medea of the ability to make reasoned decisions, and envelops her in a ruinous lack of clarity about her own doomed circumstances.

The epigrammatists of the Hellenistic age return to an explicit focus on erotic themes in their short occasional poems, as the epigram is raised to perfection as an independent literary genre. These epigrams were assembled in ancient times in different anthologies, including the famous Palatine Anthology; all the extant poems are now collected in a modern edition called simply “The Greek Anthology,” representing over six thousand epigrams ranging in date from the seventh century BCE to the tenth century CE and covering a wide array of topics, in particular the joy and anguish of love. While the writers of

epigram inherited and revived earlier poetic conceptions about *eros* as a destructive force, a tone of playfulness, irony, and even humorous detachment becomes more evident in erotic verses during this period. Asclepiades of Samos (*floruit* c. 290 BCE) was known for the elegant simplicity of his style, and his epigrams often describe the power of love with a distinctly light-hearted and mocking voice. In one epigram, he addresses the god Zeus who rains on him as he waits at his lover’s door, reminding Zeus of his own amours: “The god who compels me is your master, too” (*Palatine Anthology* 5.64). A love poet famous for exquisite style and grace, Meleager of the Syrian Greek town Gadara (*floruit* c. 60 BCE) was also known as the compiler of an early anthology of epigrams, entitled *Stephanos*, or “The Garland.” His own numerous epigrams describe love in dynamic images reminiscent of earlier lyric poets, as winged *eros* the wild-eyed conqueror is equated with the boy whom Meleager desires (*Palatine Anthology* 12.101). The erotic epigrams of Philodemus (born c. 110 BCE), also from Gadara, reveal his interest in Epicurean ideals, and are noted for their particular amusing frankness and dramatic approach. Philodemus celebrates a woman named Xanthippe in a series of amatory verses, saying it is for her that “a fire smolders in my insatiable heart” (*Palatine Anthology* 11.41). For the Hellenistic epigrammatists, *eros* was still full of implacable and antagonistic energy, a bittersweet event summed up in brief, incisive poems. The poets of ancient Greece explored the idea of *eros* as a dangerous force, and defined the experience of sexual desire as an essentially overwhelming and ultimately destructive physical feeling. To come into contact with erotic longing was to be seized, melted, frozen, beaten, invaded by sickness, and driven mad. While some verses do depict the return to health and sanity that accompanies the fulfillment of shared *eros*, the Greek poets essentially agreed that there is no real drama in blissful love, only in love’s torment.

MONICA SILVEIRA CYRINO

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## GRISSETTE

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The word *grisette* originally appeared in France in the seventeenth century and designated the grey dress worn by young French women of the lower class. By metonymy and disdain, the term came to mean the women of that class while the original reference to the grey garment disappeared. During the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the *grisette* is sometimes assimilated with a young woman of limited means and easy virtue.

Jean de La Fontaine, in 1665, is the first author to report the connection made between these poor girls and a particular practice of sexual hunting by the aristocratic males, in France: "se faire une grisette" [to have sex with a *grisette*]. In his short story, *Joconde ou l'infidélité*

*des femmes*, La Fontaine tells the story of a king and a handsome nobleman seducing all the women in the kingdom and keeping track of them in a book. At the conclusion of the tale, they share a bed with the same *grisette*, unaware of the sudden irruption of a third aficionado who, alone, enjoys the *grisette's* ardor! The text supports the idea that all women are unfaithful.

La Fontaine's *grisette* is a promiscuous girl, astute and fun, faithful while a virgin, unfaithful after the loss of her virginity and her abandonment. The *grisette* is a sexual object that can easily be bought. The *grisette* is particularly associated with an undergarment, an object of

fetishism, the *cotillon* (a poor woman's under-skirt), to which we need to add an important specific expression: *la mine chiffonnée* [the weathered face]. This idiom, as with the previous term, assumes a sexual function: the grisette and the cotillon can be crumpled [*chiffonné*] for sexual exploitation with no worry about a spoiled skirt. La Fontaine's story is labeled the *Joconde's genre* and often copied.

In the eighteenth-century texts, the grisette participates in a coming-of-age ritual for young nobles who try to take her virginity away. The grisette hopes, innocently and vainly, that all the wedding promises made by the seducer (with the aid of fashionable gifts, especially of clothing) will have a matrimonial conclusion!

In 1737, the term grisette becomes associated with craftswomen's assistants of the *magasins de nouveauté* [novelty shops], to the *filles de boutique* [shop assistants], and to the *modistes* [milliners]. It is here the finery can be observed through the shop windows where they work assiduously. From these openings, they playfully wink to tease the passers-by. They are then compared to a seraglio or a harem and become the first sexualized female advertisement for merchandise. Lawrence Sterne made a *cliché* of them in 1768, in England and America, in his *Sentimental Journey to France*, where the grisette is a disturbing promiscuous gloves' shopkeeper.

A second representation of the grisette is found in the work of Sébastien Mercier in 1781. Mercier gives a more positive image of the grisette and locates her amidst the courageous, independent seamstresses working in the privacy of their room. This room will become an indispensable accessory of her representation, a symbol of her poverty. It is always located at the uppermost floor of the house, under the roof, in a *mansarde* or a *grenier* [attic]. This location allows lovers to visit the grisette through the roof, to take their liberties with her and to escape the same way. Mercier excuses the light morality life of these girls by hard living conditions. Mercier's grisette (as opposed to the *bourgeoise*) is an independent woman who, because of her lack of a dowry, is the only woman in France who is able to choose whom she is going to love. At the time of the French Revolution, a third representation takes place. Launay, the prostitute's tax collector, completely aware of the double lives they must lead, is abusive

to all the grisettes, and considered them as disguised prostitutes.

Under the Restoration (1815–1830), two representations dominate the discourse on grisettes. One is associated with a rather erotic literary work connected with the *tableaux parisiens*. The grisette is the subject of peeping. One can observe her through a small hole drilled in the partition wall of the *Hôtels Garnis* bedrooms (furnished lodgings). She is seen dressing, or painting the nipples of her breasts in Cuisin's descriptions of the *vie galante* in Paris. Charles Paul de Kock is considered the specialist of light grisette stories. The other is associated with the most popular French singer of the period, Pierre-Jean de Béranger. He popularized the unfaithful but excusable grisette through a sequel of songs on the *Lisette* character. She becomes a kept-woman with rich lovers (Mondor), old aristocrats or bourgeois, but will be abandoned and return to her first (poor) lover. This last representation has a political tone; the grisette becomes the prototype of the republican woman who is seduced by the old and depraved aristocrats.

Under the July Monarchy (1830–1848), the grisette primarily associates with the students of medicine and law of the Latin Quarter. She is transformed into a complete romantic and melancholic character. She passionately sacrifices herself for her lover, is abandoned, and often dies from tuberculosis.

With the *Lorette's* arrival (a kept-woman, solely money-oriented, like the *Nana* of Zola), in the 1840s, the grisette is progressively detached from the figure of the prostitute and becomes a pure angel with *Mimi Pinson*, *Les Mystères de Paris* [*Sue's Rigolette*] or *Les Scènes de la Vie de Bohème* (a Murger and Puccini adaptation) where she is a singer and is associated with penniless artists (Musette and Mimi). Jules Champfleury's realism violently reacts against this iconography, in his short story: *L'homme aux figures de cire*. A wax puppet exhibitor abandons his spouse to flee with a pretty wax grisette, with whom he sleeps; thus recycling the myth of Pygmalion. Some rare explicit erotic representations of the grisette can be found in the small booklet with lithographs of Henri Monnier, *L'étudiant et la grisette*, while the socialist Victor Hugo transforms *Fantine* into an accidental prostitute in *Les Misérables*.



## GUAMAN POMA DE AYALA, FELIPE

In the nineteenth century, the word *grisette* rhymed with *amourette* (easy, free love without any long-term attachment) and *herbette* (love on the grass) in literature.

ALAIN LESCART

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# GUAMAN POMA DE AYALA, FELIPE

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d.c. 1615

Incan essayist

The sixteenth-century indigenous Andean chronicler and illustrator Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala is not an author easily placed within the context of erotic literature, yet his work offers insights into the sexual mores prevalent in early colonial Latin America. His monumental *El Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno* [*The First New Chronicle and Good Government*] (1615) also makes references to the conception and treatment of sexual offences during the Inca period, then still within living memory. Sexuality, rather than being celebrated, is a criterion used by the author to establish both his opposition to Spanish abuse and his ambiguous position towards pre-Columbian rule. It is an example of Bakhtin's notion of "hidden polemic," applied by Rolena Adorno (1986) to this extraordinary book, since Guaman Poma adopts anti-colonial positions through stealth and inference. It should be pointed out that this work, rather than strictly literary, relies heavily for effect on illustrations often more eloquent than the text, Spanish having been a patchily acquired second language for this Quechua-speaker.

Guaman Poma wrote to complain to King Philip III of the abuses suffered by his people as

a direct result of the Spanish conquest and colonial administration. His 1,200-page manuscript unsurprisingly never reached the King, but miraculously survived and became a precious source of data for historians and ethnographers.

The work was conceived not only as a denunciation of Spanish rule but also an affirmation of autochthonous cultural values, as such, sex is viewed in terms of its demographic and historical consequences for the indigenous peoples of the Andes—of particular concern to the author, the growth of *mestizo* (mixed Indian and European) and mulatto populations. Guaman Poma deplored what he saw as a destructive encroachment upon indigenous ways of life, both culturally and genetically. He advocated segregation, a position he shared with many contemporary commentators who also feared and distrusted those of mixed descent. Mercedes López-Baralt (1993) perceptively examines the coded sexual imagery in two depictions of gatherings where men of varied social positions and, crucially, ethnic backgrounds, meet to broker power. She perceives a denunciation of illicit fornication, particularly as practiced by the clergy. One perhaps unintentionally humorous reference here (574) shows a priest's illegitimate children being carried on horseback, in saddlebags, as if they were vegetables going to market.

In order to enhance his own credibility with his reader, Guaman Poma denounces certain aspects of Inca rule. The Incas' very origins are tainted since the founding couple, Mama Huaco and Manco Capac, are also mother and son (in other versions they are siblings). As well as incestuous, Mama Huaco is a sorceress, idolater, and devil-worshipper; yet she is also described as beautiful, learned, and generous (1981, p. 99). The Inca genesis is based on the falsehood that she is daughter of the sun and moon: she wins and maintains her power by making stones move and speak. Part of the section on superstition and witchcraft (252) displays naked supine figures of Indians mounted by horned devils.

If this partial vilification of the pre-Columbian world serves to establish Guaman Poma's Catholic credentials, he also stresses various instances of Inca morality with a paradoxical affirmation of the rectitude lost since the conquest. A list of crimes punishable by death, includes adultery, abortion, prostitution, rape, and incestuous marriage, this latter being reserved for the rulers (1981, pp. 164–165). All this contrasts with the sexual abuse in which the Spanish indulge with impunity, simply helping themselves to any female they choose. A particularly graphic drawing depicts a young woman innocently sleeping, her breasts, anus, and vagina (the Spanish *vergüenza*, shame) exposed, as men in authority scout for women to sate their lust: "They fornicate with married women and deflower virgins," thus producing the bugbear of *mestizos* (467). The rape and abduction of girls continues. Guaman Poma insists, because of the web of intrigue and bribery among the establishment (489).

For Guaman Poma, the abuse of power by Spanish authorities is so severe, and so corrosive of public morality, that regional segregation is the only way to prevent the contamination of indigenous peoples. Unabated miscegenation is the cause of a general malaise in Peru that he sees metaphorically as the World Upside-Down. This inversion of the natural order is borrowed from European tradition and blended with an indigenous notion of cataclysm, the *pachacuti* or periodic world-inversion seen in many pre-Columbian cosmologies as bringing essential regeneration. However, this is an inversion that will not recover any sense of natural equilibrium. Hence it retains the carnival element of grotesque upheaval, the overturning of any

normal sense of social order, but sheds any sense of ribald, Rabelaisian delight.

However, despite the sorrow and complaint that pervades Guaman Poma's opus, there are several moments in which the erotic is celebrated in the section dealing with pre-Columbian fiesta, song, and music. One instance of this is the reproduction of a Quechua language (290) *harawi* (a form of plaintive appeal) likening a noblewoman to a flower reflected in water, a transient image despite its permanence in the lover's mind. A more earthy, mundane song in Aymara humorously asks whether the beloved is as sweet when drunk as when sober. No lyricism is admitted here; the woman is doubtless accessible because of her more humble origins. Another Aymara song quoted by Guaman Poma boasts of the author's sister's 'fabulous' legs, which are beautiful enough to win bets. One drawing in this section shows two naked women in a river, pointing toward the cliff above where two men sit playing flutes and with whom they sing in dialogue. Thus an ingenuous, bucolic pre-Columbian sexuality is contrasted with its abusive, rapacious Spanish counterpart.

### Biography

Guaman Poma de Ayala was born a few years after the Spanish conquest of the Andes. As an Inca noble he was allowed to be raised among the colonizers, baptized a Christian, and educated. In his early years he served as an interpreter and assisted church officials in eradicating Inca spiritual practice. After a crisis of conscience he began teaching Incas to read and write so they could submit legal complaints concerning their condition. From 1585 to 1615 he carefully composed his own claim, titled *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno*, to King Philip III of Spain. The manuscript went unread for centuries until it was discovered by a researcher at the Royal Library of Copenhagen in 1908.

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## GUÉRIN, RAYMOND

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1905–1955  
French writer

### *L'Apprenti* [*The Apprentice*]

The apprentice is 19-year-old 'Monsieur Hermès'—always called that way with no indication whether Hermès is his first name, family name, or a nickname. The book relates his tribulations whilst training in a prestigious Parisian luxury hotel in the late 1920s. That unwelcome apprenticeship was his father's ('Monsieur Papa') sole decision: Monsieur Hermès would much rather study literature or stay in his native Portville near the Spanish border, playing rugby with his friends and writing theater plays or a literary review. Right from the start he just cannot stand the hotel's posh and oppressive atmosphere, its underpinning of social injustice and the daily humiliation from other staff members and guests alike. He successfully works at the lowest rank in the kitchen (cleaning the greasiest plates), in the restaurant (carrying dishes), and as a night attendant in charge of a floor (answering guests' silliest requests in the middle of the night, such as opening a window for a cantankerous old lady or bringing bottles of champagne for smashed aristocrats who ignore his very presence in the room). Just before being sent to a partner hotel in London, he is eventually fired after overtly rebelling against one of his cruellest mentors, putting a salutary end to twelve months of daily unhappiness and persistent victimization. After a few days of leisure in Paris, he takes the train back home, just after meeting Delorme, a fashionable playwright to whom he gives a copy of '*La joie au coeur*,' the theater play he has just written himself.

Amidst the systematic recording of his duties, problems, and feelings are reminiscences of more pleasant times and nostalgic memories, especially of his past erotic adventures: his first experience in a brothel, the various girls he fancied in

Portville, his doomed yet lasting infatuation with the mysterious Nina Brett and a romantic holiday love story in San Sebastian with Alice Elvas, a married, older woman whose few presents he still cherishes. Monsieur Hermès' love-life in Paris is more frustrating: despite an almost constant obsession with women, during his whole year at the hotel he has only gone out with the nice and plain Angélique for a couple of months, and with his loose chambermaid colleague Totoche for a couple of weeks. Yet in spite of some appreciated times of sexual gratification, those two partners have left him unsatisfied and unfulfilled. His apprenticeship is not just professional but emotional as well: he discovers the complex relationship between love, sex, pleasure, and intimacy—and indeed the book was originally entitled *L'Apprenti psychologue*. As an easier, more reliable source of sexual satisfaction, Monsieur Hermès much prefers to masturbate. The book is rich in descriptions of his masturbatory techniques (preferably lying on his belly, rubbing on the sheets without touching himself) and accounts of his fantasies (usually picturing he is a woman taken by a man, either the imaginary Lily or a desirable woman he has seen in the hotel, in the street, or in a film). This largely explains why *L'Apprenti* created quite a scandal when it was published in 1946: it was heavily pilloried for its underlying thesis that masturbation is a normal stage of sexuality and not some form of sexual perversion. Most critics then focused on that aspect of the book on the triple ground that it openly described, condoned, and validated masturbation, long before discourses of sexual liberation and popular psychoanalysis started to legitimize masturbation.

In terms of eroticism, *L'Apprenti* is also interesting because it documents how a rather typical heterosexual young man explores his developing sexuality, from minor cross-dressing (when he cannot help surreptitiously stealing and trying on a female neighbor's underwear) to voyeurism (when he observes through the keyhole a couple

having sex) to pornography (with his growing collection of pictures of nude women). That strong focus on the visual is a key element of his discovery of sexual desire, with his gaze eroticizing most women, all becoming potential sexual partners, whether they sit near him at the theater, pass by him in the street, or happen to stay in the hotel rooms he is responsible for. Numerous situations and characters are thus presented in a rather original language reaching its best expression in *Les poulpes* but already significant in *L'Apprenti*. Somehow reminiscent of Céline and maybe also Rabelais, Guérin's idiosyncratic style is one that mixes all levels of language, building upon vernacular phrasing and slang, adding occasional references to commercials and songs, as well as parodies of some of the texts that Monsieur Hermès himself reads in his few moments of leisure (Vicente Blasco Ibañez, Pierre Loti). The result is highly heterogeneous and polyphonic, ranging from the cynical to the burlesque via the humorous and the lyrical, cleverly combining accents of realism and existentialism, perhaps precisely corresponding to what Monsieur Hermès himself calls '*l'esthétique du caleçon et du bidet*' ('the aesthetics of pants and bidets,' p. 249).

LOYKIE LOÏC LOMINÉ

### Biography

Guérin planned and drafted most of his books in the four years he spent as a war prisoner in a nazi camp near Baden. He is mainly remembered for his *Ébauche d'une mythologie de la réalité* [*Sketch of a Mythology of Reality*], a Bildungsroman of over 2000 pages, composed of three books: *L'Apprenti* (1946) about early adulthood in the interwar, *Parmi tant d'autres feux...* (1949) about married life and most importantly *Les Poulpes* (1953) about life in captivity. He died of pleurisy at age 50 before completing two books, one about civil life back from the camp and one about recovering to mental and physical sanity. Other significant texts of his include *Quand vient la fin* (1941), *La confession de Diogène* (1947), and *Le pus de la plaie, journal de maladie* (posthumous, 1982). All have been published by Gallimard and most are being reprinted.

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## GUIBERT, HERVÉ

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1955–1991

French journalist, novelist, and screenwriter

Guibert's works all germinated in and were ultimately pruned from his journal, published posthumously as *Le mausolée des amants* and to which he referred as his "spinal cord." They can be divided between those written with a concern for style, tied also to the failure of fiction, and those where writing is made as communicative, as experientially transparent as possible. They raise difficult questions, demolish

stereotypes of masculinity, subjectivity, and socialization, reveal secrets, blend fiction with non-fiction, and often problematize the relationship between the textual, the visual, and the pathological. In *Compassion protocol*, for example, the rhetorical narrator, virtually indistinguishable from Guibert himself, observes that his works are permeated with truth, falsehood, betrayal, and nastiness. Moreover, Guibert was obsessed with bodies—both living and dead—, with their dissolution and fragmentation, as he admits in his journal, and with sex. As a result, he brings

his public into intimate contact with his own body and those of others, while blurring the division between fiction and autobiography, his own position as voyeuristic spectator and subject of disease. The year of his death, Guibert admitted that he had always had the impression of being his own character but also of being a body in narrations, situations, relationships, and that for him it was always a question in his works of a body, whether aging, sick, ruined, reborn, monstrous, or deformed. AIDS changed his status, from character to hero, by way of tragedy.

### *L'image fantôme*

Written around the absence of a photograph, the despair of the image, *L'image fantôme* [*Ghost Image*] privileges the relationships between photography, truth, fetishism, desire, and the artefact. It also highlights the differences between the erotic, the pornographic, the erotically unreadable, and the sexually unmarked. As he unveils the bonds between visual representation, writing, reading, and readability, Guibert subverts the ideas about referential emanation first articulated by Roland Barthes in *La chambre claire* (*Camera obscura*). As Hughes notes, he literalizes and incorporates them into a narrative of homoerotic desire with the photographic gesture turning on an erotically penetrative act and the erotic impulses and instincts of the photographic subject "legibilized."

### *Les chiens*

In *Les chiens*, the violent and explicit work referred to by the narrator of *Fou de Vincent* as a "pornographic little book," a woman's body is a foil for a hyperrealist story of male loves, sado-masochistic fantasies and practices, and heightens the erotic interest. Sexual and narrative pleasure are indistinguishable, and the boundaries between fantasy, reality, reader, author, and characters are ultimately broken down. As a result, the reader consumes the fantasies of the protagonists, entering into the text's "pornotopia," as Heathcote observes, with feet and wrists bound.

### *Vous m'avez fait former des fantômes*

Divided into three parts, the postmodern novel, *Vous m'avez fait former des fantômes*, eroticizes

cruelty and death. Loathsome men haunt crèches and orphanages to capture innocents and train them for combat in which children replace bulls to recount bullfights. The text parodies male-to-male violence with intertextual references at the same time as exposing the complicity between phantoms and fantasies, acting and obsession, the ritual and the natural.

### *To the friend who did not save my life*

The first of the novels directly and primarily to focus on AIDS and the book, Boulé claims, is the climax and point of implosion of Guibert's oeuvre, *A l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie* [*To the Friend Who Did Not Save My Life*] was hugely controversial when it first came out in 1990, the year before Guibert's death. It was read as a *roman à clés*: the philosopher named Muzil was recognized as Guibert's recently deceased friend, Michel Foucault; similarly, Marine was identified as Isabelle Adjani, Stéphane as Daniel Defert, Eugénie as Yvonne Baby, Hector as Hector Bianciotti, and Melvil Mockney as Jonas Salk. It recounts the struggles of Muzil and the narrator with AIDS and the medical establishment. In its intertwining of contagion and eroticism, voyeurism and hallucination, betrayals and commemoration, it reveals the creation and destruction inherent in writing. According to Guibert, it provides keys to understanding what is in all his other books. His seropositivity allowed him further to radicalize certain narrative systems, the relation to truth, and the staging of himself beyond what he ever thought possible.

Although Guibert had said that he would not write again, *To the Friend Who Did Not Save My Life* was followed by *Compassion protocol*, his second AIDS novel, in which he explores the erotic, sado-masochistic, and pathological possibilities of the relationship between a rhetorical narrator and his 28-year-old female doctor. The insidious progress of AIDS is also reflected in works by Guibert posthumously published or aired the year following his death. Whereas *Cytomégalo-virus*, a brief diary of Guibert's hospitalization for the opportunistic infection that gives the book its title and *Le mausolée des amants*, which systematically spans a quarter century, both respect chronology, *Le paradis* disrupts it, and disorientation forms a metaphor for illness. *L'homme au chapeau rouge* [*The Man*

*In the Red Hat*], marketed as the last of Guibert's AIDS novels, is more a meditation on delusion and the fake, a reflection on the relationship between reality and fiction, life and art. *La pudeur et l'impudeur*, shot between June 1990 and March 1991 and turned down by all the French television stations except TF1, was ultimately broadcast after Guibert's death. As Boulé underlines, it stands more as the third, final, and penultimate volume on AIDS than *The Man In the Red Hat*. Considered crude and exhibitionist by some and a logical continuation of Guibert's pursuit of truth by others, in his video-diary Guibert anachronistically rehearses his suicide attempt while playing Russian roulette with the poison Digitaline. In the video's final scene of the writer walking away from his desk, he ultimately becomes a specter of himself.

### Biography

Born on December 14, 1955 in Saint-Cloud, just outside of Paris. Although he failed the Conservatoire and entrance examination for the Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques, he was multi-talented: he combined photographic sensibility with writing flair, brought a photographic writing to literature, and was the author of nearly thirty creative works, some of them published posthumously. Many of Guibert's texts are considered erotically explicit. Indeed, many stirred controversy. Examples include: *L'homme blessé*, co-scripted with Patrice Chéreau, which won a César but upset the homosexual community; *Des aveugles* [*Blindsight*], based on his volunteer work as a reader at the Institut National des Jeunes Aveugles in Paris, which gave rise to heated exchanges over how best to care for the blind; *Les chiens* which outraged many, most notably writer Marguerite Duras who, Guibert claimed, developed a negative fixation about him because of it; *La pudeur ou l'impudeur*, which provoked a great debate in the French media both before and after its broadcast. Guibert gained the widest recognition while suffering from AIDS and following the publication of *A l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie* and *Le protocole compassionnel*. He appeared and seduced the French public on the television programs *Apostrophes* and *Ex libris*, admitting on the latter to living in a "very problematic" state of "total erotic desire." The night before his thirty-sixth birthday, he unsuccessfully attempted

suicide. He died from complications two weeks later at the Beclère hospital in Clamart, near the French capital.

BRIAN GORDON KENNELLY

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# GUIDO, BEATRIZ

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1924–1988  
Argentine novelist

In her novels, Guido presents an evocative portrayal of upper-class Argentinean life, a milieu she knew well from her childhood and adolescence. Her characteristic heroine is a young upper-class woman whose innocence is shattered when confronted with unexpected, sometimes unwelcome, sexual experiences. Her heroines' innocence is exacerbated by upbringings in the hands of fanatically religious mothers or aunts who equate knowledge about matters of the flesh with sin, forcing them to depend on half-truths and innuendos in lieu of a proper sexual education. Through the sagas of her traumatized deflowered virgins, ambivalent about sexuality yet eager for experience, Guido creates profound tensions in her texts while offering the reader titillating instances of elegantly described seductions or subtly eroticized rapes.

In *La casa del angel*, the young protagonist, intrigued by the figure of a friend of her father's who is to fight a duel at dawn, walks into the room where he is holding his vigil and finds herself at once seduced and raped. Rushing to uncover the face of the slain man after the duel only to discover that her assailant has survived, she withdraws into a dreamlike state haunted by his guilt-ridden presence. The theme of ambivalent seduction and traumatic deflowering is also central to *La mano en la trampa*, where the protagonist discovers that an aunt has remained locked in the attic for years after being

jilted on her wedding day by the boyfriend that had seduced her. Determined to find the man and persuade him to return to confront his jilted fiancée, she falls under his spell and ends up seduced in her turn. Similarly, in *La Caída*, Guido offers the claustrophobic tale of a young student, brought up in a strict Catholic home by her maiden aunt, who moves into a boarding house in which live four amoral children who become the witnesses and catalysts to her traumatic sexual awakening. Guido will bring the same erotic tension between innocence and sexual violence that characterizes her novels to her original screenplays. *El secuestrador*, for example, where the protagonists spend most of their screen time consummating their relationship, is most memorable for a scene of consensual rape staged in a mortuary. Like in *La casa del angel* and her other fiction, the blurred line between rape and consensual sex constitutes Guido's most salient repository of the erotic. This erotic quality was captured brilliantly in a film by Torre Nilsson and became one of the salient themes in their joint work.

In these texts and film scripts, Guido explores the ambivalent nature of sexual violence as a way of addressing the patriarchal and political violence that was a central element in her world. Having lived through traumatic dictatorships, coups, and labor crises, Guido was acutely attuned to the metaphoric value of images of rape, submission, and uncontrolled masculinity. As an avowed feminist and a member of a politically liberal family, she will carefully intertwine into her plots a critique of unbridled male power

and violence. The subtle accumulation of sociological detail in her works creates a series of markers for a specific class milieu and historical period that allows the reader to see her protagonists' bodies as metaphors of a collective experience under a succession of repressive regimes, allowing the sexual violence in her novels to be interpreted as offering a critique of authoritarianism. The seducer in Guido's *Fin de fiesta*, for example, draws on the image of unbridled masculinity of Argentinean dictator Juan Domingo Perón, linking violence against women to political violence.

### Biography

Beatriz Guido was born in Rosario, Argentina, in 1924, to a liberal upper-class family with advanced notions about educational opportunities for women. Consequently, she studied literature at the University of Buenos Aires and went to France and Italy for graduate studies. She started to write in her early twenties, and by the age of thirty was an accomplished and celebrated novelist and short story writer. In 1958, she embarked on a career as a film scriptwriter with *El secuestrador* (The Kidnapper, 1958), a film directed by Leopoldo Torre Nilsson (1924–1978), who had already established a reputation as Argentina's most promising young film director. They were married the following year. Their film collaboration—Guido penned most of the screenplays for her husband's films after their marriage—resulted in film versions of many of her novels and short stories. By the time of her marriage, Guido had already published three of her best novels, *La casa del ángel* (The House of the Angel, 1954), *La caída* (The Fall, 1956), and *Fin de fiesta* (The End of the Party, 1958). All three were filmed by the couple within a few years of their marriage, laying the foundation for the most successful film collaboration in the history of Latin-American cinema. Film versions of her subsequent novels, *La mano en la trampa* (1961), *El incendio y las vísperas* (1965), and *Piedra libre* (1976) cemented their reputation. They remained close collaborators until his premature death

in 1978 at age 54. Together they worked on acclaimed films like *La Guerra del cerdo* (1975), based on the novel by Adolfo Bioy Casares, and *Martín Fierro* (1968), based on the classic 1872 poem by José Hernández. She also wrote scripts for films by other directors, among them Manuel Antin's *La invitación* (Argentina, 1982), Carlos Orgambide's *Los Insomnes* (Argentina, 1986), and Fernando Ayala's *Paula Cautiva* (Argentina, 1963). Guido, considered by many Latin-American critics as one of the most important feminist writers of the second half of the twentieth century, was one of the few women writers of the Latin-American Literary Boom of the 1960s and 70s. A prolific author, she received the Konex Award for her literary achievements in 1984, the same year she was named cultural attaché to the Argentinean Embassy in Spain. She died in Madrid in 1988.

LIZABETH PARAVISINI-GEBERT

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# GUILLÉN, NICOLÁS

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1902–1989

Cuban poet

During his lifetime Nicolás Guillén became practically synonymous both with Revolutionary Cuba and the island's Black population. As a Mulatto, however, he expressed a dual heritage, using the erotic as a vehicle for notions of ethnic and cultural miscegenation. The confluence of sexual and cultural elements is also visible in the evolution of his personal style: Gustavo Pérez Firmat (1989, pp. 67–79) sees the dichotomy in Guillén's work between classical and vernacular verse as parallel to this ethnic duality, part of the acquisition of a mature, independent voice. Guillén's early "White" verse, which uses the sonnet form and follows certain conventions of courtly love, is in marked contrast to 1930s work in which, through phonetic transcription of spoken African-Cuban Spanish, he voiced popular concerns whilst also validating this language through the very fact of its transcription. During the early 1930s, Guillén distorts written Spanish, forcing it to speak from a Black viewpoint. After the Revolution, Guillén's increasingly overt political poetry relegated the erotic to a remote corner of his concerns. However, the persistence of this declamatory public image since his death is somewhat misleading: as Keith Ellis (1994, pp. 45–87) has shown, he was capable of discreet and intimate love poems such as *In Some Springtime Place: Elegy* (1966).

A recurrent theme among critics is that of Guillén's sexual politics, which in the early twenty-first century certainly appear archaic. Pérez Firmat shows how *El abuelo* [*The Grandfather*], (1934) ironically adopts a subservient, courtly stance in reminding a blonde Cuban woman of a partial African ancestry which she had chosen to ignore. But the generic perspective is distorted: for Vera Kutzinski (1993) the poem "constructs an interracial male lineage for its near-White female figure," reducing the feminine to mere spectatorship. Similarly, in *Ballad of the two Grandfathers* (1934) the female reproductive

role is excluded as African and Spanish forebears, united by the poet, unite to heal historical wounds. Where female strength is prominent, it generally takes the form of an atavistic, telluric vigor associated with fecundity and eroticism. An instance of this can be seen in *Madrigal* (1934):

Simple and erect,  
like a cane in the cane field  
Oh challenger of genital  
frenzy

Curiously Guillén's female forms often take on a phallic and even self-fertilizing nature; a potent image that may contradict some of the charges of aberrant sexual politics. Another example is *Piedra de horno* [*Oven Stone*] (1944), which describes a woman as sensually self-sufficient:

A river of promises  
runs down from your hair,  
pauses at your breasts,  
congeals at last in a pool of molasses at your belly,  
violates your firm flesh of nocturnal secret.

Guillén was central to the Afro-Cuban movement that began in the 1920s occasioned by, and crucial to, the process of ethnic and cultural integration between African and European heritages. For Kutzinski (1987): "Almost all aspects of Guillén's poetry are deeply rooted in the cross-cultural imagination of the Caribbean." Kutzinski (1993), sees the late 1920s "mulatto" poetry as essentially a celebration and mythification of the woman of mixed descent who is nonetheless disenfranchised. She is a paradoxical figure, the traditional object of male sexual preference but also marginalized and viewed with suspicion. "The mulata may be *the* signifier of Cuba's unity-in-racial-diversity, but she has no part in it." The poem *Mulata* (1930) explicitly rejects this object of lust and voices preference (recurrent in Guillén's earlier work) for a more reliable, less pretentious Black partner. The *mulata*, long seen as dangerous temptress in Cuban literature, exerts a threatening attraction

likened to the frantic and relentless rhythm of a locomotive:

Tanto tren con tu cueppo,  
tanto tren;  
tanto tren con tu boca,  
tanto tren;  
(literally: "So much train with your body, so much  
train; so much train with your mouth, so much  
train)

Lorna Williams (1982) sees a similar objectification in another poem entitled *Madrigal* (1931). The lines "Your belly knows more than your head / and as much as your thighs" display values ill-fitting a figure of the left today. Alluding to a matriarchal sensuality ostensibly consonant with African ancestry, the poem goes on to evoke "that dark alligator / swimming in the Zambezi of your eyes." The content ironically belies madrigal's association with elite European sophistication.

The transformation during Guillén's lifetime in the configuration of Cuban nationality can be attributed not only to the Revolution but also to the gradual validation of African heritage through early twentieth-century movements such as the boom in the song form known as *son*, *négritude* in the French Caribbean and the Harlem Revival. Guillén's codified sexuality enunciates a popular consciousness celebrating the mulatto as an embodiment of the principle of blending, a basic ingredient of 'Cubanness.' For Ian Isidore Smart (1990), this is the "central creative conflict" in his poetry: engendered by interethnic sexuality, *mulatez* in turn enables an awareness of African roots which itself "engenders [...] the inevitable conflict between Eurocentered and Afrocentered realities." For Smart, the resolution of this dichotomy, which Guillén transformed from a destructive force into the very basis of his poetics, is at the core of his work. Guillén was heir to the sociologist Fernando Ortiz's pioneering re-evaluation of Cuba's African heritage for which he invented the term "transculturation," referring to the mutual influence between cultures irrespective of questions of dominance or subalternity. Metaphoric

renditions of this principle of cultural and ethnic blending abound: Ortiz also spoke of the *ajiaco* (a Cuban stew) in this context. Guillén's own term "algarabía" (rejoicing) is similar, but shows a heightened optimism crucial to his poetry. The spirit of overcoming or dissolving cultural barriers, 'algarabía' is akin to the Cuban novelist Alejo Carpentier's conception of Magic Realism: the delirious and exuberant result of the encounter between diverse elements essential to Caribbean and Latin-American cultural formation (Kutzinski 1987).

### Biography

Nicolás Guillén was born in Camagüey, Cuba on July 10, 1902. He studied law and journalism at the University La Habana. His first poems appeared in Camaguey Grafico in 1922. He joined the Cuban Communist Party in 1937 and in 1940, he ran for mayor of Camaguey and in 1948 for senatorial office; both campaigns were unsuccessful. From 1953 he lived in exile in France. He returned after the revolution and Fidel Castro appointed him president of Cuba's writers' union. Guillén died in Havana on July 16 1989.

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## GULLIVER, LILI

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The title of Lili Gulliver's four-book set *The Gulliver Universe* is a take on Jonathan Swift's eighteenth-century novel *Gulliver's Travels*. However, Swift's book is a series of fantasy adventures, and there is nothing erotic in them. Here, the name Gulliver is at the same time the title of the series, the author's *nom de plume* (her real name is Diane Boissonneault) and the main character's eponym, and lets the narrative be set in a travel and discovery mode.

The excuse of travel is used at the very beginning of *Paris*, the first volume, when Lili announces that she is leaving on an erotic world tour, but only in the second volume, *Greece*, is the journey's real purpose specified: "I, Lili Gulliver, am convinced that a guide to international fuck can be very useful and help track down the best lover in the world." The intention of writing such a guide, a new erotic excuse added on to the idea of a voyage of discovery, overdetermines the contents of the narratives. The *Gulliver Guide*, as parody of a travel book, is used as an alibi for having multiple sexual encounters: "As it should be, I will meet again with various types of men, of all colours and all social standings" and also for physical descriptions and sexual relationships.

The writing of the *Gulliver Guide*, *Guide of International Fuck* conceals a specific purpose: find the best lover in the world. And since this is an impossible goal, Lili will not stop traveling around the world and living ever renewed sexual adventures. The visited countries are described in commonplace and cliché terms which are themselves considered from a sexual viewpoint.

For instance, France is acknowledged the world over for its cuisine, therefore, in the first volume, *Paris*, Lili links cooking and sex: "I know, from a culinary standpoint, that he wants to slip me his asparagus so that I can wrap it between my hams, as the host would say. Which is a more romantic version than 'grab my sausage any way you can among the pasta.'" Lili will have four sexual partners in all in the City of Lights: Francis, a wine waiter;

Gérard, a psychoanalyst; Carl, a male escort; and Dominique, a friend's lady-friend. The relationships with Gérard and Francis are heterosexual and traditional: foreplay followed by penetration. Things are different with Carl. During a moonlight river cruise on the Seine, one of the greatest romantic clichés in feminine romantic imagination, Carl offers anal penetration to the narrator, but even though she praises the value of sodomy, she avoids the occurrence of such an act in a very prudish and conventional way. The same refusal occurs when Dominique offers Lili to sleep with her: "Lili a dyke? It depends on the attraction, but I really prefer men. Women are not very attractive to me. Surely that's just a small mental block." At the very end of the volume, the narrator affirms in regard to the basic principle of her erotic story that: "Actually, maybe I am not such a real user of dicks, no more than I am into marathon sex. Fucking with one man can suffice and satisfy me fully."

In Volume 2, *Greece*, Lili finds six lovers in all: Gino, a waiter; Vangelis, a restaurant owner; Jack, an American sailor; an anonymous lifeguard; Erick, a Norwegian; Yan, a Danish Greek; and Peter, a Briton. The contradictory dialectics of the whole of *The Gulliver Universe* are revealed here. Lili Gulliver uses the *Guide* as an excuse to have as varied sexual encounters as possible, with as many partners as possible, but her morality prevents her from enjoying without misgivings those purely physical relationships. The issue lies with the fact that her *Guide* fits a certain approach to life, and her personal values another. The book repeats erotic clichés about brute male force which is devoid of feelings with six of the men on that list, whereas Lili's ideal relationship remains monogamous and perpetual. To confirm this, in the chapter titled "Love at first sight" she meets Peter, the Briton, who will embody for a while the perfect lover; nevertheless, she will leave him a few weeks later to pursue her adventures in Asia.

In *Bangkok, Hot and Wet*, the third volume of *The Gulliver Universe*, Lili only has three sexual

encounters. The first one is with a Japanese man in the plane, the second with a Thai boxer, and the third with Richard Harvey, an extremely wealthy American tourist staying at a luxurious suite in the Bangkok Hilton. As far as being a “sexplorer” is concerned, the framework of the whole adventure remains restricted and mostly predictable. The narration insists page after page on the man’s wealth, whom she describes thus: “He’s a natty dresser. Lacoste shirt, cream-coloured pants, crocodile belt, tennis shoes, well-kept body. He is a handsome fifty with the air of a man who has had it easy. This gentleman has class, and it shows.” Here we have a modern take on the Prince Charming, who is always handsome, rich, and cultivated. And actually, the semantic network used to describe sexual relations with Richard—tenderly, marvellous, fabulous, enchantment—belong also to the fairytale universe. On learning that her lover is already married, Lili leaves again, toward the end of the world, feeling disappointed and betrayed.

In the last of the four volumes, *Australia, Down Under Without Undies*, Lili has four lovers. Joe, an architect; Jerry, a surfer; an anonymous lover; and Tarzamo Rambo, a farmer. The relationships are all conventional except for a threesome at the beginning of the novel. Later on she meets Tello, nicknamed Tarzamo Rambo, for obvious reasons. Lili uses and abuses that lover who gets the highest award in *The Gulliver Universe*: “The gold dick is awarded here to a rigid, enduring, and valiant steel

penis.” The couple goes camping and indulges in sexual activities divided into rather equal parts of cunnilingus, fellatio, and penetration.

This survey of the four volumes of *The Gulliver Universe* shows how eroticism is organized according to sequential logic: visits to several countries, encounters with several lovers, experimentation of various positions, and description of heterodox practices. All of that is presented humorously, using as many clichés as possible to describe all the situations. It is obvious that this story relies on convention. The same can be said of the male and female paradigms underlying the narrative: the man is always manly and the woman relies on him to achieve orgasm. Lili Gulliver—the ‘sexplorer’—will be satisfied only when she has traveled all the countries in the world!

### Biography

Lili Gulliver—born Diane Boissonneault—studied literature and screenwriting and has been a journalist and cultural critic. She lives in Montreal, Canada where she runs a bed and breakfast with her husband.

ELISE SALAÜN

### Selected Works

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## GUYOTAT, PIERRE

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1940–  
French writer and artist

### Tombeau pour cinq cent mille soldats

A violent, erotic epic of blood, sweat, and semen, with echoes of Genet, Guibert, Noël, Sade, and Wittig, and even Malraux’s *La condition humaine*. It combines an incantatory, almost

biblical, tone with parody and hyperbole—and, for some, given Guyotat’s troubled period in Algeria, implicit comments on the Algerian War.

### Chant I

This text recounts the taking and the liberation of Ecbatane, torn between an invading army, an

aged chief, and his lieutenant, Iérissos, and rebels, whether soldiers or slaves. In the course of the conflict, there is much bloodshed, copulation, and torture between the main, human characters—Iérissos, the Queen of the Night, and three slaves, Mantinée, Bactriane, and Aravik—and also animals: a horse, rats, and birds.

### Chant II

This section is, at first, a more episodic account of the occupied island, moving between various individuals and groups, from the violent Kment family to the picaresque adventures of the sexually liberated Crazy Horse and of the Governor, his wife Émilienne and their two children Serge and Fabienne. Licentiousness alternates with incest, infanticide, bestiality, cannibalism, and torture. The frequent spilling of blood, semen, and excrement seems, however, neither subversive or salacious but the simply savoured self-expression of a population at war. The pace then slows to register the erotic coupling of Kment and Giauhare, a cardinal's desire for adolescent boys, and the trials of Illiten, chief of the rebels.

### Chant III

Here, a series of surreal tableaux moves from brothel activities and the further visitations of the cardinal to scenes of war, torture and, since blood is the sperm of battle, sex: a soldier masturbates; the narrator (intermittently in the first-person) has congress with a seagull; Serge and Émilienne make feverish love; the young General enjoys an uninhibited session with one of his kitchen-boys, Pino, before fantasizing running an S/M male brothel and an orgy of violent, incestuous pleasures. Meanwhile, it seems that the captured Illiten has escaped and the rebels are winning.

### Chant IV

Apart from occasional violent episodes—as when Giauhare is almost raped by a soldier and when a rat devours a dead boy's penis—this section evokes more gentle, even tender male-to-female and male-to-male bondings, whether on the beach where the wounded Serge is tended by a devoted Émilienne or in a cave where a soldier fellates a group of men. The

section ends in one of the disputatious local brothels, where the young, drug-injected Pétrilion sodomizes, and is sodomized by, an eager and athletic dog, after which Pétrilion is borne off, wounded and Christ-like, by a solicitous admirer, Draga.

### Chant V

Conflict between revolutionaries and invaders wears on, with slave-prisoners (Véronique, Xaintrailles, Thivai, and the narrator) conducting a kind of sexual ballet, adolescents fornicating in the Royal Inaménas hotel, and the General licking the wounds of dead and dying soldiers. Fabienne mourns a happier past with Serge, Kment and Giauhare are reunited, and Illiten is murdered and replaced by Béja who brings the rebels closer to victory. After the General is murdered and the Governor imprisoned, the characters of Ecbatane are even freer to change and combine sexual partners and positions as dawn breaks over the coast.

### Chant VI

Preparations for the final engagement are accompanied by the soldiers' struggle over and with the seductive Niké who wants to see the battle which will involve hideous slaughter, not least in the city of Titov Veles, hitherto characterized by its failure to support the rebels and by an absence of brothels since its inhabitants prefer its own slaves, children, and animals. Faced by the marauding rebels who rape, massacre, and plunder—killing Serge and Émilienne, decapitating Pino in his kitchen, and incinerating Titov Veles—the Governor surrenders. Giauhare tells Kment she is having a child—by a rat.

### Chant VII

Kment and Giauhare are now alone with nature and with animals. Kment ejaculates into the earth while Giauhare lies under a wolf. The lovers embrace.

### *Éden, éden, éden*

In tune with Guyotat's contention that his work is not merely erotic but pornographic, this controversial, single-sentence text describes

the serial and multiple copulations of a group of men, women, children, and animals in and around an Arab brothel (male and female) in an otherwise unspecified time and place. Although war is not the issue, it was in *Tombeau*, soldiers and their fatigues—usually unbuttoned or discarded—figure strongly, alongside “lubricators,” herdsman, and nomads, who gather, with their livestock (sheep and geese), to enjoy the whores and boy-whores such as Wazzag and Khamssieh who participate readily in the alternating exchanges of seminal fluids and orgasmic couplings. When a butcher and his family become involved, the sex-making becomes predictably bloodier, with the butcher fisting Khamssieh, who is also bitten by a tarantula, and with Wazzag busy with a whoremaster, a date-picker, a panel-beater, and twin apprentices until the whole group is a virtually indistinguishable *mêlée* of limbs, lurchings, orgasms, and excrement. The twins then separate as other previously mentioned ‘characters’—nomad, herdsman, soldiers, and Blacks—return to the fray, which, now in a farm-camp, includes a cow and a baby. The adolescent herdsman is penetrated on all sides and by all comers, including the twins, Hamza and Khemissa; the latter is then sprayed with the urine and semen of the whoremaster. However insistent and even relentless these sexual encounters and however regular the orgasms, pornography’s “money shot” is itself never a sexual or even verbal climax but, rather, one aspect of the eroticism of the whole body—with its other liquids such as sweat, saliva, and blood—and of the language used to describe it. Hence the body is a permanent repository of earlier, sedimented or congealed orgasms which gleam on its surfaces and form a basis for a continuum of pleasure. This ubiquitous corporeal viscosity can also be seen as redolent of the existentialist *pour soi*, of Bataille’s expenditure, and also, perhaps, of the eventual threat (or promise) of erotic death. For although the text in a sense never finishes (it “closes” mid-sentence with a comma) the exchanges do become more violent—chest-hair is burnt, a vein is bitten open, an anus is lanced—and more chaotic: dogs, monkeys, goats, women, and children are drawn in to a dervish dance of sweating, groaning, and increasingly unidentifiable bodies. Despite this uninterrupted sexual activity, what seems to be missing here is desire itself, either because it is just assumed or because it is thought to be in the reader

(hence possibly the association with pornography) rather than in the text itself. Guyotat’s desert “Garden of Delights” thus offers a highly original and potentially disturbing oneiric, erotic epic.

### Explications

Among the topics discussed here with Marianne Alphant are the relation between sex(uality) and writing and the status and significance of the prostitute (male and female). The relation between sex and writing is complex: on the one hand writing is, despite Guyotat’s notorious association between writing and masturbation and general eroticization of the word, not only borne of personal chastity but constitutes a kind of anti- or counter-sex—a revolt against sex and sexuality. On the subject of prostitution and the male or female whore, Guyotat is similarly ambivalent: although he describes the whore as a “non-person,” between human and animal, who is, like everything else, a saleable commodity, the brothel and its environs are clearly his preferred “real” and symbolic territory, as is shown by its recurrence in other texts such as *Prostitution* (1975 and 1987) and *Progénitures* (2000). Without necessarily allying him to the “poète maudit” tradition, Guyotat’s foregrounding of the prostitute enables him to question what it is to be human, what it is to be sexual, and what are the links between carnal and familial-social relations. On the subject of sexuality and gender, Guyotat is equally ambivalent: although he has been described as a eulogist of homosexuality, some of his texts end with an epiphany of male-female bonding, and, as the title of *Progénitures* confirms, breeding, whether actual or symbolic, is a key theme in his works. Indeed, both male and female prostitutes are put forward as breeders, whether male-on-male, male-on-female, female-on-male or (more rarely), female-on-female. The urge to breed, whether in sex or in art, transcends biological sex and sexual “orientation”: semen flows between sexes as it flows between orifices in a never-ending series of human/non-human erotic exchanges.

### Biography

Although Guyotat’s early writing includes two novels, *Sur un cheval* and *Ashby*, it was his later

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*Tombeau pour cinq cent mille soldats* and *Éden, Éden, Éden* which brought him fame, indeed notoriety, with the latter being banned from 1970 until 1981. After publishing a number of books in the interstice, including *Prostitution* and *Le Livre*, he came to public attention again in 2000 with two further volumes: *Progénitures* and *Explications*. The year 2005 saw the republication of *Ashby* and *Sur un cheval* together with the first volume of his *Carnets de bord* (1962–1969) and Catherine Brun's *Pierre Guyotat. Essai biographique*. It is worth noting that Guyotat himself rejects the title 'writer' in favor of creator, artist, or even architect.

OWEN HEATHCOTE

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## HAINTENY (MADAGASCAR)

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The *hainteny* is a poetic genre composed in both Malagasy and French and most often found in written form. It originated, however, as a form of poetic oral dialogue in Madagascar, common in everyday speech. It expresses two principal themes: love and justice, and was originally used to settle disputes, as well as, more popularly, to express metaphorically sexual desire or pursuit. *The hainteny* frequently takes the form of a dialogue, which was originally improvised on the spot as a kind of verbal duel. To engage in an oral *hainteny* competition it was first necessary to know a number of commonly cited *hainteny* or *ohabolana* (the closest translation is “proverbs”), with which they have often been confused. The dialogic structure has parallels in other African forms of poetic expression, as well as in the Malaysian *pantun*. In the written form this frequently gives rise to ambiguity however, where it is frequently not clear where divisions between interlocutors lie, or even whether more than one voice is present. The Malagasy language also does not mark the gender difference in speech and so further ambiguity is often present, especially where the *hainteny* express courtship or sexual advances.

The derivation of the word “hainteny” itself has attracted considerable controversy. Their erotic content is often stressed, as in the description of them given by the Reverend James Sibree, a British Missionary who edited the *Antananarivo Annual* from 1875–1900, as “erotic proverbs” and Domenichini-Ramiaramanana’s use of “mots brûlants,” or “burning words.” Jean Paulhan, who spent two years in Madagascar from 1908–1910 and produced a highly influential body of work on the *hainteny*, stressed rather their wisdom and artistry, calling them “mots savants” and “science du langage.” Paulhan was the first outside commentator to see the *hainteny* as poetry rather than prose, as the missionaries generally had, and sought to uncover its perceived obscurity. It was through Paulhan’s work and his correspondence with, among others, Guillaume Appollinaire and Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, that the *hainteny* came most prominently into view in European cultural circles, where they found an echo in the avant-garde search for a new form of poetry. They also had a resonance within the francophone African community, as part of the anti-colonial *négritude* movement, and examples can be found in



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Leopold Senghor's *Anthologie de la nouvelle poésie nègre et malgache de la langue française*. Within Madagascar the rediscovery of the *hainteny* by twentieth-century poets writing in French, notably Jean-Joseph Rabearivelo and Flavien Ranaivo, should be seen as part of a literary return to Malagasy tradition though not excluding the incorporation of European language and poetic devices.

Major collections were made in the nineteenth-century by missionaries, but these were heavily censored and so tend to exclude the more overtly sexual *hainteny*. The Reverend Lars Dahle, a Norwegian Missionary, went as far as to include in the preface to his *Specimens of Malagasy Folklore* (1877) the warning "In spite of all care I am still not sure that in some places an unnoticed impure thought may not lurk underneath, as it is sometimes so extremely difficult to find out what notions and associations may, in course of time, have gathered round a seemingly quite innocent word or phrase." Even in collections that were not overtly censored by Western collectors it would appear that the range of *hainteny* communicated was censored in some way by the practitioners themselves. The difference in style and content can be seen when compared with the wide-ranging collection made under the reign of Queen Ranavalona I, between 1828 and 1861, and published by Bakoly Domenichini-Ramiaramana (*Hainteny D'Autrefois*, 1968) which contain more explicit sexual references. It may also be that an effect of the spreading of Christianity in Madagascar was to dilute the erotic content of commonly known and recited *hainteny*. Even so, as Dahle feared, careful analysis of seemingly innocent *hainteny* may reveal highly erotic connotations, and Flavien Ranaivo, one of the leading Malagasy poets of the mid-/late-twentieth century, has claimed that in all *hainteny* an erotic meaning can be found on some level.

The *hainteny* is associated primarily with the Merina people, although other related genres exist in Madagascar which are more overtly sexual and direct, such as the Sakalava *saimbola*. In these the part played by the woman is simply an acceptance or refusal of the man's advances, however, which may indicate a difference in the relative status of men and women in different regions of Madagascar. *Hainteny* tend to be more indirect, where the woman is fully capable of poetic expression and negotiation. Many,

such as Ranaivo's "la cousine de Magali" take the form of a dialectic of capture and escape, where the woman is able to evade the man's advances through constant deferral and transposition of the approach or question. Here the woman responds to the man's assertions of sexual possession (gathering a silver fruit) by transforming herself from an object (the fruit on the tree) to an animal (a bird which may fly away).

This indirect communication functions primarily through the use of metaphor and symbol, which frequently operate on multiple levels. These resonate strongly in Malagasy culture and language, but have frequently led during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries to the dismissal of *hainteny* as obscure and incomprehensible. The landscape of the *hainteny* is rich and populated by birds and animals which may indicate, for example, desire or availability, and by mountains, rivers and forests, all of which bear symbolic meaning. Sexual and emotive associations may also be linked to everyday objects such as the *lamba* [shawl], which often functions as a locus of desire.

The *hainteny* presents significant problems of interpretation for a non-Malagasy audience. It repays careful study however, and its subtle treatment of themes such as love, jealousy, and desire reveal layers of meaning and association, and a rare and enduring beauty.

IMOGEN PARSONS

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## HAITIAN LITERARY EROTICISM

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Since independence and up to the middle of the twentieth century Haitian society remained remarkably structured, stable, and self-contained: The citizenry was divided into a small self-perpetuating urban minority which monopolized political power and its perquisites, and a large powerless rural majority who produced the nation's wealth while receiving none of its benefits. The constant struggle for ascendancy that characterizes Haitian history concerned the contending factions of the ruling classes, was irrelevant to the illiterate peasantry, and had little influence on the elite's cultural *Weltanschauung* and its expression.

The catastrophic dictatorship of François Duvalier on the one hand, and the progress of modernization and globalization on the other, have plunged Haitian society into a continuing ever-deepening crisis. The last half-century has witnessed ecological devastation, the pauperization of a peasantry forced to abandon the land and crowd into urban slums and shanty towns, the breakdown of law and order, the disregard for human rights, and the massive emigration of Haitians of all social strata (especially intellectuals) primarily to the other West Indies, Quebec, and the United States. Traditional ways of life, social customs, intellectual values, intergenerational relationships, and modes of interaction between the sexes have been further profoundly unsettled and deeply affected by foreign ways learned in exile or through the media. These changes are necessarily reflected in literary eroticism. One should therefore distinguish between literary eroticism during the century and a half of stability, and literary eroticism as

it has been developing since the crisis. While the first is relatively easy to describe, such is not the case for the second.

Generally speaking, Haitian society is not particularly prudish. Haitians are just as fond as other West Indians of double-entendres and ribald stories. Popular songs, enjoyed by men and women of all social classes, make a specialty of this kind of racy humor, and are quite openly suggestive. But they are in Créole, the national language, in which all citizens are fluent, and not in French, the only official language up to 1987, the medium of a literature that remains accessible to only a minute percentage of the ruling classes.

Literate Haitians have traditionally regarded French with a respect verging on idolatry. They tend to consider that their country's contributions to its literature should deal primarily with serious, lofty, socially committed themes. One theme has in fact dominated the concerns of Haitian writers (and readers) ever since independence: the viability of Haiti as a nation, and the failings of its citizenry. This obsession with the tragic destiny of the country makes the sexual life of its citizens a secondary concern. Erotic experiences are practically never included for their own sake but used to illustrate, complement, or symbolize other themes, or to flesh out the psychological makeup of a character. Thus, in Fernand Hibbert's 1905 novel *Séna*, the eponymous hero's lusting for his light-colored mistress is an expression of color prejudice rather than of conquering masculinity. In Frédéric Marcelin's 1902 *La Vengeance De Mama* (*Mama's Revenge*) a young woman assassinates the corrupt politician who thinks he is finally about to enjoy her favors not during a lover's quarrel but to avenge the death of her fiancée.

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If we define erotica as writings primarily designed to titillate or arouse through the description of sexual acts, there is for all intents and purposes no Haitian erotica. Haitian literature in French is meant to educate and inspire, not to entertain, and thus has produced no erotica, and no (or very few) mystery or detective novels either, nor science fiction, children's books, bedroom farces, or Harlequin romances. In addition, the writer and his public belong to the same extremely narrow social group. All writers know each other personally, and it would be only a slight exaggeration to suggest that most readers also are acquainted with one another. A writer tempted to explore erotic themes, or even to compose erotic passages, would therefore hesitate for fear of scandalizing readers who, in the way of readers everywhere, readily identify authors with their fictional characters and ascribe descriptions of "unseemly" behavior to their creator's libido.

The literary genre in which Haitian authors writing in French are less reticent to evoke sexual desire and satisfaction are tales and short stories depicting, always in the facetious mode, rural or proletarian life. For example André Chevallier in *Mon petit Kodak* [*My Little Camera*] (1916), Jacques-Stéphen Alexis in *Roman-cero aux étoiles* [*Songbook for the Stars*] (1960), René Depestre in *Alléluia pour une femme-jardin* [*Hallelujah for a Garden-woman*] (1973), and Gary Victor in most of his collections of ribald tales: *Albert Buron* (1988), *Nouvelles interdites* [*Forbidden Tales*] (1989) etc. These texts are reminiscent of medieval and Renaissance anecdotes about cuckolded jealous husbands, ridiculous old men lusting after young women, frustrated old maids, city Casanovas bested by wily country wenches, and the like. They could be traced back to the *fabliaux* tradition that occasionally inspired La Fontaine, Voltaire, and Balzac, but they could also be considered as the adaptation into the cultured language of the Créole songs and stories that treat the same subject matter. In these tales, as in traditional French anti-clerical anecdotes, it is not uncommon to see Breton missionary priests sacrifice their vow of chastity on the altar of their lusty Black housekeepers. However, in contradistinction to the French, Haitian authors have not depicted nuns succumbing to or even having to resist temptation.

Descriptions or mere allusions to a series of sexual behaviors are practically absent from Haitian writings before the last few decades. Sexual dysfunction, be it impotence or frigidity, is not even hinted at. Male homosexuality seems

not to exist. No incidence of lesbianism before a fleeting episode between two prostitutes in Jacques-Stéphen Alexis' *L'Espace d'un cillement* [*In the Flicker of an Eyelid*] (1960). No male masturbation. The first mention of female self-gratification is in Marie Chauvet's *Amour* [*Love*] (1968) (Chauvet, and to a lesser degree Alexis, are the first Haitian novelists to have scrutinized feminine eroticism). No occurrences of incest or pedophilia. No description of orgies or evocations of masculine or feminine private parts. None of the "unnatural" heterosexual activities considered sinful by the Church. No sadists or masochists (except, once again, in Marie Chauvet's novels). Not even salacious depictions of the kind inspired by the *Kama Sutra* or *The Joy of Sex* illustrations. And sexual matters are never couched in vulgar or coarse language which, be it said in passing, is particularly rich and pungent in Créole.

This is, of course, not to say that Haitian sexual mores are any less complex than any other people's—but the theme is tacitly ignored in polite society, both in its oral and written manifestations. According to the accepted piety, Haitian sexuality takes place within the bonds of "normalcy" and "morality." Deviations and transgressions are alluded to in the normal exchange of gossip, but not in open discourse. From this point of view, it would not be unfair to speak of Puritanism.

One characteristic that distinguishes French language poetry in Haiti from that of the Europeans is the obsessive identification of women with edibles. Especially, as could be expected, with fruits. A woman's breasts can be compared to "twin sapodillas" or "twin marmalade plums," her lips are "as purple as our lovely caymitos" and taste like "mammy apples"; her kisses are "honeyed pineapple," her mouth "melts like a mango"; she is "a sugar-sweet orange," "a well-ripened fruit, defenseless and full of sap"; her body is "hot citrus," her eyes can be "tamarind, but shaped like almonds" her breath "wafts the perfume of our guavas," her cheeks are "rose apples"; and when she is cruel, her heart is as hard as "Guinea coconuts." To be sure, French poets also have celebrated women's peachy complexions or their cherry red lips, but their Haitian colleagues' imagination runs riot in the pursuit of scrumptious metaphors. And other flavorful comestibles are also evoked: the kisses of the poet's beloved can be "more gooey

than turtle soup,” they can taste of “sour ball candy,” have “a salty, tangy taste,” and the nape of her neck can “taste of sea-food.” All Haitians know a humorous poem by Émile Roumer in which the marabout (a dark-skinned, silky-haired woman with European features) of the poem is compared to the most appetizing specialties of Haitian cuisine:

*Marabout de mon cœur [Marabout of my Heart]:*

Marabout of my heart, with breasts like tangerines,  
 You taste better to me than eggplant stuffed with  
 crab.  
 You are the slice of tripe within my gumbo soup,  
 The dumpling in my beans, my tea of herbs and  
 cloves,  
 You are the bully beef whose rind my heart provides,  
 The syrup and cornmeal that trickles down my throat,  
 You are a steaming dish; you are mushrooms and  
 rice;  
 Cod fritters very crisp; fish fried to golden brown.  
 I hunger for your love. Where you roam I will trail  
 Your buttocks, bouncing boats with bounteous  
 victuals laden.

While French poets tend to depict beautiful women in repose, and compare them to paintings or statues, movement is an essential component of Haitian feminine attractiveness. As René Depestre puts it in *Hallelujah for a Garden-woman*:

Garden women have electric buttocks  
 Garden women have cyclones in their love play [...]   
 And in their movements the geometry of she-lions

The women of Haiti reveal the true essence of their beauty by moving, walking or, better yet, by dancing—and especially in dancing for the Gods, or while possessed by them during voodoo ceremonies. Since the nineteenth century, novelists and poets have often described such ceremonies, sometimes realistically, sometimes imaginatively. And the focus is generally on the dancing woman, and on “her nimble loins” and “the savage play of her undulating hips.” A particularly suggestive description is found in Milo Rigaud’s 1933 novel *Jésus et Legba*:

In the glow of the fire a woman started to dance. Half naked, dressed only in a skirt tied on her hips by a red sash, she stormed into the circle like a dusky Fury. She went through terrible contortions. A man with the limbs of a panther came after her, and while she sang:

Zaguidi, zaguidi  
 I am more of a man than a woman,  
 Zaguidi, zaguidi,  
 I’m more of a woman than a man  
 her black partner pressed upon her with domineering gestures. While the woman kept sticking out her bouncing haunches, they mimed a mad pursuit, which the man won. (p. 109).

It should be noted that in most cases only dark-skinned peasant or working class women are compared to edibles or displayed in the performance of wild or suggestive dances. Their aristocratic light-skinned counterparts, on the other hand, are generally compared, like European women, to objets d’art and admired while dancing dignified waltzes and two-steps in well-appointed ballrooms.

Similarly, writers draw a modest veil when society ladies are about to enjoy sex. They are somewhat more daring when dealing with peasant or proletarian girls. Such scenes are not necessarily meant to be demeaning or prurient. On the contrary, they are generally described in poetic language; they take place in the open air, and the girl is identified with the motherly and bountiful earth. Jacques Roumain’s evocation in *Gouverneurs de la rosée [Masters of the Dew]* (1944) of Manuel and Annaïse’s first coupling by the side of the spring is particularly skillful, even in translation, and has inspired many imitators:

Their lips touched.  
 “My sweet,” she sighed.  
 She closed her eyes and he laid her down. She was stretched out on the ground and the low rumble of the water echoed within her in a sound that was the tumult of her own blood. She didn’t defend herself. His hand, so heavy, transmitted an intolerable sweetness.  
 “I’m going to die!”  
 Beneath his touch, her body burned. He unlocked her knees, and she opened herself to him. He entered, a lacerating presence, and she gave an injured groan.  
 “No! Don’t leave me—or I’ll die!”  
 Her body went to meet his in a feverish surge. In her an unspeakable anguish was born, a terrible delight, which absorbed the movements of her body. A panting which rose to her lips.  
 Then she felt herself melt in the deliverance of that long sob that left her prostrate in man’s embrace.

As previously mentioned, all of the above hardly applies to most Haitian writings of the last few decades. The economic, political, and social deterioration of the country is reflected

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in its literature and its depiction of eroticism. Contemporary writings are the texts of despair, be they composed and published in Haiti or, increasingly, in French or Quebecois exile. Haitian authors, as their colleagues in the Western world, are now free of the censorship that used to inhibit the representation of eroticism. To be sure, some authors nevertheless hold to the old-fashioned standards of allusiveness and delicacy when depicting physical love. But the sensuous, happy descriptions of “fruit women” and of cheerful lusty encounters now seem old-fashioned. Henceforth, the erotic is at best wistfully associated with more humane bygone days or, more usually, with present deprivation and torture. Given the trials of the country and the suffering of its citizens, to evoke the *Joys of Sex* seems irrelevant if not downright offensive. As Louis Neptune put it:

For us the stink of prison has replaced the fragrance of bosoms  
The cold wind of stone walls my Caribbean girl's soft breath.

Also, the last decades have seen Haitians broadening their literary horizon until then limited to the latest French productions. More and more Haitian readers and authors have now become familiar with and influenced by English, Spanish, and “Francophone” writings. Many have been exposed to avant-garde schools of literary criticism which regard all means of expression, even pornography, as equally respectable. Under these various influences, the modesty and seamliness of old has all but disappeared.

A particularly representative and impressive example of the new literary vision is Gérard Étienne's 1974 first person narrative *Le nègre crucifié* [*The Crucified Negro*]. In a semiconscious hallucinatory state, a prisoner who has suffered the most abject forms of torture at the hands of François Duvalier's henchmen imagines himself crucified at a street crossing in Port-au-Prince. He screams invectives at those who have debased him and the country he loved. His ranting denunciation of life under the terrorist regime makes for painful reading. Blood, excrement, garbage, vermin, scabs, the screams of prisoners, the stink of unwashed bodies, of rotting food, and of clogged latrines are the stuff of his vociferations. Humiliating sexual submission, for pubescent boys and girls as well as for men and women, is at best a survival tactic.

Eroticism has been replaced by obscenity. Even presumably tender moments are reminiscent of the nightmares painted by Hieronimus Bosch:

Nounou is beautiful. He wants to take her. Lie down, he says. More than twenty mice run into her mouth, inspect her guts, and tumble out through a hole in her pelvis. Do the mice hurt you? No, replies the girl, they feed on my tuberculosis. [...]

He throws himself on Nounoune, licks her skin, bites her eyes. She sighs. He lifts her dress, touches her vagina and makes a face. What a strange animal, he says. Look at its cockscomb. It looks like a grass snake's tongue. Nounoune, does it have teeth? Why don't we make love in your mouth? (pp. 56–57)

Voodoo used to be, if not respected, at least admired for its artistic components. In Étienne's phantasmagoria, this is what happens to practitioners:

They have cavorted so long that they end up fucking their own daughters on straw mats where dogs and fleas cavort. [...] Their slobber and their food foam up. Their sweat foams with their spittle and the pus of their wounds.

It's like a clump of meat rotting in sorcery, hunger and orgies. (p. 29)

*The Crucified Negro* is an extreme example, and few texts equal its apocalyptic vituperations. But it seems that, while Haitian authors used to seek inspiration in the sentimentalism of Lamartine or the committed idealism of Victor Hugo, they now turn to the Marquis de Sade and the pessimism of Céline. Be that as it may, erotic passages are now certainly more explicit, but it would take a peculiar sensibility to be aroused by novels such as Daniel Supplice's novel *Karioka* (1999), where a young girl passes out under *tonton-makout* torture. When she returns to consciousness:

She brought her hand to her vagina, and the abundance of sperm that oozed out of it revealed that she had been raped repeatedly. (p. 89)

Such a passage would have been all but inconceivable before the Duvalier era. Rape, which used to be taboo, is now a common literary occurrence. In Marie Chauvet's *Colère* [*Anger*] (1968) the young mulatto Rose submits to the *makout* chief to protect her family.

In Jean-Claude Fignolé's *La dernière goutte d'homme* [*The Last Human Drop*] (1999) among other horrors perpetrated by Duvalier's goon is described:

a woman, her tongue cut out, her breasts ripped and mangled, after having been raped by two unidentified individuals. (p. 23)

This is the first Haitian novel in which sexual love between two men is evoked, and with respect. It is also the first one in which an episode of fellatio is described, as well as incest between a mother and her son and the homosexual rape of a child by his brother. For such daring, even though it avoids any prurience, Fignolé would probably have been run out of town in the more decorous past.

In Anthony Phelps' *Mémoire en colin-mailard* [*Memory Plays Hide-and-Seek*] (1976), a sexual encounter between Claude, a well-to-do young mulatto, and his Black servant Mésina is described in poetic and very precise details. It seems at first that we are witnessing the joyful coupling of consenting adults, but we soon realize that we are dealing with an oneiric sequence, that Claude has been crippled (and possibly unmanned) by Duvalier's thugs and that the whole daydream is nothing but wishful compensation. The climax comes when Claude imagines himself as a sadistic voodoo spirit mounting the young woman (in voodoo parlance, a person possessed is a "horse" "mounted" by the spirit) and bringing her to painful climax with his whip and spurs:

-Buck, now, Mésina. Buck!

-I'm bucking, M'sieu Claude. And your whip is flaying me. I'm bucking again and your spurs bite into me. Aïe!... I'm going to die, m'sieu Claude. Aïe!... you are a god, m'sieu Claude. You are the devil himself.

In French as in Elizabethan English, "to die" is a euphemism for "to climax." And so it is here. But at the same time the primary meaning of the verb is emblematic: for most writers, sex in today's Haiti is perversely linked with death, and release can only be attained through inflicting pain. Sex in Haitian literature will become erotic again only when peace and justice return to this much abused country.

LÉON-FRANÇOIS HOFFMAN

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# HALL, RADCLYFFE

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1880–1943  
English novelist and poet

### *The Well of Loneliness*

Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) is arguably the most notorious lesbian novel in English, whereby its fame stems partly from its early ban in Britain. Subdivided into five books, the work portrays the life and loves of the female invert Stephen Gordon, who has often been wrongly assumed to be based on Hall herself. The masculine English upper-class girl, Stephen, discovers at the age of seven that she is attracted to women when she develops a crush on the housemaid. Aged twenty-one, she then has her first sexual encounter with another woman, the married Angela Crosby. The passionate affair ends when Angela confesses it to her husband, who in turn informs Stephens's mother about her sexual inclination. This results in Stephen leaving the family's country estate. She settles in London together with her teacher-companion Puddington, or Puddle, who is herself a closeted invert. Hall modelled Puddle in part upon her earlier fictional creation, Elizabeth Rodney from *The Unlit Lamp* (1924), which was one of Hall's more overtly feminist works. Here she had condemned expectations that women had to fulfil the traditional role of womanhood, which allowed them no personal choices or development. Like Rodney, but quite unlike Stephen, Puddle suppresses her sexuality. In London, Stephen establishes herself as a successful writer.

With the outbreak of World War I, she joins a women's ambulance unit in France, where she meets the young Welsh woman Mary Llewellyn. After the war, the two become lovers. Their first sexual union is alluded to in the now famous line "...and that night they were not divided" (316). They set up house together in Paris and become part of a colorful set of male and female homosexual intellectuals and artists, which Hall loosely based on her own Parisian circle of friends, especially on Natalie Barney. The narrative spirals towards its dramatic ending when Stephen's old friend Martin Hallam reappears and falls in love with Mary. Stephen decides that she should give up Mary to Martin. She devises a ploy whereby the unwitting Mary is directed into leaving Stephen, to be taken away by Martin. *The Well of Loneliness* ends with a quasi-religious scene in which Stephen, now alone, has taken on the grand role as representative for the millions of inverts on earth, in whose name she demands recognition and the right to existence.

*The Well of Loneliness* is a candid document of Hall's (at the time) radical understanding of lesbianism—or sexual inversion, as it was also known—which she perceived to be a naturally occurring sexual variation. This idea was based on the newly developed theories of sexology, for which Hall had an avid interest. Two of the leading nineteenth-century sexologists, the German lawyer and homosexual activist Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, and the German psychiatrist Richard von Krafft-Ebing, are actually mentioned in the novel. Their theories had in common that they distinguished between congenital and acquired

homosexuality, and that they linked sexual inversion to gender inversion. These ideas feature prominently in *The Well of Loneliness*, especially through the portrayal of the protagonist. Stephen Gordon is characterized by her overt masculinity, which marks the fact that she is born an invert, in contrast, for example, to her first lover, Angela Crosby, for whom inversion was an acquired habit. Hall inscribes erotic tension into the narrative by repeatedly and in detail describing Stephen's masculine body, and then contrasting it with the feminine features of Stephen's lovers. The most erotic moments in the narrative are thus constructed by conjuring up certain bodily imagery, rather than through the use of explicit sexual language.

Hall had wanted *The Well of Loneliness* to be bolder than any other lesbian novel in English before. The book, written in the style of the *bildungsroman*, followed in the footsteps of recent developments in English literature, whereby lesbian themes had gained increasing, albeit tentative, attention at the turn of the last nineteenth century (see entry on lesbian literature). However, Hall was the first to sympathetically portray a sexually active invert. This bestowed almost instant notoriety upon both the work and its author. First published in May 1928 by the London-based Jonathan Cape publishing house, *The Well of Loneliness* was tried under the Obscene Publications Act of 1857 in November of the same year. It was found guilty of obscenity and banned in England. The novel was subsequently published in America where it was also tried, but cleared of obscenity charges. The British ban on *The Well of Loneliness* was only lifted in 1959 with the passing of a new Obscene Publications Act.

The ban of *The Well of Loneliness* did not end Hall's literary production. She published two more novels, *The Master of the House* (1932) and *The Sixth Beatitude* (1936), as well as a collection of short stories entitled *Miss Ogilvy Finds Herself* (1934). None of the works engaged with the subject of female sexual inversion. Hall's lover Una Troubridge claims to have given *The Well of Loneliness* its famous title. It appears rather tongue-in-cheek, as the protagonist of the novel leads anything but a lonely life.

In the 1980s, *The Well of Loneliness* suffered much critical condemnation for allegedly reinforcing narrow stereotypes about the masculine lesbian. A decade later, there has been a marked

change in critical opinion and the novel has been reassessed as a subversive and empowering piece of writing. The erotic allure of Hall's narrative continues to appeal to generations of readers.

### Biography

Born August 12, 1880 in Bournemouth, Hampshire as Marguerite Radclyffe-Hall, she renamed herself John in adult life and adopted Radclyffe Hall as her literary name. Privately educated, she spent 1898–1899 in Dresden, Germany, and on return attended lectures at King's College, University of London. Her life was dominated by three major relationships (the last two chronologically overlapping) with Mabel 'Ladye Batten,' Una Troubridge, and Evguenia Souline. Her friends and acquaintances included May Sinclair, Rebecca West, Natalie Barney, Colette, Havelock Ellis, and W. B. Yeats. She was a keen traveller, but rooted in England, where she died in London on 7 October 1943.

Hall published five volumes of poetry and seven novels. Her literary acclaim was established with the novel *Adam's Breed* (1926), which won the Prix Femina Vie Heureuse, and the James Tait Black Memorial Prize. Her first publication, a book of poetry entitled *A Sheaf of Verses*, came out in 1908. Her first two novels *The Forge* and *The Unlit Lamp* were both published in 1924.

HEIKE BAUER

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# HARRIS, FRANK

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1856–1931

Irish memoirist, short story writer, and journalist

### *My Life and Loves*

Frank Harris' five-volume work *My Life and Loves* is a biography with sexual elements present throughout and not (like the anonymous *My Secret Life*, for example) a sexual autobiography with no other matter covered.

This autobiography is his only enduring work, one that deliberately steps outside the contemporary restraints of the genre, provocatively setting a standard against British and American sexual prudery. Harris determines to tell the truth about his sex life, declaring "If all the ways of love are beautiful to me, why should I not say so? All the girls and women I have met and loved have taught me something."

In the forward he sets down the ultimately mournful theme of the book, of how the power to enjoy and give sexual pleasure is keenest in early life, while the understanding of how to do it well develops later, "when the faculties are already on the decline."

He creates a revealing analogy to illustrate this: when he was a child his father gave him a single-barrelled gun; when he had learned to use it he was given a double-barrelled shotgun; and in later life he took to using a magazine gun. "My Creator, or Heavenly Father, on the other hand, gave me, so to speak, a magazine gun of sex, and hardly had I learned its use and

enjoyment when he took it away from me forever, and gave me in its place a double-barrelled gun: after a few years, he took that away and gave me a single-barrelled gun with which I was forced to content myself for the best part of my life. Towards the end the old single-barrel began to show signs of wear and age; sometimes it would go off too soon, sometimes it missed fire and shamed me, do what I would." The story gives much of the book: the self-important while at the same time self-pitying tone but with more than a hint of mockery; the neatness of expression over a limited field; the mechanical view of sex and the analogy with hunting game.

Harris tells of sexual experience from the earliest years: in the classroom when he was under five and would drop his pencil to be able to bend down and see the legs of the big girls; and his sisters showed him their developing breasts.

Born in Ireland, Harris was sent to school in England; he describes the sexual bullying of the public school system where 'fags' were forced to masturbate older boys. Harris believes unreservedly in the 'vital force' theory of masturbation as an enervating activity and as evidence cites the case of one boy who masturbated frequently, "All of us knew he had torn a hole in his pocket so he could play with his cock...the little fellow grew gradually paler and paler until he took to crying in a corner, and unaccountably nervous trembling shook him for a quarter of an hour at a time. At length, he was taken away by his parents."

He tells how at thirteen as a boy in the choir who sang solos, the organist would summon him to practice with local girls, one of whom also sang alto so she was placed next to him. He cautiously slips his hand up her skirt, at which "she did not move or show any sign of distaste." He examines her vagina with his fingers, "Gently I rubbed the front part of her sex with my finger. I could have kissed her a thousand times out of gratitude... as I went on, I felt her move, and then again; plainly she was showing me where my touch gave her most pleasure."

The lesson finished and they had to leave. The following week Harris tries to repeat the experiment but the girl refuses and Harris in his distress sings so badly he loses his position as soloist. Like most of Harris' sexual tales, the story has a ring of truth—a tale with pornographic intent would have had the episode leading to copulation or at least orgasm, not humiliated disappointment. Though there was no success, Harris remarks in a characteristically blunt metaphor, "I had tasted blood and could never afterwards forget the scent of it." He determined "No more self-abuse for me; I knew something infinitely better."

With the inquiring intellect that was to make him a successful newspaperman, Harris learns from older boys such lessons as "girls love kissing" and, from his sister, "you must say that the girl you are with is the prettiest girl in the room." He begs sexual advice from a man known locally as a Lothario who tells him, "When you can put a stiff penis in her hand and weep profusely the while, you're getting near any woman's heart. But don't forget the tears."

He describes in detail how he gets to fondle three other girls, one of them, Jesse, on the boat crossing from Liverpool to New York after he has run away from school at the age of fifteen. He exclaims, "She yielded again to my hand with a little sigh and I found her sex all wet, wet!" When, in New York, they are together and naked, he notices, with a disappointment very characteristic of his sexual quest, "she was too broad for her height; her legs were too short, her hips too stout. It all chilled me a little. Should I ever find perfection?"

Physically, Harris was short of stature, very short-sighted and considered himself ugly but says he discovered that qualities such as "strength and dominant self-confidence" are those most attractive to a woman. His gifts

were his conversation, his brilliant memory (he could recite a book of Swinburne's verse by heart after reading it once) and a driving will which enabled him to achieve such feats as shutting himself up for three months to become fluent in a new language when he needed to do so.

In the United States, Harris' first extensive sexual experiences are at the age of eighteen with an older woman, the passionate wife of an acquaintance who, after his advances, takes the lead in the relationship, "My second orgasm took some time and all the while Lorna became more and more responsive, till suddenly she put her hands on my bottom and drew me to her forcibly while she moved her sex up and down awkwardly to meet my thrusts with a passion I had hardly imagined." She introduces him to sexual variety, riding him and also giving him his first experience of fellatio with the words, "Your seed, darling, is dear to me: I don't want it in my sex; I want to feel you thrill and so I want your sex in my mouth, I want to drink you essence."

New loves come to excite him, which he explains with the proverb "Fresh cunt, fresh courage," and he seduces the daughter of his landlord. Aware that the narrative structure implies a series of conquests, he insists "my half dozen victories were spread out over nearly as many years and time and again I met rebuffs and refusals." Still, he wishes to emphasize that "success in love, like success in every department of life, falls usually to the tough man unwearied in pursuit." In sex as in business and education, he is the ultimate self-made man.

His high intellect and thirst for knowledge lead him to be taken up as a student by Byron Caldwell Smith, a professor at Kansas University. In return, Harris says he tried to cure Smith of nocturnal emissions, which were enervating the classics scholar, by a regime of tying up his penis at night which Harris himself had found helpful.

With a scholar's dedication, Harris plunges into the mechanics of sex which he finds endlessly fascinating. He has himself circumcised because he believes that a toughened skin of the cuticle makes it more difficult to catch syphilis, and that toughening the head of the penis would allow him to prolong copulation.

Harris does not wear his knowledge lightly and feels moved to explain female anatomy and the process of conception to women with whom

he has sex. He uses immediate post-coital douching as a method of contraception, helping his lovers to insert the device.

He is full of sexual lore and is ever interested in adding to it. He feels the heat of a woman's lips are an indication of the lubricity of her vagina; he remarks that the French think "small bones indicate a small sex; but I have found the exceptions are very numerous." His kindness to a black woman leads her daughter to offer herself to him, at which he remarks, "To my astonishment her sex was well formed and very small: I had always heard that Negroes had far larger genitals than white people; but the lips of Sophy's sex were thick and firm...My admiration of Sophy cleansed me of any possible disdain I might otherwise have had of the Negro people."

Some techniques are too advanced for the young man, however: when a French woman asks him to *faire minette* (give her cunnilingus) saying "I prefer in a meal the hors-d'oeuvres to the pièce de resistance like a good many other women." Harris refuses with "the ordinary English or American youth's repugnance to what seemed like degradation."

Some years later, however, in Athens, he is in bed with a woman who so fears conception that she begs him to give her cunnilingus, and out of his passion for her he consents "I opened the lips of her sex and put my lips on it and my tongue against her clitoris. There was nothing repulsive in it; it was another and more sensitive mouth." He is delighted at the experience and builds its possibilities into his sexual world, "I could give pleasure to any extent without exhausting or even tiring myself. It thus enabled me to atone completely and make up for my steadily decreasing virility. Secondly, I discovered that by teaching me the most sensitive parts of the woman, I was able even in the ordinary way to give my mistresses more and keener pleasure than ever before." Harris seems unable to have a sexual experience without drawing a moral from it, from this one he learns, "how superior art is to nature."

He travels to Europe, chiefly in Paris and Germany where he studies in Heidelberg where he discovers that "absolutely complete chastity enabled me to work longer hours than I had ever worked" and resolves to have sex only when he is truly in love. The problem with this resolution is that Harris falls in love very easily. He has sex with women in Austria and Ireland and learns

through his experiences that he most enjoys sex the more he gives pleasure to women

He falls in love with Laura Clapton, a beautiful and intelligent Anglo-American with scheming, impoverished parents. He hopes to marry her but waits until he has made his fortune, but she has had liaisons with other men and he sets her up in an apartment as his mistress. Though she protests love for him, he has great difficulty in bringing her to orgasm, "I would pose her sideways so as to bring out the greater swell of the hip and the poses would usually end with my burying my head between her legs, trying with lips and tongue and finger and often again with my sex to bring her sensations to ecstasy and if possible to love-speech and love thanks!"

By hard work and by importuning editors he becomes a successful journalist in London, and rises rapidly to become one of the greatest popular newspaper editors of his generation. He described his success to his ability to see the world through the eyes of a teenager, "kissing and fighting were the only things I cared for at thirteen or fourteen, and those are the themes the English public desires and enjoys today."

In Paris, he picks up a coquette, Jeanne, by leaping into her carriage. She is no longer young nor a beauty but is a refined, well-read woman who offered the speciality of 'casse noisettes': a vagina "with the contractile strength of a hand." She has saved a good deal from her life as a mistress and offers to take Harris away to Algeria and keep him while he pursues his writing. Jeanne uses her adopted daughter of around twelve, Lisette, as bait, encouraging Harris to see her in the bath and to be alone with her. Later Harris takes the opportunity, while Jeanne is dressing, of kissing and fondling Lisette but does not have full sex with her.

He never ceases to ponder the mysteries of sexual attraction, remarking on his "adoration of virginity" which is as inexplicable to him as an old man as it was fifty years previously. "Even now a well-made girl's legs of fourteen make the pulses beat in my forehead and bring water into my mouth."

He marries in 1887 in the hope that this will advance his intended political career. His autobiography omits details of sexual relations of this and a later marriage to Nellie O'Hara, his true soul-mate, whose name does not even occur in the book.

While on honeymoon in the first marriage he chances to see his old love Laura on a station and feels a choking pain, "in one moment I realised I had bartered happiness for comfort and a pleasant life, that I had blundered badly and would have to pay for the blunder and pay heavily." He resumes the relationship with Laura while attempting, unsuccessfully, a parliamentary career.

Harris seems to tire of the chronological story by the time he has described his life to his mid-forties, and the book becomes increasingly more fragmented with chapters given over to accounts of famous people he has known or to sexual adventures.

One story is of what he calls "The greatest amatory experience of my life" after he has bought a villa in San Reno and falls in with his gardener's suggestion of a beauty contest where five local girls are invited to the villa, encouraged to strip, and rewarded with prizes by Harris who is posing as an English lord. Word gets around of these frolics and another week the gardener procures twenty girls willing to take off their clothes for the chance of winning a hundred francs.

Having made their choices, Harris and a friend work on a refinement of the game to determine the winner of winners. They then make close examinations to see who has "the smallest and best made sex" and stimulate the girls to test their reaction to sensation, though Harris' favorite, Flora, "disdained the test and said she felt more at something said, at a beautiful thought or fine deed than she ever felt by mere sexual excitement."

The contests inevitably turn into orgies, and the girls become close enough friends for some to express their disgust, "'I hate these comparisons,' cried Adriana, 'They degrade one to the level of the mere animal; surely there's more to me than round limbs and a small sex?'"

A Frenchman joins the group and introduces them to the use of dildos and to whipping, saying that by whipping a girl's bottom "he could bring her to a passion of desire." Harris remarks that, "nothing prettier could be imagined than three or four girls being excited in this way."

Harris encourages the girls to tell the stories of their sex lives. Flora talks of having what she calls "naked thoughts" from the age of seven, and of sex games she played with other girls as a young teenager. Adriana is much more passionate and

says she was given to masturbation from ten or eleven years old until at the age of thirteen when she was told it was bad for the health and then restricted herself to masturbate only on Saturday nights. She was raped at the age of sixteen by the manager of a hotel where she worked, and then had no sex for two years in disgust at the experience.

One of the most attractive features of Harris is his genuine interest in the stories of women, even when their experience undermines his world view of the joy of seduction for both male and female. Thus he prints a long letter from a woman who wrote in response to the publication of his first volume. She had met men like him and her experience of seduction was humiliation and abandonment, of venereal disease, and of becoming an unmarried mother.

Harris tries drugs and sex, sampling opium, ether, and cocaine, but finds no advantage; and also tries 'cock rings' aimed at a higher stimulation of the woman. He meets a procuress on a voyage to India who caters for his desire for young girls by supplying him with child widows (the result of Indian marriage customs). "The second evening she brought me a girl of twelve—a widow—rather pretty but childish. Her sex was naturally very small but she had little response to passion in her; she seemed afraid to complain and didn't enjoy it greatly. She was happy for the first time when I paid her." After several such encounters he remarks, "The experience cured me of my liking for the immature. For even the best of them never gave me the thrill I experienced with older girls. The sex was often very small, but it had not the gripping, pumping power of the mature older woman."

By the end of the biography his memory and stamina are failing him and he balks at relating the decline of his sexual performance. Desire was as keen at sixty as at forty, he says, but by then he had become "a mediocre performer in the lists of love, but had never been shamed by failure." It is a shock when for the first time even desire fails him, when a servant comes who is looking for work and though she is pretty, he is not aroused by her.

For all its structural failings, the obvious exaggerations and some pure invention, *My Life and Loves* remains one of the most vivid memoirs of the nineteenth century, reading it gives the impression of a long conversation with a well-read Victorian libertine.

## HAWKES, JOHN

Putting aside Harris' extravagant claim that this is "the first book ever written to glorify the body and its passionate desires and the soul as well as its sacred, climbing sympathies," the development of biography as a form in the twentieth century vindicated his conviction that no biography can claim to be honest unless it deals with a character's sex life.

### Biography

Frank Harris was born James Thomas Harris in Galway, Ireland, February 14, 1856. He immigrated to the United States in 1869 and studied at the University of Kansas. In 1878, he was married to a woman who would die the following year. She was the first of three wives he would have.

In 1882, Harris returned to England where he worked as editor at a number of publications and edited the work of H. G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw. From 1916 to 1922, he edited the U.S. edition of Britain's *Pearson's Magazine* in New York. He died in France on August 27, 1931, of a heart attack.

JAD ADAMS

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## HAWKES, JOHN

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1925-1998

American novelist

Lauded by critics and scholars alike, and sometimes called "Gothic" or "experimental," Hawkes' darkly comic fiction, characterized by disjunctions in the traditional novel components of character, plot, setting, and theme, was never popularly received in the United States. Hawkes placed an emphasis on structure, what he called "verbal and psychological" coherence. This attention manifests itself in poetically imagistic and

dreamlike sections, often narrated in the first person. The texts frequently confront human nature in all its ugliness and human failings in all their magnitude, but do so with a self-reflexive comedy and a beauty of language meant to recuperate those shortcomings. Hawkes' attempt to elucidate the unconscious desires of his characters entails frequent interrogation of the erotic components of the unconscious and thus aligns him with other writers of darkly erotic literature, including the Marquis de Sade, Georges Bataille, Angela Carter, and Flannery O'Connor.

Though he published his first novel, *Charivari*, in 1949, Hawkes did not begin to fully engage in theories of the erotic through his fiction until 1970 with the publication of *The Blood Oranges*. *The Blood Oranges* is the first novel in what Hawkes would come to call “the triad,” centering upon explorations of male sexuality; the others are *Death, Sleep and the Traveler* (1974) and *Travesty* (1976). Following upon publication of these works, Hawkes began to explore female sexual subjectivity in two novels: *The Passion Artist* (1979) and *Virginie: Her Two Lives* (1981).

Set in the fictional Illyria and modeled upon Ford Madox Ford’s *The Good Soldier* and Shakespeare’s *Twelfth Night*, *The Blood Oranges* relates the story of Cyril and Fiona’s encounter with Hugh and Catherine, and their daughter, Meredith. Cyril claims that the “only enemy of the mature marriage is monogamy.” In order to introduce this ideal, Cyril impresses partner swapping upon his guests. Characterized by a truncated arm, symbolically suggestive of his failure to fully engage in his desires, Hugh serves as the “castrated” and therefore incomplete male. Hugh manifests his sexuality in two distinct ways. First, he partakes in photographing “peasant nudes” in order to build his private collection of pornography. Second, he confines Catherine in a rusty chastity belt the quartet finds in a deserted cave to prevent her union with Cyril. What Cyril takes to be Hugh’s sexual impotence eventually ends in Hugh’s accidental suicide from auto-erotic asphyxiation, an event that precipitates Catherine’s catatonia and Fiona’s departure to care for Meredith. While he prides himself on his role as a “sex singer,” this dissolution of the quartet reveals Cyril’s ironic inability to account for sexuality in all guises.

Like Hugh, Allert Vanderveenan in *Death, Sleep and the Traveler* experiences much of his erotic stimulation through pornographic imagery. The novel manifests Hawkes’ typical technique of narrative fragmentation with the use of numerous short segments chronologically disjointed to narrate events occurring in two locales: his land home and a cruise on which Allert embarks. In each locale Allert participates in a *menage à trois*, reluctantly on land with Ursula and his best friend and therapist, Peter, and exuberantly at sea with the diminutive Ariane and the ship’s wireless operator, Olaf. Through the presentation of these locales, Hawkes sets up

the dichotomy between motion and stasis, between life and death, and reveals male psychological fears concerning impotence, performance, and endowment. Over the course of the novel, Allert attempts to emotionally exonerate himself from the death of Ariane, of whose murder he has been acquitted, and through Allert’s narration, Hawkes explores societal experience of repression and guilt in the arenas of sexuality and the consequent human need to control desire.

*Travesty* (1979) narrates a short murder-suicide ride in narrator Papa’s car. Accompanying Papa are his daughter, Chantal, and her boyfriend, the poet Henri, who has been having an affair with Papa’s wife, Honorine. The themes of marital infidelity and male control over sexual expression emerge in Papa’s first person narration. This novel, however, takes the male desire for control to its extreme of insecurity through the murder-suicide plot, which suggests the toll inherent upon the suppression of erotic desire in marriage. While the erotic lives of all the characters prior to marriage find locution, the act of marital infidelity finally cannot be countenanced within the narrative.

Hawkes turns to an attempt to liberate female sexuality in his next two novels. While *The Passion Artist* (1979) tells the story of Konrad Vost’s sexual awakening, Hawkes moves to third person narration to explore Vost’s encounter with feminine sexuality. Vost, along with other men in the community La Violaine, attempt to quell a riot at the women’s prison for which the community is named. During the altercation, Vost participates in brutal, disfiguring violence against some of the women, giving narrative voice to subconscious erotic desires that transgress into violence. Despite the men’s efforts, the women prevail and Vost becomes himself prisoner in La Violaine. In his prison cell, he encounters writing on the walls indicating that women, too, sustain violent erotic fantasies. The prison experience constitutes Vost’s awakening to the vagaries of sexuality, and suggests for many critics the liberation of female sexuality and desire because the women claim power and Vost experiences subjugation.

The same power over sexuality is granted to Virginie, the narrator of the *Virginie: Her Two Lives* (1981), because as voyeuristic witness and narrator of scenes of sexuality, she controls the reader’s perception of sexuality. Eleven-year-old

## HAWKES, JOHN

Virginie recounts her two lives, one in 1740 when in the home of Seigneur she witnesses the training of women to be mistresses to members of the aristocracy and the other in 1945 where she recounts “charades of love” in the Parisian home of her brother Bocage. While the novel presents sexuality from the female perspective utilizing a diminutive, girlish figure resonant within the Hawkesian oeuvre, the reader experiences female sexuality only voyeuristically as Virginie never engages in sex. Despite the successful depiction of female *subjectivity*, this voyeuristic approach to narration ultimately signals the male authorial inability to enter feminine *sexuality* and therefore functions adroitly as Hawkes’ final foray into explorations of the erotic.

### Biography

John Clendennin Burne Hawkes, Jr. was born on August 17, 1925 in Stamford, Connecticut, and spent his youth in Connecticut and Alaska. Hawkes entered Harvard University in 1943, but soon failed out and served as an ambulance driver in Italy and Germany during World War II, 1943–1945. After the war, Hawkes returned to Harvard where he earned his B.A. in 1949. Hawkes worked for Harvard, first for the University Press (1949–1955) and then as an instructor for three years. In 1958, Hawkes became a professor in the English Department at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, where he worked until his retirement in 1988. Hawkes married Sophie Tazewell in 1947 and the couple had four children. Over the course of his career, Hawkes was awarded a Guggenheim and a Ford Foundation Fellowship, grants from the National Institute of Arts and Letters and from the Rockefeller Foundation, and a Lannan Foundation Award. He utilized his prize monies to

support travel to the various locales comprising the settings for his novels, including the West Indies, France, and Italy. His novel *Second Skin* (1964) was runner-up for a National Book Award and *The Blood Oranges* (1971) received the Paris Prix du Meilleur Livre Etranger. Hawkes was a member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters. Hawkes died during heart bypass surgery in a Providence hospital on May 15, 1998, four days after having suffered a stroke.

JON ROBERT ADAMS

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# HAWKESWORTH, JOHN

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1720–1773

British writer, moralist, editor and translator

## Almorán and Hamet

Hawkesworth originally wrote the oriental tale *Almorán and Hamet* (1761) as a play, but its exotic trappings proved too costly to stage. The dedication to King George III places the tale in the tradition of fictional works of advice to princes like Fénelon's *Aventures de Télémaque*, which Hawkesworth later translated. The self-control of Hamet, who faces off against his evil twin Almorán, provides a model of princely behavior. Yet the eroticism of magically trading bodies with another (and thus of experiencing sexual pleasures reserved for one's twin) undermines the tale's explicit moral lesson about "the suppression of desire" through rational self-mastery.

Mixing "oriental" ornament with a calculated elevation of tone, the story begins with the death of the old king who has decreed that his twin sons share rulership of Persia. Raised to value the "prerogative of his birth," the older of the twins, the "volatile, impetuous and irascible" Almorán, initially dissimulates his hatred of Hamet, immersing himself in sensual pleasures while surrounding himself with flatterers. Accustomed to deferring to his twin, the "gentle, courteous and temperate" Hamet lives a regulated life while serving the people. Both subscribe to a system of laws proposed by the wise Omar, who seeks to quash Almorán's tyranny and stimulate Hamet's submerged capacities for leadership.

This equilibrium reaches a crisis when Hamet rescues Almeida, the incomparably beautiful daughter of the Circassian ambassador, from a palace fire. Resisting an initial temptation to ravish her while she is unconscious, Hamet proclaims, "I do not want a slave, but a friend; not merely a woman, but a wife . . . if her mind corresponds with her form, and if . . . she can give her heart to Hamet, and not merely her hand to the king; I shall be happy." Giving

one's heart to Hamet proves difficult indeed in a tale in which mind and body constantly shift out of proper correspondence.

Predictably, Almorán wants Almeida because she belongs to his brother: "with dominion undivided and Almeida, I should be Almorán; but without them, I am less than nothing." A "Genie" appears to Almorán and promises to help him achieve his desires. At the marriage of Hamet and Almeida, an ominous voice declares from the thick of a cloud that "Fate has decreed to Almorán, Almeida." Nonetheless, Omar persuades the people that the tyrannical Almorán has deployed occult forces and Hamet receives popular acclaim. The Genie then counsels Almorán to go before the people where a mysterious voice proclaims him king. The credulous masses reverse their position, Hamet flees, and Almorán claims his prize. Almeida resists, arguing that God has not made her love Almorán and so cannot have willed her to be his; God cannot have condemned her to "a joyless prostitution."

The Genie presents the frustrated Almorán with a magic talisman enabling him to exchange forms with another person. Assuming the appearance of Hamet, Almorán enjoys Almeida's passionate caresses, but she refuses to have sex outside of marriage despite all his persuasion. Reacting to his dishonorable arguments, she reflects that the ominous voice assigning her to Almorán must have been divine rather than occult. Since he still bears the form of Hamet, however, Almorán cannot take advantage of her change of heart.

When the exiled Hamet realizes that he looks like Almorán, he returns to court. Almeida greets him as Almorán, declaring that she is ready to marry him. Hamet registers her apparent betrayal and, consumed by desire for her and hatred of his brother, considers marrying and taking her while still in the form of Almorán. Conquering his passions, however, he reveals who he actually is. At that very moment, Almorán reassumes his own form in order to marry Almeida, so Hamet is transformed before



Almeida's eyes. Almorán then finds the two lovers reconciled, imprisons Hamet, and despairs of ever possessing Almeida.

The Genie invites Almorán to present Hamet with a means of committing suicide. Almorán, who has taken on the form of one of two subaltern rivals in order to deliver a dagger, is poisoned by the other, while Hamet resists the temptation to kill himself. At last suspicious of the Genie, whose every gift has stymied him, the dying Almorán hides in Hamet's prison and overhears the Genie presenting Hamet with a magic scroll that will allow him to invoke a secret life-giving lamp. As Hamet wavers over the morality of employing occult forces, Almorán assumes the form of Omar and steals the scroll in order to save his own life. Just as Almorán is transfixed into stone, the Genie reappears, revealing that he is in fact a divine emissary commissioned to "perfect virtue" and "entangle vice."

*Almorán and Hamet* has sometimes been framed as a lesser work in imitation of Samuel Johnson's *Rasselas* (1759). The genre of oriental tale to which both tales belong has often been dismissed in traditional criticism as a curious but passing fashion or, following the work of Edward Said, assimilated to the larger category of western Orientalist cultural discourse.

Current reevaluations view the oriental tale, for all its orientalism, as a popular early transnational genre contrasting with the self-conscious formation of national identity in the novel (Aravamudan), forming "a counterpart of sorts to the great male tradition" represented by the *Aeneid* and its rewritings (Mack), and acting a privileged site for materialist thought about bodily drives. Within this context, *Almorán and Hamet* may be seen as a text which, through its thematics of twinning, impersonation, and brotherly voyeurism, unwittingly undoes mind-body dualism in favor of a new psychology of self conceived as the performance of the other and as contingent on the incorporation of the other's desires. By presenting lawful and unlawful possession of a woman as an allegory for just rule or tyranny and as a talisman for differentiating the divinely chosen ruler from the pretender, the tale also hopelessly eroticizes the body politic in a move typical of the eighteenth-century oriental tale. Against the tale's own grain, the populace that gives its hand freely

and that which is condemned to a "joyless prostitution" ultimately amount to identical twins. Only mildly sexualized by the standards set by the eighteenth-century pornographic novel, and not nearly as explicit in its depictions of sexuality as the notorious Tahitian passages in Hawkesworth's *Account* of voyages to the South Seas, the tale nonetheless erotically trades on the conventions of the exotic harem, the dynamics of sexual dominance and subordination, and the provocative theme of inhabiting another's body to perform one's own desire.

### Biography

A respected man of letters, Hawkesworth spent most of his life in London and Bromley, Kent. His earliest literary activity in 1741 was as compiler of parliamentary debates and contributor of poetry to the *Gentleman's Magazine*, for which he later became the literary and dramatic editor. With Samuel Johnson, he wrote and edited the periodical *Adventurer* beginning in 1752. His works include plays and adaptations for the stage, moral essays, criticism, and oriental tales that appeared in periodicals, the *Life of Swift* (1755), and the controversial *Account* of eighteenth-century British voyages to the South Pacific (1773). Contemporaries imputed his death in 1773 to disappointment over the damaging reception of the *Account*, which was viewed as improper in its treatments of divine providence and Tahitian sexuality.

PAMELA CHEEK

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## HAWTHORNE, NATHANIEL

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1804–1864  
American novelist

### *The Scarlet Letter*

Originally hailed as "the most moral book of the age" after its 1850 publication by literary critics, *The Scarlet Letter* appeared at a time when readers were looking for an example of moral and community values. Viewed as a book that encouraged self-restraint and adherence to conventional community values in a non-intrusive manner, *The Scarlet Letter* tackles the need for self-denial and social responsibility in the pitfalls and shortcomings of its main characters, Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale; Hester Prynne; Pearl; and Roger Chillingworth. Seen through the prism of Pearl, the daughter of Dimmesdale and Hester, the novel also incorporates the perspectives of Hester, her lover, Dimmesdale, and her husband, Chillingworth, providing a discourse on social, moral, spiritual, and legal legitimacy. From the beginning, the novel follows a clear plan, beginning with the illusion of illicit sex to the accompanying psychological implications of this act, with Reverend Dimmesdale as the exemplar of all socially unacceptable qualities and Hester as the embodiment of public property. Hester, however,

did not completely fit the personification of the "fallen woman," since her strength, selflessness, and positivity allows her to overcome her previous actions. Consequently, Hawthorne seems to implicitly encourage readers to condemn Dimmesdale rather than identify with his suffering, which essentially reinforces the nineteenth-century moral conservatism.

Hawthorne struggled to justify romance in a culture of pragmatism; Hester's entrance into the marketplace after her implied illicit act marks her conflicting role. While wearing the scarlet letter "A," signifying the opposing concepts of pride and shame, as well as both achievement and alienation, Hester must play two roles, that of mother and partner in the wake of adultery, in a society that viewed illegitimacy as a moral sin. Puritanical society required public confession of sin before forgiveness, yet, despite the pain of seeing Hester on the scaffold and suffering public humiliation, Dimmesdale could not bring himself to confess his adultery. Tortured by his conscience, Dimmesdale lamented, "...were I an atheist,—a man devoid of conscience,—a wretch with coarse and brutal instincts,—I might have found peace, long ere now." The request for him to speak "drove the blood from his cheek, and made his lips tremulous," which related to Hawthorne's depiction of

Dimmesdale in feminine terms, and the psychological distress led to weight loss and a distrust in his spirituality, reducing him to a “poor, forlorn creature.” In contrast, despite the public humiliation in the marketplace, Hester exists in isolation, yet she somehow sustains her strength “without a friend on earth who dared to show himself.” She never experienced public conflict, and earned the townspeople’s respect with the “blameless purity” of her life. She maintained a subsistence living with her daughter, Pearl, and occasionally took on sewing jobs for the townspeople. Due to her position as an outcast, she somehow regains the townspeople’s sense of respect.

Hester’s struggle between desire and her culturally conditioned sense of social responsibility is very much a physical expression, and she uses her body as a stage for her sexuality. For example, Hawthorne describes her “art” of sewing for the townspeople, in which Hester’s hands are described as repeatedly moving to her lap. Hawthorne, in his discussion of this scene, tactfully diverts the reader’s attention from Hester’s “sinful hands” used to touch “the spot [which] never grew callous; it seemed, on the contrary, to grow more sensitive with daily torture.” This description, while not explicitly sexual, does suggest that Hester is still a sexualized being. Her clothing, normally a coarse gray cloth, was interrupted by the scarlet “A,” which revealed a sense of autoeroticism. When she emerged from prison, for example, this reflected her own emergence from a physical confinement, as well as an emotional, spiritual, and sexual confinement.

While *The Scarlet Letter* may be interpreted as the rise of Hester from ruin and the demise of Dimmesdale from moral superiority, the novel can also be described as the tale of Chillingworth’s fall and redemption, as well as his efforts to claim Pearl as his child. The reader’s first view of Chillingworth, seen through the filter of Hester’s disgust, is his appearance in the marketplace after a two-year absence. Hawthorne describes his reaction as one of repulsion, manifested as a “writhing horror.” Incorporating this connection, literary critic T. Walter Herbert defines Chillingworth’s reaction as practically masturbatory, with the “snake-like writhing” personifying the “erotic energy invested both in the hidden feelings and in the compulsion to

keep them concealed.” Herbert contends that Chillingworth’s reaction imitates Hester’s sexual transgression. In many ways, Hawthorne deals with Chillingworth ambivalently, although he does give Chillingworth a name, “Roger,” that was a colonial epithet for adulterous intercourse or rape, and provide Chillingworth with a new name, the pseudonym Chillingworth, in substitution for his given name, Prynne.

Self-recognition plays an important role in *The Scarlet Letter*, including Chillingworth’s attempts to gain recognition from the daughter he tries to claim as his own. In his first attempt, when Pearl is three years old and refuses to be catechized by the Puritan elders, and Hester could potentially lose her daughter, she refuses the assistance of Chillingworth. In the second attempt, four years later, while Pearl and Hester stand at midnight with Dimmesdale, Pearl twice withdraws her hand from Dimmesdale’s hand to point at Chillingworth, and it is in this scene that Dimmesdale first conceives of Chillingworth as an “arch-fiend.” After this scene, when Hester confronts Chillingworth on the shore, he undergoes a sort of spiritual awakening. Both Chillingworth and Dimmesdale look at Pearl, perhaps dreading what image they would see reflected in Pearl’s eyes. Hester does the same, expecting to see Dimmesdale’s reflection, but instead seeing Chillingworth, suggesting that perhaps a solid family unit would be important. Yet, by leaving Pearl without a father, Hawthorne confronts illegitimacy and self-doubt. In the scene in which Dimmesdale acknowledges his daughter, Pearl kissed her father’s lips, and “a spell was broken.” His confession, however, is only part of the attempt to establish legitimacy for Pearl. The kiss may have enabled her to become a woman, but it is not until she inherits Chillingworth’s legacy of his estate in England that she comes into her own as a woman. This, in many ways, further destroys Dimmesdale’s reputation, and provides legitimacy to Chillingworth.

Similarly, the conclusion of *The Scarlet Letter* is fraught with meaning; Hester seems to have perfected an image of self-denial and has become the woman to whom many of the townspeople brought their complaints. Where she was once the pariah for her lack of self-constraint, Hester is now the model of restraint, counseling others on the importance of social conformity.

### Biography

Nathaniel Hawthorne was born on July 4, 1804, in Salem, Massachusetts. After graduating from Bowdoin College he tried unsuccessfully to make a living as a writer. In 1942, Hawthorne married Sophia Peabody and moved to Concord, where he was introduced to the Transcendentalist circle that included Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. More lean times followed, forcing a return to Salem. Success finally came with the publication of the hugely popular *The Scarlet Letter* (1850) and *The House of the Seven Gables* (1851). Hawthorne died on May 19, 1864, in Plymouth, New Hampshire on a trip to the mountains with his friend, former President Franklin Pierce.

JENNIFER HARRISON

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## HAYWOOD, ELIZA

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c.1693–1756  
English novelist

Eliza Haywood, dubbed the "Great arbitress of passion" by contemporary James Sterling, was perhaps the most successful writer of sensational amatory fiction in Britain in the 1720s. Her work has enjoyed considerable critical attention since the 1980s, though for generations she was chiefly familiar as an object of Alexander Pope's satire in *The Dunciad* (1728), in which she is offered—"Two babes of love close clinging to her waist" (II. 158)—to the winner of a pissing contest: "His be yon Juno of majestic size,/With cow-like udders, and with ox-like eyes" (II. 163–164). In a note, Pope justifies this attack by identifying her as the "authoress of ... most scandalous books."

Haywood was one of the most popular authors of her time. Her career spanned four decades and she produced more than 80 texts—although she at times published anonymously and no full list exists—in an astonishing array of genres, novels, shorter prose, essays, plays, and conduct literature among them. *The Female*

*Spectator* (1744–1746), which she published anonymously, was one of the first English periodicals by women, for women. Of particular interest is her amatory fiction, a genre distinguished from erotic narrative by its emphasis on subjectivity, and from romance by its emphasis on sexuality. Her first novel, *Love in Excess* (1719–1720) was, with Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, arguably one of the two most popular novels of the early eighteenth century. She followed with 38 original works in the following decade, most of them short novels—"secret histories"—following the French model. Her novella "Fantomina" (1725), the story of a young woman who successfully disguises herself in various ways in order to maintain a connection with an inconstant man, is frequently anthologized. She is credited, with Delarivier Manley, of developing the novel of seduction in English (Spencer). Often framed as "scandalous memoirs," these episodic narratives of innocence defrauded frequently criticize courtly culture, with their middle-class heroines and upper-class heroes, and contemporary politics, with sexual libertines standing in for corrupt politicians.

Through most of the 1730s, Haywood concentrated on the theater, then she returned to prose fiction in the 1740s. It has been suggested that attacks such as Pope's temporarily drove her from publishing, but it would seem that she instead was drawn to the stage, at least until the political situation under Walpole made a theatrical career difficult. In the 1740s and 50s, Haywood turned to writing didactic novels such as *The History of Miss Betsy Thoughtless* (1751), but with its plain language and frank depictions of pregnancy and prostitution, even this unexceptionable narrative is considerably racier than the novels of female education of subsequent decades. Later generations, while rejecting her more unregenerate contemporaries, lauded Haywood for having "repented of her faults" (Reeve, 285), though it is generally agreed now that rather than "reforming," Haywood was particularly attuned to the nuances of the literary marketplace. This interpretation is supported by recent scholarship which identifies Haywood as a translator of Crébillon fils's erotic novel, *Le Sopha, conte moral*, as late as 1742 (Spedding).

During her lifetime and following, Haywood was seen as a successor to Aphra Behn and Delarivier Manley in "the fair triumvirate of wit," all of whom were women writers considered expert in love. Her critical reputation waned over the nineteenth century until her reclamation by feminists, in the twentieth century, as a "mother of the novel" (Spender). More recently she has been studied for her contributions to popular literature, her attacks on the sexual double standard, her interweaving of political satire with amatory fiction, her representations of female desire and subjectivity, and her "creation of environments radiant with the possibility of transgression and provocatively in counterpoint to [her] explicit moral arguments" (Pettit, 244).

### Biography

Haywood is reported to have instructed her friends not to reveal details about her life, "from a supposition of some improper liberties being taken with her character after death, by the intermixture of truth and falsehood with her history" (Blouch, 545). As a consequence there is little reliable information about her, though recent research has uncovered new material and exposed the falsity of some long-standing stories, such as the rumor that Haywood was the

runaway wife of a minister (Blouch, Beasley). Her life after she became published is better documented, though many questions remain. She would seem to have had an unusually good education for a woman, as she published various translations; she made her acting debut 1715; she was arrested in 1749 for publishing political works; she had liaisons with Richard Savage and William Hachett, the former who referred to her in print as "a cast-off dame" and the latter with whom she lived for twenty years. She was an active member of a busy literary circle and had connections to Henry Fielding and other notable writers of the day. At the end of her life, although a successful writer herself and rumored to be wealthy, her death duties remained unpaid.

MIRIAM JONES

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## HECHT, BEN AND BODENHEIM, MAXWELL

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**Hecht, Ben**

1893–1964

**Bodenheim, Maxwell**

1892–1954

American novelists, poets, and playwrights

***Cutie: A Warm Momma***

Maxwell Bodenheim describes this brief narrative as a "satire on ultra-prudish hypocritical censors and assailers [sic] of sexual candor and incisiveness in literary and pictorial work. . . ." It was published in 1924; its story spans the years 1922–1930.

In 1922, Covici-McGee published Hecht's *Fantazius Mallare: A Mysterious Oath*. Pascal Covici had just started as a Chicago publisher, and asked Hecht for a book which could be sold by subscription. It was to be attractively printed and illustrated, with the black boards and red end papers which were code for an upscale sex book. Covici wanted the kind of sexual content that would be desirable to people with money and fantasies of being considered avant garde, sexually sophisticated, and aware of the most daring fiction and poetry available. Covici's audience, therefore, was no different from those Sylvia Beach had in Paris for Joyce, or Pino Orioli in Florence for Lawrence and Norman Douglas: collectors, literati, booksellers with trusted customers. All had an interlocking interest for modernism, explicit language, and erotica. *Mallare* was in the decadent style of Huysmans' *A Rebours*. The protagonist is a cynical dandy with no interest in sex. He trains a gypsy girl to adulate him. Frustrated, she gives herself to his servant; only then does he realize he has lost what he most desired, and can never retrieve. Recognizing the result of his alienation from his sexual nature, his grip on sanity weakens.

Impotence and self-lacerating voyeurism are deliciously fascinating vices for prurient imaginations to contemplate—at least, Hecht must have thought so. He was disappointed that no moral guardian arose to censor his novel, the illustrations and decorations for which might easily have offended one. Wallace Smith's work included penises surrounded by thorny branches, and writhing naked figures, apparently modeled after those of Egon Schiele, one of which was obviously having intercourse with a tree. Not even when Covici had copies placed in his bookshop's windows, opened to pages with the most shock value, did the outrage develop.

Finally, postal authorities intercepted copies sent to subscribers and prosecuted. It was a federal case, and if Hecht and Bodenheim had been convicted they might have gone to jail. Hecht had trumpeted his intention to gain an acquittal and then break "the censorship" by suing and therefore bankrupting his accuser, whom he hoped would be John Sumner of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, but was more likely to be Philip Yarrow of the Illinois Vigilance Association (Hecht knew considerably less about how obscenity law worked

than one would expect for a practicing journalist). He tells us that a dozen fellow writers reneged on promises to testify that he was a serious artist who should be allowed to express himself in language he felt necessary.

Consequently, one look at the solid citizens awaiting jury duty was all it took for him to insist that his lawyer plead *nolle contendere*. He and his illustrator were fined 1,000 dollars each. The guardians of decency could be excused for thinking that the blasphemers had been sent packing with their tails between their legs. And so could the literati who read D.H. Lawrence's contemptuous review: Lawrence opined that the book's text and illustrations, by encouraging titillation, solidified the impression that sex was dirty. Mallare might "hang his [penis] on his nose-end and a [testicle] under each ear, and definitely testify that way that he'd got such appendages, [and] it wouldn't affect me."

Hecht did not give up on *Mallare*, writing a "continuation" (*The Kingdom of Evil*) in 1924. *Cutie*, published the same year, was Hecht and Bodenheim's revenge on the censors. Bodenheim had not yet produced *Replenishing Jessica* or *Georgie May*, for which he was to encounter obscenity charges, but he was well known as a bohemian firebrand poet and reviewer. Hecht was a friend and admirer; the two co-edited *The Chicago Literary Times* and were part of the impressive group of writers and artists who congregated around Covici and McGee's bookshop. The 8,000 word satire, privately printed ("Heckshaw Press"), had appeared in installments in *The Literary Times*. In his Introduction, Bodenheim expresses his hatred for privately-organized decency societies which cannot distinguish between gratuitous vulgarity and art which must, to be honest, include frank depiction of sex and sexual experience in all its varieties and motives. Hecht and Bodenheim personify these censors in Herman Pupick, "a prude with one glass eye and splintered pieces of glass in what passed for his heart." Herman is a federal employee who sniffs out immorality everywhere and anywhere he sees it. As such, he is an amalgam of the postal inspector and the police-deputized agent of an anti-vice group, as were Sumner and Yarrow. In Yiddish, "pupik" means bellybutton. Leo Rosten defines a pupik as an inconsequential person, or "nudnick" (a bore or pest) who worries about what is not worth worrying about. Since "preprice" is the

fold of foreskin over the head of an (uncircumcised) penis, Herman is also just a prick.

Herman knew nothing of life when he became besotted with Cutie. He was married, but to a woman who “couldn’t pass a bathroom without blushing.” Herman first noticed Cutie when she was being helped by a policeman after skinning her knee. He was outraged that the officer was exposing Cutie’s leg in public. He’s another Willy Wet Leg, ironically similar to Fantazius. Pupick’s crusades close down *The Chicago Literary Times*, all the libraries, and the “abdominal belt displays” in the drugstore windows. He also gets rid of many of Chicago’s authors, and the bookleggers (actually, he did not get the ones who later pirated *Cutie*). The story ends with Mrs. Pupick, seeing Herman with Cutie and two other flappers, stabs Cutie and Herman with a hat pin. The story is told as if the writers were entertaining fellow customers at Schlogl’s, a favorite literary hangout. There are lots of topical references as well as period argot: “lost manhood advertisements,” the famous cross-dressing entertainer Julian Eltinge, Gilda Grey, Ruth St. Denis, and Freudian psychoanalysis.

In 1930, the pirate publisher Samuel Roth issued his *roman à clef* about an oppressive censor from New York, *Hugh Wakem: The Diary of a Smuthound*. The smuthound is probably modeled on Sumner. Many titles of banned books are mentioned, as are six booksellers, all of whom are most likely real people with slightly disguised names.

### Biographies

**Hecht:** Important figure in the Chicago Literary Renaissance; writer for the stage and films whose screenplays included *The Front Page* and *A Farewell to Arms*; journalist, activist for Israeli causes; satirist.

**Bodenheim:** Poet who won early acclaim for his work; novelist, vagabond, literary critic, and brilliant conversationalist who suffered an emotional decline near the end of his life which reduced him to selling verses in Greenwich Village bars. Some important themes in his novels were prostitution, urban life, derelicts. Well

respected by Ezra Pound, Conrad Aiken, William Carlos Williams.

JAY A. GERTZMAN

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# HERMAPHRODITISM

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Hermaphroditism is a word used to denote a condition in which both male and female sexual characteristics are combined in one body. So-called 'perfect hermaphroditism,' in which male and female characteristics co-exist in equal proportions, very rarely exists. Throughout history hermaphroditism has been both real (based on some form of genital irregularity) and imagined (drawing from a range of sexual and social ambiguities). The blurring of male and female has, in many cultures, been celebrated as a spiritual ideal but embodied sexual ambiguity has also provoked fear and many supposedly hermaphroditic individuals have been reviled as monsters.

From eastern celebrations of the mystical eroticism of hermaphroditic sexuality to Antonio Beccadelli's fourteenth century Latin poem, *Hermaphrodite*, hermaphroditism has been the subject of erotica. The erotic allure of sexual ambiguity is encapsulated in a famous series of Hellenistic sculptures that depict 'The Sleeping Hermaphrodite.' Within these images a beautifully ambiguous reclining nude is represented. When viewed from behind, the soft, languid lines of the body appear to be female but when seen from the front a penis comes into view.

The hermaphrodite has often been represented as a primary symbol of sexual union. In Plato's *Symposium* Aristophanes relates how humans were originally created as 'Androgyni,' doubled beings which circled like wheels in a condition of wholeness and perfection until the god, Zeus, grew jealous and spilt them down their centers. Henceforth, the desolate remaining parts of the original whole search the earth for their lost other halves. Plato's text privileged the reunion of male/male parts of the complete original beings but the fable became disseminated in later times as a parable that demonstrated the power of heterosexual love and erotic desire. A similar story emerged within medieval Jewish literature as some mystics believed that Adam was originally hermaphroditic. Heterosexual sex thereby symbolized a return to the primal Edenic moment of unity.

Ovid's story of 'Salmacis and Hermaphroditus' in *Metamorphoses* influenced many subsequent representations of sexual ambiguity, from the Renaissance and beyond. The story relates how Hermaphroditus, the child of Hermes and Aphrodite (or Mercury and Venus), a youth of exceptional beauty, met the nymph Salmacis. Salmacis becomes overwhelmed by her passion for the indifferent Hermaphroditus and forces him to unite in a violent embrace. As Ovid describes it:

When their limbs met in that single clinging embrace the nymph and the boy were no longer two, but a single form, possessed of a dual nature, which could not be called male or female, but seemed to be at once both and neither. (Ovid, 1955, p.104)

On seeing his transformation into 'half a man,' Hermaphroditus prays to his parents to curse the pool. The prayer is granted and the curse is passed on to all men who enter the pool of Salmacis forever more.

Ovid's representation of the sexually ambiguous, solipsistic youth has resonated throughout artistic and literary history. Hermaphroditus was one of a series of mythical youths who were the consummate objects of erotic appeal (Narcissus, Adonis, Ganymede, and Leander). Such figures were the focus of a particularly homo-erotically charged gaze as they were represented in the visual images of Renaissance artists (such as Correggio's *The Rape of Ganymede*) and the poems of William Shakespeare, Christopher Marlowe, and others. For these artists and poets the aestheticization of young male sexual ambiguity was to be delighted in. The beautiful youth was, as Shakespeare put it in sonnet 20, 'the master-mistress' of their creator's passions.

Hermaphroditism was associated with a number of social transgressions ranging from same-sex erotic desire to effeminacy, transvestism, and sodomy. According to George Sandys, writing in 1632, for example, the fountain of Salmacis was reported to have both effeminized the ancient Carians and led them into various forms of

sexual debauchery. Hermaphrodites were accused of deviancy, not because they were of both sexes, but because they “defiled themselves with either” (Sandys, 1632). A later text, *The Wandering Whore*, is even more explicit, describing hermaphrodites as, “effeminate men, men given to much luxury idleness, and wanton pleasures, and to that abominable sin of sodomy, wherein they are both active and passive in it” (anon, 1660).

Throughout the seventeenth century there are a number of case-histories that are reported in medical, paramedical, and legal treatises, as well as in erotica, that connect hermaphroditism in women to the existence of an enlarged clitoris. Many stories of prodigious female members were drawn from stories about exotic and eroticized non-European lands. Writers of medical and paramedical texts exploited the titillating effects of describing how women ‘abused’ these enlarged members by engaging in tribadic activities with other women. Giles Jacob, for example, (whose *Treatise on Hermaphrodites* was printed in 1718 with Edmund Curll’s explicitly erotic *A Treatise of the Use of Flogging at Venereal Affairs*) was typical in his exploration of erotic lesbian escapades.

By the eighteenth century, so-called hermaphrodites were increasingly viewed as objects of scientific scrutiny. But medical enquiry could not always be separated from popular entertainment and during this period many sexually ambiguous individuals were displayed as curiosities. The focus on genital anomalies in hermaphroditic cases inevitably led to ostensibly ‘scientific’ studies being charged with erotic excitement. During the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries such displays reached a peak as male–female hybrids such as ‘Josephine–Joseph’ and ‘Robert–Roberta’ were regularly shown in ‘freak shows’ and fairground entertainments.

The late-nineteenth-century sexologists developed a discourse whereby a range of ambiguities in sex and gender were defined as ‘pseudo-hermaphroditism’ and pathologized. In 1978, Michel Foucault published *Herculine Barbin*, the memoirs of a nineteenth-century hermaphrodite. Foucault presented a dossier of medical

and legal documents alongside Herculine’s tortured first person account that conveyed the agonies of living with a confused sexual identity. The story of Herculine marked the inception of critical and theoretical interest in exploring histories of marginal lives and erotic identities.

In the early-twentieth century there is still a popular and academic fascination with issues of transsexualism and gender dysphoria. However, sexually ambiguous individuals themselves are now beginning to claim identities as intersexuals rather than accepting the surgical mutilation, pathologization, and erotic objectification that has characterized their representation throughout history.

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## HERRGOTT, ELISABETH

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1947–  
French writer

### *Transports amoureux*

The title is a play on words, referring to the metaphoric use of the word ‘transport’ in the classical French phrase ‘*transports amoureux*,’ as clarified by the epigraph, an entry from the *Lexique de la langue du XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle*: ‘transport amoureux’ are ‘violent and pleasant agitations of the heart; rushes of love, lust and passion; mislayings of the body and the soul.’ The tone is set: the whole book is about ‘amorous transports’ in both meanings of the word, as erotic scenes are usually set in particular transport contexts, from local buses to inter-continental aeroplanes. Sex with strangers during weekly commuting high-speed train journeys, sex with an air hostess on the way to Rio, sex with a gondolier in Venice: the bisexual female narrator never seems able to travel without initiating or encountering sexual adventures, even in elevators or in the underground.

*Transports amoureux* is not a long book: it is composed of twenty-one short sections of four pages on average. The sections can be presented as short stories; their titles are usually explicit about the location: ‘Parking’ for the section about sex in a car park, ‘*Transports en commun*’ for the section about being fingered by unknown hands at rush hour in the underground. One can distinguish between two types of short stories: fifteen are directly about sex and transport together (sex in particular means of transport), six others are about sex without reference to transport. Falling into that latter category is the most intriguing short story, which is also the longest one (nine pages): entitled ‘*La grande abbesse de l’abbaye de P.*,’ it presents a filthy nun called Bénédicte de G., her private emasculated priest Ignacio, and their friend Hildegarde. It is not easy to interpret how this short story fits within the overall economy of the book, located as it is

between ‘Le 83’ (two pages about masturbating a man in the bus 83) and ‘*Anales Ferroviaires*’ (seven pages about having sex on the train to Paris).

Elisabeth Herrgott trained as a Lacanian psychoanalyst—and it shows, through some transparent references to youth episodes accounting for bouts of fetishism, such as the young man obsessed by buttons on women’s dresses (because his mother was a school teacher who asked him to button up her blouse), or the narrator’s discovery of fellatio when, aged nine, she sucked a man (an Indian Catholic priest) in an elevator (Catholicism is a recurrent sub-theme of the book). In terms of sexual activities, other interesting components of *Transports amoureux* are the instances of auditory voyeurism, masturbation with a silver dildo, and lesbian group sex. The overall atmosphere of the book is one of mild decadence, but its voluptuous universe is far from cheap: women always wear Dior perfume and expensive fur-coats (whilst being usually naked under the fur); men are lawyers or scientists who drive a Mercedes or a BMW and eat in the most expensive restaurants; holidays are spent in Brazil or Venice, and one travels first-class in aircrafts or in private yachts.

In terms of erotic literature, one can appreciate the creativity of the author with her witty focus on transportation means, as well as the way some short stories lend themselves well to queer readings, for instance the very last one: entitled ‘*Dédicace*’ (‘Dedication’), starts with the epigraph ‘*A Vladimir mon amant lesbienne*,’ [To Vladimir my male lesbian lover] (Vladimir was also mentioned in the ‘*Postface*,’ witch came just before the ‘*Dédicace*’; like all other characters in the book, he only has a first name, like Daniele, Germain, Guy, Julien, Juliette...). This fair attempt to start blurring boundaries between sex, gender, and sexuality is another interesting feature of *Transports amoureux*, and Elisabeth Herrgott further develops this in her other books.

**Biography**

Elisabeth Herrgott, who mainly works as a journalist, has published several books of erotic literature as well as the semi-autobiographic *Mes hiérodoules* (2000). That latter book caused an unexpected, dubious, and widely publicized scandal that started in the provincial town of Dole (in the Jura region of France) when local doctors identified a local colleague of theirs as the inspiration for one of the key female characters of the book (a bisexual woman keenly into sado-masochism). They successfully had that highly respected pediatrician suspended for three months, arguing in court that she had

failed to follow principles of morality and ethics in her private life. Elisabeth Herrgott narrated that scandal in *Les Sorcières du Val d'Amour* (2003), which made erotic literature enter the public debate in France.

LOYKIE LOÏC LOMINÉ

**Selected Works**

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# HERVÉ, GÉRALD

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1928–1998

French novelist and philosopher

**Questioning**

The question of the masculine Eros runs through Gérard Hervé's novels and philosophical works. In 1956, he described it as "the great and naturally free male principle. Sex. Erect sex. And sperm spurting out in the sun because it is necessary to man." But unlike those in the 1950's who fictionalized homosexuality, Gérard Hervé's Dionysian imagery is the result of constant philosophical questioning. Therefore, this underrated work may be considered as the first where homosexuality "and as an indirect consequence homophobia" are not "doubly secondary problems" (P. Zaoui, "Philosophie" in *Dictionnaire de l'homophobie*, Paris: PUF, 2003). The 1956 quote comes from a text written one year after his expulsion from the Navy for homosexuality. At its source is homophobic violence against what we cannot deny, our being. This leads to the necessity of exceeding the ontological rupture by returning to the source of the repression and to confront one's

homosexuality in its singularity. The author completed *Orphée interdit* in 1960. This essay on homosexual phenomenology is not a treaty for eroticism or a hedonistic plea. Some of the theses which are defended in it do lead to homoeroticism which, at the opposite extreme from the theory of androgyny turn the union of the similar into the only way out for the incompleteness of the otherness of the sexes approached from the angle of dominant relationships. The homosexual relationship tends towards psychophysical fusion. Moreover, this essay denounces the neurosis of civilization by installing a complete break between antiquity and Christianity responsible for mad Eros (in the Nietzsche sense). It is not the intention of the author to promote any kind of Greek golden age but is thinking of a way of being a full being before the alienating dualism. He therefore reveals homo-sensual forms of collective sublimation such as the Church or the Army. These erotico-ethical totalities produce some of the most significant characters in novels. The concept of heresy as a necessary product of repressive orthodoxy occupies a central role in it. By indicating and exceeding the world of fault, the homosexual writer is a heretic who proffers

truths which are impossible to say or intolerable. The free creation evokes this absolutely free Eros.

### ***Fictionalizing***

The drama of 1955 produced the autobiographical statement, which was published in 1971. The transposition of the real begins lately, via several novels that highlight complex characters and situations. In an episode of *Hérésies imaginaires*, the author uses a double metaphor, that of a mutilated soldier of the first world war who yells for having been deprived of his “torch.” But Gérard Hervé accords a significant role to the joyful body. We may be tempted to oppose the world of infantile sexuality with that of adults. Faced with their eroticism often covered by pretexts that may not even be able to be decided, adolescent sexuality is lived through figures in games and rituals, in the happy transgression of that which is forbidden, this obstacle that provides an image to desire, which suggests a happy Eros as opposed to the incomplete, frustrated adult Eros. The friendship between Bernard and Philippe in *Le soldat nu* is accomplished through physical love but ends in a sudden break-up; the carefree and happy pederasty of J. Lambègue in *Les feux d’Orion* is threatened; the coitus of Romain Saint-Sulpice and the young Gildas is the peak of eroticism but as the subject of blackmail in an ecclesiastical pedophile scandal in which he becomes indirectly involved, the adult commits suicide. The tragic or disappointing outcomes suggest the curse hanging over male homosexuality. However, we should not look on this as a simple transposition of the drama of 1955. Eros is polymorphic. More than a dichotomy between happy fictional love and unhappy real love, the erotic experiences are indicated by intensity and abnormality. They cannot be the subject of any normative discourse: “In terms of sex, the mere Montmartre fraud knows more than esteemed university professors,” he wrote in 1999. The author defines perversity as the meaning of hidden correspondences. On several occasions he recounts the relationship of two men with one woman. This is a figure of a significant relationship of this perversity, which reveals the transversality of homosexual desire. The most heretical of all the figures illustrates the crucial

aspect of the theory of homosexuality that was formulated in 1960 as ontological incest: the actions of the father Cham on his son Bohor in *Les hérésies imaginaires*.

Moreover, this novel shows itself to be extraordinarily rich and original in the way it tells of love between children, which takes place away from the eyes of adults. The eroticism which is revealed in the first part culminates in episodes which highlight figures of uninhibited and non-narcissistic adolescent sexuality: homosexual cruising, mutual masturbation, discovery of the erect phallus, heterosexual deflowering, erotic purifications, anal eroticism, substitution of sexual possession by body to body contact or rectal injection. Real and realized fantasy fill up this universe where fear and attraction, pleasure and pain indicate paradoxical forms of erotic intensity: terror caused by ithyphallic beings, fear of castration, ejaculation following flagellation. This freedom culminates in nudity in front of a group of children or adults. The male nudes in the work translate the necessary link, which is also nostalgic love for a lost unity, of beauty and truth. Its end is therefore less sexual pleasure as the search for joy by reconciliation in the eyes of others.

Genital coitus constitutes above all a polymorphic, even queer figure of sexuality or an initiatory cerebra-sensorial experience mode, thus, the magnificent deflowering scene between Cyril and Barbara in *les Hérésies imaginaires*. But anal coitus is the subject of the strongest narrations. The last novel, *Les aventures de Romain Saint-Sulpice*, dedicated to the under-20s, combines the excremental vision, in the Norman Brown sense, with didactic proselytizing in favor of sodomy. Only this coitus, which is slow and tender, leads to the full accomplishment of male desire. Romain leads about sexual completeness through heterosexual sodomy, then with a boy. This love is perfect but tragic and ephemeral. The comment that Gérard Hervé made to Alberto Moravia, that sex is the key to his work, also applies to his own.

### **Biography**

Gérald Hervé was born in Marseilles, France, December 13, 1928. He studied law and political science in Paris, was awarded a post as Navy

officer and initially drafted near to Saigon in September 1954. In May 1955, the victim of an anti-homosexual purge, he spent two months in jail and was dismissed from the Army. He worked in Paris in insurance until he moved to Perros-Guirec (Brittany) in 1971 to teach economic sciences. In 1993, he retired to Nice. He died in Miami, USA, June 06, 1998, from injuries caused in a motorboat accident in Paradise Island (Nassau, Bahamas).

HERVÉ BAUDRY

See also *Gay (Male) Writing; Pedophilia/Pederasty; Philosophy and Eroticism in Literature; Psychoanalysis; Queer Theory; Religion and Sex; Sodomy*

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## HISTOIRE D'I

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This novella was published in 1974, in the climate of intellectual freedom that followed the "events" of 1968, a time of onslaught against literary conventions and sexual stereotypes. It employs a gender twist to parody formulaic models.

Published the same year as Belen (alias Nelly Kaplan)'s *Mémoires d'une liseuse de draps* [*Memoirs of a Sheet Reader*], *Histoire d'I* is equally literate and shares its basic strategies of reversal, but limits itself to a straightforward caricature. Beyond the title's obvious reference, the story line takes up specific episodes of *Histoire d'O* (1954) and constructs I as O's male counterpart, while relentlessly deflating the programmatic verticality of his name through a systematic inversion of male and female stereotypical positionings. Everything is described

from the point of view of I's consciousness, but the author's signature, with its telluric connotations, is that of Gaëtane, the protagonist's tormentor, a fact that underscores her absolute agency, thus diverting the erotic significance of the female signature in pornography.

I, an innocuous, conceited playboy, is picked up by a stunning beauty in a café and becomes her passive prey. Gaëtane takes him to her own car where she initiates some foreplay, and then to her house, a setting where all the slaves are male and whose baroque trompe l'œil will be the stage of I's voyage into loving self-immolation, and physical and mental torture. At once comical, violent, and nauseating, Gaëtane's parody does not spare any aspect of high and low erotic literature. Gaëtane, the dominatrix, is both

ultra-feminine and virilized, curvaceous but bristling with a panoply of sharp appendages, starting with her clitoris and her breasts “beautiful like iron and ice.” Her monstrous cohort of women, who enthusiastically assist her in I’s tormenting, embody menacing fantasies of the feminine: dentate or gaping vaginas, mountains of flesh and spiked heels that crush or pierce I’s flesh, in short, engulfing and castrating sexuality.

Betrayed by the intensity of his desire, I fails to satisfy Gaëtane during their first sexual encounter. This introduces the motif of punishment. I understands that he deserves the whipping that Gaëtane instantly administers—not, as in the case of O, for some obscure flaw inscribed in nature—but because, as a man, he has “lost face and made a fool of himself.” Nevertheless, the effect is the same: “The punishment did him good, absolved and purified him.” I soon realizes that his total submission will take him “beyond the limit” (Bataille) and, like O with Sir Stephen, he accepts the prospect of dying for Gaëtane’s sake. Like O, he is put on a leash and, unlike her, made to sleep on a litter; he has to wear high cothurni and must leave his “genital clutter” uncovered and available at all times; and he gratefully suffers Gaëtane’s voyeurism of his worst tortures. In a twofold replica of O’s labia pierced and chained and her buttocks branded with Sir Stephen’s initials, he undergoes circumcision and Gaëtane embroiders her name on his breast, making sure not to forget the two dots on the ‘e’. The accumulation of concrete minutiae in this episode points to a *mise en abyme*, from Pauline Réage to Barthes and then to Sade. In *Sade, Fourier, Loyola*, published in 1971, Barthes commented on the detail of he “red thread” with which the daughter sews the mother’s vagina in *Philosophy in the Bedroom*. The parody devises all sorts of niceties in Gaëtane’s needlework, thus embroidering on Barthes’s clever association of *écriture* with sewing (“the sure way to horror is metonymy: the tool is more terrible than the torture”).

Direct references to Sade are the roasting of a young boy (an allusion to the roasting of Juliette’s daughter in *The Story of Juliette*), followed by the consumption of his penis by the “ogresses”; and the banquet scene, during which some of the slaves are temporarily transfixed into contorted poses thanks to an injection and

have their organs turned into candlesticks and inserted with candles (a function provided by women’s vaginas in Sade’s novel).

Constantly raped and sodomized by hideous women, when not forced to participate in sodomic “trains” with other slaves, I can achieve an erection only through repeated whippings and finally becomes unusable. After failing to attract any buyer during the slave market which provides an outlet for Gaëtane’s discarded slaves, he is free to return to the outside world, but feels incapable of renouncing his voluntary servitude. He awaits death, but his punishment will be worse than death: Gaëtane forces him to witness her sexual embrace with another woman: “A woman’s pleasure (*jouissance*) with another woman cannot, must not be told. It would burst the world open and would reduce it to powder. The two women did not even bother to cut I’s tail. But ... he knew full well that his organ was useless. They did not even look at him. I left with his tail between his legs, as ashamed as a fox ensnared by a hen.” (the latter simile a direct quote from La Fontaine’s fable “The Fox and the Stork”). With this final burst of laughter, little is left of O’s pathetic consent to her own death.

No doubt, beyond the male slant of the porno-/erotic genre, Gaëtane’s target is the complacent earnestness that characterized its higher forms even when they were not devoid of humor, as in Klossowski, Bataille, Barthes, and their followers, all harking back to Sade. But *Histoire d’I* at times could pass for “the real thing,” in its few lyrical passages and with its medley of ludicrous postures and curvilinear settings—an excellent pastiche of the burlesque vein that runs from the Ancients through Sade to the present. There remains the question of the effectiveness of such a parody, whether in terms of its erotic value or as a feminist satire, or merely as a joke. To this reader at least, the latter are far more potent than the first, an opinion that still leaves open the question of *Histoire d’I*’s readership (and authorship).

LUCIENNE FRAPPIER-MAZUR

### Editions

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# HOUELLEBECQ, MICHEL

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1958–

French novelist and poet

## *Les particules élémentaires*

Michel Houellebecq's *Les particules élémentaires* proved to be one of the most controversial French novels of the 1990s. The storm this book provoked was rapidly christened the "Houellebecq Affair," and was largely the result of three elements: the novel's highly charged sexuality coupled with its deep-seated pessimism concerning contemporary Western society, and the author's penchant for the outrageous interview statement. In a conversation with a reporter from the distinguished French newspaper, *Le Monde*, Houellebecq once expressed his admiration for Stalin because "he killed lots of anarchists" (Van Reuterghen). With comments such as this, along with his apparent distrust of France's immigrant population, Houellebecq fueled the arguments surrounding his novel, and in doing so, positioned himself as a latter-day Céline.

*Les particules élémentaires* is the story of two half-brothers who try to come to terms with their lives in contemporary, post-May '68 France. They were both in their early teens in 1968, and thus were not active in the strikes and demonstrations during the spring of that year. Yet each in his own way must experience what the novel portrays as the dire consequences of the break with tradition and a new, uncontrolled liberalism.

As the novel begins the brothers are facing their early forties. Michel is a biologist utterly lacking in affect, yet a brilliant researcher. Part of the disturbing effect Michel's theories have on readers comes from the apparent verisimilitude of the description of his scientific activities. This is largely due to Houellebecq's own scientific background and knowledge. Before becoming a writer, he trained as an agronomist and received a diploma in that discipline in 1980. Michel's

half-brother, Bruno, is a hedonistic high school literature teacher who tries to find solace, if not meaning, in unbridled sexuality. Their mother, Janine, who later Americanizes her name to Jane after a period in a California hippy community, is a trained physician who becomes a counter-culture fanatic; over the course of the novel she experiments with an impressive number of alternative religions, life styles, and men. Just before her death she converts to Islam, much to Bruno's chagrin.

Bruno is the sexual center of the novel. Obsessed with women, particularly young ones, and by the smallness of his phallus, he turns out to be, in an age of putative sexual liberation, a spectacularly unsuccessful seducer. He winds up mostly paying for the sexual release he so desperately seeks. However, his erotic misadventures take place against the background of the new sexual permissiveness in post-May '68 France. He visits Paris's sex clubs, participates with indifferent results in the sex parties, *les partouzes*, springing up all over France, and fails as a husband and father. Bruno's fixation with all things sexual eventually costs him his job, when he is removed from the school where he works for making advances to a teenage Arab girl. Another nasty offshoot of Bruno's frenzied pursuit of sexual release is his burgeoning racism. His contempt for young African males stems from his conviction that their penises are larger than his own.

Bruno's luck changes briefly when he spends time at the Espace du possible [the Space of the Possible]. This is a New Age vacation spot run by former and would-be hippies who shrewdly exploit the younger generation's (forty and below) desire for casual sex coupled with self-help seminars; this is a place where a "sensitive gestaltmassage" can be followed by fellatio. At the Espace du Possible a chance encounter changes Bruno's life. He meets Christiane, a woman in her early forties, with whom he has sex and discovers love. Together they plunge into a world of sexual licence, the clubs, *les partouzes*, etc., but this



time Bruno mostly enjoys himself. For the first time he is relatively at ease with his life and his world. Unfortunately, his happiness is short-lived. Christiane falls victim of a non-sexually transmitted disease and dies painfully. Bruno's only recourse is to check himself into a mental institution.

Unlike his brother, Michel has practically no libido. He is all intellect; his sexual experiences are scant, and occur with little pleasure and less emotion. Yet Michel is a very successful biologist who has done distinguished research on cloning. As a youth he was a very close friend to a beautiful girl named Annabelle, but this adolescent romance went nowhere. At forty Michel takes a sabbatical leave from his research institution, and during this period he meets Annabelle again. They try being together, but the effort is a failure. Annabelle's effort to have a child with Michel results only in the discovery that she has ovarian cancer. When the cancer metastasizes, she commits suicide. Michel then takes leave from his research facility, and accepts a position in Ireland where he continues his work on cloning. It is in this setting that he will also take his life, but not before developing theories that will lead to the creation of a new race that will be asexual and immortal. When the novel ends in 2029 this new breed has largely replaced the older, human model.

Houellebecq uses sex in *Les Particules élémentaires* as a metaphor for all that is wrong in post-May '68 France and, by extension, the Western world. Unbridled sexual licence signals the collapse of traditional moral values, while it remains at the same time the only source of pleasure, and the sole means of briefly escaping life's total meaninglessness. Bruno's activities represent the pathetic attempt to be part of this new age, while Michel's scientific activities

constitute an effort to curtail the era's horrors. One brother struggles to accept the contemporary world, while the other labors to reject it. Yet in the end they both fall victim to a world wherein they can find no place for themselves.

### Biography

Born in 1958 on the island of the Reunion. He published his first book, a biography of H.P. Lovecraft in 1991. He has written essays, poetry, and novels. He received the Tristan Tzara Prize for his first collection of poetry, *La poursuite du bonheur* (1992), the Flore Prize for his second collection, *Le sens du combat* (1996), and the November Prize for his second novel, *Les Particules élémentaires* (1998). Houellebecq has his own website,

WILLIAM CLOONAN

### Editions

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# HUANG

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1316–1368  
Chinese writer

### *The Records of Green Bowers.*

In Chinese *Qinglouji*, variously translated *Green Lofts Collection* (W. Idema), *Green Mansions* (Chung-wen Shi) or *Green Bower Collection*, “bower” in the singular being a literary reference to the entertainments bureau at the time of the Mongol empire. Besides, the “seventy” is in fact the round number of entries telling the biographies of many more people, a hundred and twenty female entertainers, and some thirty males introduced as their relatives. What are recounted are their activities as dancers, singers, poetesses, or comedians rather than as courtesans of unforgettable beauty. The avowed ugliness of some of them is redeemed by their gifts. Concise and matter-of-fact, the biographies range from thirty to three hundred words. According to the author’s statement in his preface, the stories originate from both second-hand sources of questionable reliability and from first-hand, personal experiences.

### **A source-book for the early history of Chinese theater**

The major value of the work is as a source-book for the early history of Chinese operatic drama. Fortunately, it has been preserved in more than half a dozen collections, in various, incomplete states, the best available text being the one included by Yze Dejun (1864–1927) in his *Shuangmei jing’an congshu*, first published in 1903. Newer modern editions are based on it, completing and annotating it critically, mainly through the discovery of a unique manuscript, from a probable second edition prepared by the author himself after 1366.

### **A public service**

“The brief biographies of the *Qing-lou-chi* show how varied the careers of those girls were, they

mirror the confused and uncertain times. Some singing-girls were bought as concubines by wealthy men, then left them to join a private theatrical troupe owned by another man, and finally married their master or drifted back to their original profession. Others became Taoist nuns and roamed all over the larger cities of the Empire, earning their living now as actresses, then as prostitutes, to end in misery or in a harem of a Chinese or Mongol official. We also read about male actors, a lowly profession that was badly paid; their wives and daughters often had to earn extra-money as prostitutes.” These limited images translated by Robert van Gulik may represent the whole picture.

In Mongol times (1276–1368), entertainments were a public service provided by the state not only to the court but also to officials and occasionally to affluent merchants. There was no clear dividing line between sexual or artistic services. Brothels of lower status were private enterprises not taken into account in the celebrity ranks. Indeed, though admired, entertainers belonged to a despised social stratum, maintained in a servile status through heredity or penalty. Nevertheless, their attractiveness tended to deplete their numbers, as the powerful tried to take hold of their persons. Repeated biographies insisted on the prohibition of inter-marriage with “good people,” albeit unsuccessfully. Take as example the case of Gu Shanshan:

“As she was the fourth child, she was called ‘Miss Ku Number Four.’ Though from a good family, she lost her status because of her father. Gifted and witty, she was an unrivalled artist. First married to the musician Li Little Big Man, she became, when her first husband died, a concubine of the district magistrate of Huating, *Kharabukha* (a probable Mongol name) for thirteen years, before returning to her former status of entertainer. She is now in her sixties, aging in Sung-chiang (Songjiang, a city not very far from present-day Shanghai), but has kept the charm of her youth when performing in dramas the role of flowery female lead. The new generation profits from her guidance and still many are her admirers.”

### A Multifaceted Gallery of Portraits Drawn in Sober Style

On the other hand, nothing is said about the charm of “La Petite” Shi, so “good in reciting chantefable (what we call these days ‘small talks, prose interspersed with verses). Her delivery is like a ball running down hills, like water gushing out of a bottle. Her daughter, ‘La Toute Petite,’ was too skilled in tongue twisting. She married the male lead Qing the Bountiful but did not outstrip her mother’s art.”

Yang Mai-nu, “the daughter of Yang the Colt had a beautiful and charming face. Good at singing, an addicted drinker, she was the idol of high officials, dukes and princes. She married later a musician; Kicking devils Chang the Fourth, and died of gloominess. Guan Yunshi (1286–1324) wrote the lines ‘Her hair twisted like a black conch, her skirts trailing like a white belt’ deriding her, probably because she suffered from the ‘white-belt disease’ (leucorrhoea, a form of vaginitis).”

In an unaffected style the author managed to avoid repetitiveness even when dealing with loyal courtesans’ cases, for example that of Truthful Fan: “A famous beauty from the capital. She became the favourite of the Councillor Zhou Zhonghong. When he returned home in the South, she saw him off at the gate of Universal Transformation. ‘After our separation, keep yourself in check and behave so that people won’t scoff at us,’ said Chou. Throwing wine on the ground, she swore: ‘If I am unfaithful to you, I’ll gouge out one eye in repentance!’ Some time later a powerful potentate appeared. Her mother was afraid and tempted by his wealth. The daughter resisted at the beginning but finally gave up. When Chou returned to the capital, she told him: ‘It is not that I did not wish to behave after you left, it’s the pressure of his wealth and power. The oath of former days,

how could I have taken it in vain?’ She drew a metal comb and pierced her left eye. Blood gushed out, drenching the ground all around. It was such a shock for Chou that he loved her as much as he used to before. Some amateur made a play out of it, quite successful, under the title *An eye pierced with a metal comb.*”

### Biography

The name Huang comes from a misreading in a preface dated 1364. His identity has been clearly established as Xia Tingshi, born about 1316, a renowned composer of arias. A member of a wealthy and powerful clan famous for its huge collection of books, he was patron to a number of well-known amateurs of stage entertainments. Of his writings, only one thin collection of short biographies is known. He died around 1368.

ANDRÉ LÉVY

### Editions

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# HUNEKER, JAMES GIBBONS

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1857–1921

American journalist and novelist

## *Painted Veils*

At the time *Painted Veils* was published, a draconian censorship regime prevailed in the United States. Works by such established authors as Arthur Schnitzler and D.H. Lawrence were routinely condemned to the incinerator by the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice. The New York publishing firm of Boni and Liveright decided to proceed with prudence, and issued Huneker's novel in a subscription edition of some 1,300 copies for which the author received \$1,800. Although the book escaped prosecution, within a short while it had become an underground classic and second-hand copies were trading for as much as eighty dollars. Scholars should be aware that some later editions, including those issued by the book's original publisher, are expurgated versions.

The action is located during an eighteen-month period some time in the late 1890s. The story itself centers on Ester Brandès, a talented but impecunious young woman from Virginia, and the various cultural intermediaries whom she meets when she comes to New York to study music. These include Alfred Stone, a slightly world-weary theater and music critic, who helps her enroll in the Conservatoire Cosmopolitain as a student of Frida Ash; Ulick Ulvern, a restless, Paris-born American writer with considerable prospects; Paul Godard, a millionaire dilettante who tries to seduce her shortly after her arrival in New York; and the various women friends of these men. At the end of the novel, Ester, who has moved on to Berlin to complete her musical training, returns to New York following her triumphant operatic debut.

Although *Painted Veils* contains little which might be described as erotic, there are a number of intentionally sensational episodes. One of these is the flashback "Holy Yowler" incident

that occurs early in the novel during which Ester and Ulick (then unknown to each other) become involved in a drunken orgy organized by a Pentecostal sect. Although at the time Ulick believes he has sexual congress with Esther, it is later revealed that his partner was, in fact, an alcoholic black woman and that Ester had had congress with the itinerant leader of the group. Given the laws of racial segregation in force at the time, this revelation makes the episode even more scandalous than the Black Mass episode in J.-K. Huysmans's *Là-bas* (1891) which, presumably, provided the original model for the scene. Another celebrated incident also concerns a drunken orgy, this time organized for the benefit of young men-about-town in the studio of a New York painter. Once again, the selection of this episode is prompted by a close reading of Huysmans (the Black Banquet in *A Rebours*, 1884) though the scene itself is closely modelled on the notorious Pie Girl Dinner (so-called because a sixteen-year-old model emerged from a giant pie) given by millionaire Henry W. Poor in 1895. Huneker had probably been present. But even without these two set pieces, there are many other scandalous admissions in the novel, notably the lesbianism of the heroine. Indeed, it is implied that one consequence of Ester's increasing artistic prowess is a shift in her sexual orientation such that she shows rather more sexual interest in Ulick's various female partners than in Ulick himself.

As a novel, more than eighty years after its initial publication, *Painted Veils* makes little intellectual sense without an appreciation of the author's long fascination with European culture, his particular interest in music, and the problematic nature of the cultural relationship he had spent a lifetime trying to forge between the New World and the Old World. One theme that is very pronounced in the novel, for example, is that of deracination, a subject much discussed by the French writer Maurice Barrès. Similarly, Huneker would seem to have looked to Nietzsche for a justification of the philandering

## HUNGARIAN

of his central male character, Ulick Ulvern. Likewise, although one reading of the novel would suggest that Ester Brandès is simply ambitious, opportunistic, and immoral, a more sophisticated view would be that it is only by freeing herself from the normal conventions of her time that she is permitted to attain the highest artistic development. The extent that Huneker was exploring the contradictions of his own life by reference to the individualistic philosophy of Nietzsche is further indicated by the author's identification which Ulick Ulvern whose death, like that of the German philosopher, is ascribed to a sudden syphilis-induced paralytic stroke.

At the very least, *Painted Veils* is an interesting though flawed attempt by an American writer to create a work of fiction using themes and techniques developed by European modernists and to explore their relevance within this new cultural setting. Paradoxically, given the operatic background of the novel, it is sometimes considered to be the first novel of the Jazz Age.

### Biography

Though intended for the law, Huneker devoted much of his adolescence to the study of music and literature. After marrying in 1878, he and his wife spent nine months in Paris before returning to their native Philadelphia. In 1886, this time alone, he decamped to New York, where he worked as a journalist and music teacher. From 1900 to 1917, he wrote for the

New York *Sun* on art, literature, drama, and music. The various collections of essays and articles he published in book form exhibit his overriding fascination with European culture. These include: *Iconoclasts. A Book of Dramatists* (1905), which is largely devoted to Scandinavian, French, and German theater; *Egoists. A Book of Supermen* (1909), which focuses on the writings on Stendhal, Baudelaire, Flaubert, Anatole France, Huysmans, and Nietzsche; and *Unicorns* (1917), in which Chopin, Wagner, Brahms, George Sand, Cézanne, and others pass under review. In contrast to his critical works, Huneker's prose fiction is often considered labored as well as unduly Continental. The latter include collections of short stories such as *Melomaniacs* (1902) and *Visionaries* (1905), both of which deal largely with the musical world, and the 'erotic' novel *Painted Veils* (1920), which though considered controversial at the time of publication managed to avoid prosecution. *Steeplejack* (1920) is an autobiographical work.

TERRY HALE

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# HUNGARIAN

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Erotic literature is defined here as a genre with three progressively explicit types of text: the erotic, the sexual, and the pornographic imaginary in its linguistic expressions and versions; progressively explicit is understood as the representations of the erotic imaginary from the implicit (i.e., erotic) to the more explicit (i.e., sexual) to the most explicit (i.e., pornographic) in content and form. Erotic literature is thus

employed as an umbrella term and is understood by the levels of linguistic explicitness of the imaginary from the erotic to the sexual to the pornographic.

Similar to other Central and East European literatures (e.g., Czech, Slovak, Slovene, Romanian, Croatian, etc.), erotic literature in Hungarian is scarce in all periods of literary history. As a result of the scarcity of the genre, there is

limited scholarship available on the topic beyond a few articles and László Kemenes Géfin and Jolanta Jastrzobka's *Erotika a huszadik századi magyar regényben, 1911–1947 (Erotica in the Hungarian Novel of the Twentieth Century, 1911–1947)* (1998).

Explicit erotic, sexual, and pornographic imagery and language exist aplenty in Hungarian oral literature, common in the countryside where wedding songs in particular have been and still are today heavily erotic to pornographic. Here is an example from a suitor's song: "Kérem, alázatosan,/ Eresszen be, kisasszony,/ Ha igazán nem baszom,/ Törjék bele faszom"/ "I beg you most humbly,/ give me leave to enter, young miss,/ if I don't fuck you real well,/ my cock should break off in the effort" or in a song of unmarried men to the bride: "Kelj fel menyasszony/ Itt a volegény,/ Tapogasd meg a faszát,/ Hogy milyen kemény!" / "Get up bride,/ here comes the groom,/ feel his cock,/ how hard it is") (qtd. in Vasvári at <<http://clwebjournal.lib.purdue.edu/clweb99-4/vasvari99.html>>). Also, pornographic language and imagery occurs in many folk tales passed down orally.

The situation is markedly different in written literature, canonical or popular. From the seventeenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries there are only few texts with any erotic content: examples include Mihály Csokonai Vitéz (1773–1805), whose *Lilla* songs and the comic epic *Dorottya* contain erotic symbolism; or Pál Németi (eighteenth century) whose poetry is infused with erotic tones. After the birth of the novel in Hungarian literature with the mid-nineteenth century, eroticism appears in prose but only implicitly as authorial instigation for the reader to imagine the sexual situation and in almost all cases a consummation of sexual desire is described as exemplification of the consequences of sexual repression, as a punishment for transgressions of social codes, usually by the woman. Examples of this genre of erotic literature include texts—poetry and prose—in the work of canonical authors such as Zsigmond Justh (1863–1894), Zsigmond Móricz (1879–1942), Margit Kaffka (1880–1918), Gyula Krúdy (1878–1933), Józsi Jenő Tersánszky (1888–1969); Mihály Babits (1883–1941), Dezső Kosztolányi (1885–1936), Géza Csáth (1887–1919), Zsolt Harsányi (1887–1943), Mihály Földi (1894–1943), Béla Révész (1876–1944), Erno Szép (1884–1953), and Sándor Márai (1900–1989).

An exception to the status quo is the prose of Renée Erdős (1879–1956) who published a number of novels with explicit descriptions of sexuality such as in *A nagy sikoly (The Great Moan)* (1923), a novel about sexual repression similar to the novels of canonical authors mentioned previously but here it is the female voice that is given prevalence, often women of the gentry in widowhood after World War I. Another exception is the verse of Árpád Löwy (pseudonym of László Réthy, 1851–1914) whose sexual and pornographic poetry remained unpublished during his life, though it was distributed in hand-written copies or orally. A few years after his death, in 1919, a private edition of his texts appeared in print while the next publication of his texts occurred, again in a private edition, in Germany in 1983, edited anonymously by "J.H.J." His verse is arguably of interest because it is with humor and irony about social matters including the pillorying of pretension and repressive social codes and mores of the time and expressed in pornographic language and imagery (including scatology and blasphemy, the latter a characteristic of Hungarian colloquial language). Rumor has it that János Arany (1817–1882), one of Hungary's most revered national writers, compiled a secret collection of pornographic verse. It is said that a relative of the author guarded the text that was then destroyed during the bombing of Budapest in World War II. Also, Arany's epic *Toldi*, a verse trilogy published 1847–1854, has an anonymously published short version of pornographic and scatological verse narration, at times attributed to Arany himself. Here is an example from this pornographic version from the epic: "Egy csak egy legény van, aki nem hág: Toldi, / Pedig rofös faszát talicskán kell tolni. / Legénytoll sem fedi bár hatalmas pöcsét, / Egyensúlyoz rajta három tonna rozsét. / Vele o az ipart csak en-gross-ban <zi, / Farkára a noket hármassával f<zi; / Egy krónikás mondta, aki mindent látott, / Jókedvében egyszer hét megyét meghágot" / [There's only one guy who doesn't fuck now: Toldi, / Though it takes a wheel-barrow for his dick to carry. / His huge prick youthful without pubic hair yet, / He balances on his dick three loads of wood on a bet. / With this prick he does business en-gross exclusively, / And so Toldi fucks women by the three exemplarily; / A chronicler who saw it all reported, / In a good mood Toldi once summarily in all seven

provinces fucked] (my translation). What has made the text offensive in Hungarian culture in the opinion of the general reading public as well as with scholars and intellectuals is not only the pornographic language and imagery of the text but the fact that the pornographic version ridicules a national and canonical epic much revered then and now.

Further examples of erotic-pornographic poetry include verse by Ádám Valagh (alias of the literary historian and translator Tibor Szilágyi, “valag” is arse in Hungarian) published during World War II or Zoltán Somlyó (1882–1937) with his “Milléva” series published in Transylvanian Romania in 1926. In prose, of some interest are the texts published by the critic, writer, and poet Pál Ignóty (pseudonym of Hugó Veigelsberg, 1869–1949) who under the pseudonym “Emma”—it is of much discussion why he chose a female persona—published between 1893 and 1906 fictitious letters about the situation and daily life of women, embracing a feminist point of view including the right of women to eroticism and the enjoyment of sexuality. Other rare texts of sexual and pornographic contents include Tivadar Zichy’s (1908–1945) novel *Orgia Rt.* [*Orgy Inc.*] and of particular note is Attila József’s (1905–1937) recently published *Szabad ötletek jegyzéke* [*Notebook of Unbound Ideas*] (1991), a text categorized today as auto-psychoanalysis about the dreams and imaginings of one of Hungary’s most prominent poets of modernity. In his text, József describes, among others, in sexual and pornographic language his imaginary relationship with his mother. The canonized writer Józsi Jenő Tersánszky (1888–1969), listed above, wrote a pornographic short novel that remains unpublished in a literary museum, the Petőfi Irodalmi Múzeum, in Budapest.

While translations of French or other Western erotic literature are extremely rare to nonexistent until recently, of interest is the free translation of François Villon’s ballads by György Faludy (1913–), *Villon balladái* (1937), a masterful rendition of the original with explicit sexual language and imagery. Faludy also translated erotic poetry of canonical authors such as Verlaine, Baudelaire, and Rimbaud.

In contemporary Hungarian literature, it is in exile literature where the first text of prose with pornographic content and language was written and published: László Kemenes Géfin’s

*Fehérlófia nyolcása. Hardcore szerelem cirkusz* [*The Eight Circles of the White Stag: Hardcore Circus of Love*] (1978–1981; 1995). Although not paid virtually any attention to in Hungarian scholarship, the novels of Kemenes Géfin represent the first postmodern text of Hungarian literature, not the least because of the novels’ daring irony about Hungarian patriotism and history, presented in a sexual and pornographic context and language. While Kemenes Géfin’s novels are still today, in the context of post-1989 Hungarian culture and literature, innovative and worthy of serious study, his sexual and pornographic writing is from a strongly patriarchal point of view; and so is his and Jolanta Jastrzębska’s study, *Erotika a huszadik századi magyar regényben, 1911–1947* (*Erotica in the Hungarian Novel of the Twentieth Century, 1911–1947*) (1998). Here is an example of Kemenes Géfin’s sexual and pornographic writing:

“He finally took his clothes off, kicked his shoes off, and told me to stand up and that I must take that goddam pantyhose off. I too took my shoes off now and quickly rolled down the offensive stockings although I put them on especially for him, they were of a nice smoky color, and now I should be glad that he did not rip them off. I wanted to crouch down in front of him, I had only the blouse left on me, it had a décolletage that my tits spilled almost out of them. But he was uninterested in this daring pose and I suddenly felt lost. He then said that he wants me to stand in front of him, so I did, my Venus just in front of his face, weak in my knees. He embraced my hips, took my ass into his hands and burrowed into my groin. I felt his tongue inside me, he was slurping, his tongue was in my cunt and for minutes I lost time, I don’t know what he was doing, and felt his finger, too, in my cunt, with another one caressing my anus, and I returned to time and place when I heard his voice telling me that one does not have the chance to lick such a nice and clean cunt everyday. Then he took my clitoris into his mouth and all presence left me, if he hadn’t been holding me I would have crumpled to the floor. The next I remembered I was on the bed, he was bending my legs backward, licking me, digging his tongue into my cunt, sucking my juices out, then sucking on my anus, licking it and I realized that I was making noises, babbling and sighing with short shrieks. I never experienced such pleasure. Then something burning hot and enormous began and swept through me” (1995, 62–63).

After the dissolution of the Soviet empire in 1989–1990, in Hungary, similar to all other

countries of communist regime, erotic literature began to be published en masse. In canonical prose, the two most prominent examples are the novels of Péter Nádas (1942–), especially his novel *Emlékiratok könyve* (abridged and censored 1986, unabridged 1998) [*A Book of Memories*, trans. Ivan Sanders and Imre Goldstein, 1997] and *Égi és földi szerelemről* [*Of Heavenly and Earthly Love*] (1991), a collection of essays about sexuality and language and Péter Esterházy (1950–), whose novel *Egy nő* (1995) [*She Loves Me*, trans. Judith Sollosy, 1997] is unremarkable although his daring of pornographic descriptions of the loves and affairs of a fictitious alter ego—similar to the work of Kemeses Géfin in a strongly patriarchal and male chauvinistic voice—nevertheless represent innovation in Hungarian literature. Here is an excerpt from Esterházy's novel:

“A Woman (64). I saw her breasts from the side, they bounced and moved about, jumped elasticized; happy breasts, this is how they can be summarized. ... I saw her ass, too, when she walked, consequently from afar, moving away, bum, ass, I don't know what to call it. Apart from all these I would like yet to see her hair in my life, her ears (cleanliness and control), her neck (from the front, I saw it fleetingly when she, excited, swallowed something, and something moved there as if she had an Adam's apple), I would like to see her collar bone, her ribs, her shoulder blades (like stumps of wings), altogether her bones, from her skull to her toes' middle bones, I would like to see her stomach, the youthful rolls of fat, altogether all her fat, her belly button, and all her holes, the hair under her belly, and altogether all her hair. I don't want to see anything else, that's what I keep my eyes for. She squeezes the champagne bottle between her legs, that's how she opens it. It's as if it were her penis. I will have to pay for this, says one of us as the champagne overflows. It's more from the champagne than from the joke that I suddenly remember: and I would like to see her cunt, face to eye” (124, my translation).

In the visual arts of Hungary, similar to literature, there is very little erotic material and virtually none exists when it comes to sexual and pornographic art (there was no impact in Hungary of the highly erotic and sexual visual arts of the Viennese art nouveau of such as Klimt or Schiele). However, of international renown are the erotic and in some instances pornographic drawings of Mihály Zichy (1827–1906), a prominent representative of romantic painting, illustrator, and portraitist. In accordance with the

general sensitivity about the sexual and the pornographic with regard to national symbols and texts altogether and with regard to literature, in contemporary Hungary sexual and pornographic depictions are rare as in previous periods. An example of the contemporary situation is the following: a serious offence with legal implications was the depiction of the post-1989 reinstalled official coat-of-arms of Hungary, with two angels on each side of the escutcheon where an artist in opposition to the decision to reinstate pre-war religious symbolism, depicted the two angels masturbating. The intention of the artist was, indeed, to ridicule religious and historical symbolism albeit the humor of the alternate depiction was in whole not accepted by the general public and the picture was understood as desecration and only after a lengthy trial was the artist acquitted.

As introduced above, it is in the years after the end of the communist regime and Soviet colonialism in 1989 when an increase of productivity in Hungarian erotic literature occurred. In addition to the examples presented above, the publishing enterprise *Nappali Ház* invited in 1998 prominent authors such as Péter Esterházy, Lajos Parti-Nagy, Zsuzsa Forgács, and Ildikó Szabó (the film director of renown), to write short stories where a sexual act is described. Parallel to such publications, it has become accepted that young poets in particular publish verse in eroticized to pornographic language (e.g., János Dénes Orbán, Attila Sántha, Endre Wellmann). Akin to the practice of authors in contemporary literature elsewhere, there are examples of canonical writers who write unpublished texts such as diaries with much pornographic material as is the case with one of contemporary Hungary's prominent poets, Endre Kukorelly (1951–), who lists and describes his amorous adventures and escapades in his diaries in much detail. Further examples of contemporary texts with erotic-pornographic content include the poetry of László Lator (1927–) or Tibor Papp's “Kurvák Ilosfalván” (“Whores in Ilosfalva”), a short story in the style of stream of consciousness about amorous adventures with pornographic detail, published in the literary journal *Az Irodalom Visszavág* (1999).

Overall, the significance of the increased production of erotic culture rests on the fact that the genre of the erotic text thus attains legitimacy in Hungarian culture and literature. Of note is that



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homoerotic writing, gay or lesbian, is virtually nonexistent in Hungarian. Since the mid-1990s, in Hungary as elsewhere, there has been productivity of erotica in both text and visuals in new media on the World Wide Web and there are signs that in Hungary, too, it may be in new media where writers experiment with erotic and pornographic writing.

STEVEN TOTOSY DE ZEPETNEK

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# HUYSMANS, JORIS-KARL

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1848–1907

French novelist

### *Marthe: histoire d'une fille*

Huysmans completed the draft of *Marthe*, drawing on his experiences in 1867–1870 with a minor actress at the Bobino theater, in 1876; out of fear of censorship but also to anticipate Edmond de Goncourt's novel about a prostitute, *La fille Elisa* (1877), he traveled to Brussels to have it published there in 1876; almost all the copies were seized at the French border. After establishing himself in the group of Naturalist writers with *Les Sœurs Vatarde* and some polemical art criticism, Huysmans was able to have a second edition of *Marthe* published in Paris in 1879, the same year as Zola's *Nana*. It met with little immediate critical and generally hostile response (one critic viewed it as an “obscene publication”) and little success.

The prostitute was to preoccupy Naturalist writers with her complex linkage of sexuality with power, class, and money. Huysmans's provocative choice of subject for a first novel—the subtitle refers to the heroine bluntly as “a whore”—on a blatant contemporary social phenomenon represents the first attempt in French

to break both with the Romantic stereotype of the prostitute redeemed through love (*La dame aux camélias* of Alexandre Dumas fils) and with heroic and self-sacrificing figures like Fantine in *Les Misérables*, and to give an unsentimental portrayal of the life of a prostitute in contemporary Paris. The narrator stresses its demythificatory side when observing that Marthe's initial loss of her virginity to an older and richer man is due, not ‘as novelists say,’ to her senses, but to pride and curiosity.

The novel opens in the wings of the Bobino theater where Marthe is being prepared by the actor Ginginet for the opening night of a second-rate review; her performance attracts a young journalist, Léo. A flashback then traces Marthe's past: orphaned at 15, she had followed her mother's trade as a worker in false pearls which both undermined her health and exposed her to the corrupting conversation of her fellow workers. She yielded to an older man, but left him, disgusted. With no trade she slid into occasional prostitution, then formed a liaison with a young man. Both he and their premature child died; she sought refuge in a brothel. Slipping out one day she was noticed by Ginginet in a bar.

Marthe now begins an affair with the would-be writer who had picked her out at the theater.

After an initial idyllic period, life together and poverty erode the relationship. He grows frustrated in his literary ambitions; she suffers from his lack of interest in her as an individual. She begins to sell herself again, but stops, afraid of being caught by the police as a fugitive from a licensed brothel, and turns to drink. Léo, called to the sickbed of his mother, leaves Marthe with relief. In despair she contemplates suicide and returns to the brothel. Back in Paris, Léo seeks her out again, and finds her as the mistress of Ginginet in the sordid bar he now owns: the actor's intervention has had her struck off the police register, and he is using her to attract customers. She escapes from the mutually brutalising relationship with Ginginet, and a former woman friend helps her to acquire a lover, young, rich, and idle, who sets her up in her own apartment. Her contempt for him and sexual dissatisfaction soon drive her back to Léo. Léo, though still drawn to her sensually, is reminded by her bruises of her other life and they part definitively after a single night. She returns to a series of lovers. A coda which opens in the morgue of the Lariboisière hospital rounds off the brief novel with the triumph of bourgeois order: a smug letter from Léo to a student friend reveals him about to enter a conventional marriage, and cynically predicting for Marthe, now back in the brothel, a death from drink or in the Seine; a surgeon performs an autopsy on Ginginet to demonstrate the effects of alcoholism.

The slice of life offered by Huysmans switches between the three central figures, but Marthe remains the most ambiguous, set between the jocular cynicism of the self-destructive and exploitative Ginginet and the egoistic Léo, who is drawn to Marthe as a stimulus to his imagination, but becomes rapidly bored by the real woman beneath the actress and frustrated by the petty frictions of cohabitation.

Marthe's career allows Huysmans to portray dispassionately the varied forms that prostitution had taken in nineteenth-century Paris: the controlled world of the *maison close*, with its protection, routine, and comforts, which however imposes an "odious job" that allows neither revulsion nor fatigue; the unofficial prostitution that seeks clients in dance-halls or bars; the woman kept by a rich lover as an object of display and a sexual convenience, and her life of races, parties, and boredom. Huysmans is no

social reformer; if he is an invaluable source of information, he also betrays pervasive social attitudes (Alain Corbin), and his presentation of the prostitute's life remains intriguingly ambivalent. It offers initially the Naturalist scenario of a vulnerable individual from a sickly family corrupted by the physical squalor and moral laxity of a destructive environment, and inevitably drawn back into the world of the brothel: "Every woman who has lived this life plunges back into it one day or another." But Marthe, though attractive and physically responsive to Léo, is not driven by sexual desire: she is full of self-loathing, and, unlike Zola's *Nana*, unable to use her sexuality as a weapon against others. Her point of view offers a protest against the brutality, vulgarity, and arrogance of men and against male contempt for the prostitute. On the other hand the sympathy Huysmans shows for one individual does not really call into question the exploitation of women in this society: the availability of venal sex, the dual standard, and the evocations of women in the brothel reveal on occasion a voyeuristic fascination.

Huysmans also wrote two aggressively obscene sonnets for the *Nouveau Parnasse satyrique du XIXe siècle*.

### Biography

Charles-Marie-Georges Huysmans was born in Paris, 5 February 1848. Educated at Lycée Saint-Louis, Paris, 1862–1865; studied law at Faculté de Droit et de Lettres, Paris, 1866–1867. He earned his living as a minor civil servant at the Ministry of the Interior from 1866, then, after serving in the Garde Nationale Mobile in the Franco-Prussian War in 1870, in the Ministries of War (1870–1876) and the Interior (1876–1898). In 1892, undertook a retreat to a Trappist monastery and returned to the Roman Catholic church, spending nearly two years as a Benedictine oblate in a monastery in Ligugé (Poitou); returned to Paris in 1901 when the monks left France. His first book, the collection of prose poems *Le drageoir à épices* [*The Spice Bowl*], was published in 1874, signed Jorris-Karl Huysmans; he used J.-K. Huysmans for subsequent works. As well as a series of novels that chart a progression from Naturalism through an interest in Decadence and Symbolism (*A rebours* [*Against Nature*]) and in Satanism (*Là-bas* [*Down There*]) to conversion to

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Roman Catholicism, he wrote art criticism. Died of cancer of the jaw and mouth in Paris, May 12, 1907.

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## HYVRARD, JEANNE

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1945–

French novelist, poet, short story writer, and essayist

A crucial figure in contemporary French literature, Jeanne Hyvrard nonetheless remains largely unexplored outside the critical truisms that categorize her œuvre as 'écriture féminine' (women's writing) and/or autobiography. However, the complexities of her writing in fact place her œuvre beyond restrictive generic parameters. Although her later, more structured work displays a measure and control absent from the fragmented narrative of her early texts, the initial novels are those which display a fascinating engagement with intertextual, maternal, and morbid eroticism.

The first evidence of erotic writing in Hyvrard comes in her novel, *Les prunes de Cythère* [*The*

*Plums of Cythera*, Paris, Minuit, 1975, hereafter cited as *Prunes*]. While the novel's preoccupations with maternity, social injustice, and madness have been treated by various critics, Hyvrard also draws heavily on Charles Baudelaire's poem 'Un Voyage à Cythère' ('A Voyage to Cythera'), published in the collection *Les fleurs du Mal* [*The Flowers of Evil*]. Jeanne, the narrator, can be seen as a reincarnation of Jeanne Duval, Baudelaire's 'Muse Malade' ('Sick Muse'), his mulatto mistress and the inspiration for a number of poems in which the sensual and the necrophilial are disturbingly intertwined in the poet's erotic portrayal of his muse. The silent scapegoat of Baudelaire's passion, Duval is liberated from the mute role in which the poet imprisoned her via Hyvrard's impassioned and liberating narrative, which witnesses a woman's refusal to remain bound

within stereotyped notions of femininity. Indeed Jeanne, Hyvrard's narrator, claims that 'Je crie par mille bouches' ('I cry out from a thousand mouths,' *Prunes*), thus emphasizing the universal and intertextual relevance of the narrator. However, it is not a male lover who is subjectivising and eroticizing Jeanne, but a phallic mother figure. Like Baudelaire's polarized visions of Duval, Hyvrard offers a dual representation of the mother. The first is that of a suffocating monster whose invasion of her daughter's body is likened to a rape: 'elle s'est étendue sur moi et m'a enfoncé son phallus dans la bouche' ('she spread herself over me and forced her phallus into my mouth,' *Prunes*). These violently sexual images demonstrate a morbid eroticism that is all the more sinister given the maternal provenance of the physical abuse, and the unsettlingly vivid imagery of the phallic female. The maternal rape is seen to be cannibalistic: 'elle m'étouffe et me digère' ('she suffocates me and digests me,' *Prunes*), and the repressive maternal relationship is also depicted metaphorically as quasi-sexual: in *Prunes*, as well as the 1976 novel *Mère la mort* [*Mother Death*], the mother is likened to an octopus, stifling her child in a pseudo-amorous embrace, and in the 1990 novel *La jeune morte en robe de dentelle* [*The Dead Girl In a Lace Dress*] she is likened to mistletoe, the plant which symbolizes romantic love but which suffocates and poisons the plant it wraps around.

By taking such negative qualities away from the narrator or muse, and instead incarnating them in the oppressive othered figure, Hyvrard shows Baudelaire's description of Duval to be a projection of the self onto the other. However, the representation of the positive mother figure is no less eroticized. For example, the narrator addresses her 'real' mother (an eco-feminist Mother Earth), saying that 'quand je rentre en toi, j'y disparaiss [...] [ ;] tu m'embrasses jusqu'à ce que mes plaies touchent les tiennes et qu'elles en guérissent' ('when I go back inside you, I disappear there [...]; you kiss me until my wounds touch yours and are healed by the touch,' *Prunes*). The blurring of mother and earth echoes the narrator's desire to 'rentrer dans la terre jusqu'à devenir le sexe du monde' ('return inside the earth until I become the world's entrails' *Prunes*, p. 208). The overt erotic implications suggest a communion with the earth that is powerful and life-enhancing, and

the eco-feminist nature of this eroticism is picked up and developed in Hyvrard's 1998 text *Ton nom de végétal* [*Your Plant Name*]. The return to the earth's core also symbolizes a return to the womb, thus pulling out the pro-maternal eco-feminist strand in Hyvrard's writing. The eroticized vision of childbirth is represented here from the perspective of the child, whose fulfillment is achieved by a symbolic return to the womb. However, while the backward-looking process of returning to the 'ventre' ('womb/core') is evident, we can also identify a forward-visioned re-working of Hyvrard's sexualized view of childbirth. It is in becoming a mother herself that she feels physical fulfillment reaches its zenith: projecting forwards towards a positive and life-affirming view of motherhood, and rejecting the sadistic and morbid eroticism that defines her textual relationship with her (negative) mother, Hyvrard's narrator describes the birth of her own daughter in physical, visceral terms: '[I]nfant qui me faisait l'amour, avec tout son corps. Venu de l'intérieur de moi-même. Glissant entre mes cuisses. L'enfant nu traversant mon sexe . [...] Toi, ma petite fille, tu m'as fait l'amour mieux que tout autre.' ('[t]he child who made love to me, with its whole body. Come from my own core. Slipping between my thighs. The naked child passing across my vagina. [...] You, my little girl, you made love to me better than any other,' *Prunes*). Hyvrard's eroticized view of motherhood corresponds to the positive feminist position of viewing childbirth as the height of sexual pleasure, and thus she liberates herself from the physical and maternal restrictions of a negative female genealogy, through this orgasmic experience of childbirth.

It is thus not through a heterosexual love or relationship that Hyvrard re-works traditional or Baudelairean representations of the fetishized or eroticized female figure, but rather through a pro-life affirmation of the mother-daughter relationship. The female-centered nature of Hyvrard's texts is particularly evident in the raw and urgent emotion of her cry 'Je te crie ma haine et mes amours castrées' ('I cry out to you my hate and my castrated loves,' *Prunes*), the feminine plural 'castrées' feminizing and sexualizing the loves of which the narrator speaks. Therefore, despite her own strongly heterosexual beliefs, which she describes as a political position as well as a personal choice, the polarized representation of the female in Hyvrard is

## HYVRARD, JEANNE

redeemed through woman-to-woman love, and via a subjectivized re-working of traditional, male-authored representations of the woman as sexual or sexualized object.

### Biography

Born in Paris in 1945, Jeanne Hyvrard trained as an economist and lawyer, and claims to have come to writing ‘by chance’: having entered the teaching profession in the early 1970s, she was posted to Martinique for two years, and was outraged by the injustice and inequality she witnessed there, particularly in the treatment of women. She decided to write a social report about this in order to raise awareness—although she points out now that this was a naïve hope—of the injustices in francophone post-colonial society. However, the text that she wrote was disturbingly poetic, and blended literary narrative with social comment. *Les Prunes de Cythère* [*The Plums of Cythera*] was thus published as a novel with the Éditions de Minuit in 1975.

Since 1975, Hyvrard has produced a substantial corpus of novels, poetry, social commentary, and philosophical short stories. She maintained her teaching job in a technical college in Paris until the age of 60, retiring in summer 2005. She still lives in Paris with her husband, and has one daughter and two grandchildren, with whom she maintains a strong family link.

HELEN VASSALLO

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## IBN AL-HAJJĀJ

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c. 932–1001

Pre-modern Arab poet

Relatively unknown nowadays except in literary circles and among specialists, Ibn al-Hajjāj was of great fame in his time, in later epochs, and up until the modern period. He is considered one of the major poets of the Būyid period (932–1062), known for its political tumult but vibrant cultural production. He secured the patronage of the most powerful men of the age, as the panegyrics he composed for them attest, and was also active in many elite circles. Ibn al-Hajjāj was praised by literary critics and admired by contemporaries, and secured many a mention in anthologies for his unique style and for pioneering a new mode of scatological parody and obscene frivolity termed *sukhf*, which became synonymous with his name and person(a).

While certainly talented and unique, Ibn al-Hajjāj and his poetry did not appear ex nihilo. The time was ripe for such a trajectory, and Ibn al-Hajjāj's *sukhf* can be seen as a natural culmination of an established and hallowed tradition which produced the potential for parody. There had already been parodic trends of the

conventions of Arabic poetry before Ibn al-Hajjāj's time. In addition, the shift to urban centers and a courtly culture with a new set of sociopolitical functions and surroundings had already produced a variety of specialized genres and subgenres of poetry (ascetic, bacchic, nature, and hunting poetry, to name a few). The status and function of the poet, too, had changed from that of hero and spokesperson of his tribe in pre-Islamic times to court entertainer and, at times, even ritual clown. This urban and urbane poetry had already reveled in parodying the classical literary (and social) conventions, motifs, and values attached to and celebrated in older bedouin poetry. *Mujūn* (licentious and hedonistic poetry), with which *sukhf* at times overlaps or is coupled, saw its apex in the poetry of the libertine master Abū Nuwās (755–813). Ibn al-Hajjāj incorporated all these trends, as well as the obscene and scatological motifs and diction of invective poetry, known as *hijā*, and redeployed them with added force in a full-fledged parody of all that was conventional in literary and sociocultural spheres, to become, as many have noted, the most obscene and irreverent poet in pre-modern Arabic poetry.

Not surprisingly, the body (and its functions) is the main vehicle through which Ibn al-Hajjāj carries out his scatological parody. One of the essential motifs of Arabic poetry was the elegiac pause of the poet in remembrance of his beloved's abandoned encampments. Ibn al-Hajjāj's poetic persona reenacts this ritual, but it is his cock, rather than his eye, which cries over the abandoned encampments. Moreover, instead of a real or imagined space, the object of his tears is usually the abandoned vagina or anus of a grotesquely old woman. Not unlike parody in general, all motifs are inverted in the world of *sukhf*. If the beloved is not a hyperbolically old hag, she is at times a pre-pubescent girl, and the poetic persona is an impotent old man lamenting his lost virility. Ibn al-Hajjāj's descriptive prowess is focused on the lower parts of the body so that in lieu of the conventional imagery highlighting the upper part and face of the beloved, we find hilarious microscopic descriptions of orifices, bodily fluids, odors, and functions. The latter usually interfere with and disrupt attempts at intercourse. Even in panegyrics, it is not the patron's generosity that is (traditionally) hailed, but his virility and the length and width of his cock. The patron's enemies are not threatened with military defeat, but with Ibn al-Hajjāj's own excrement, which he threatens to hurl at them. Much in the tradition of *mujūn*, but going much further than any of his predecessors, Ibn al-Hajjāj was extremely irreverent in parodying religious themes as well. In describing a beloved's clitoris, for example, he likens it to a bent-over imam. To portray a lengthy intercourse, he writes "my cock calls for the morning prayer inside her anus and stays until the forenoon."

Ibn al-Hajjāj was well aware of the niche he had found for himself and the poetic mode he had established. There are numerous examples in his poems where he boasts of this, calling himself "the prophet of frivolity: a man claiming prophecy in frivolity/and who dare doubt prophets?/He brings forth his own miracles and calls upon people to follow/So answer all ye frivolous ones." He even likened his oeuvre to a privy, without which life is impossible.

What further distinguishes Ibn al-Hajjāj is his fame and popularity outside of literary and literate circles. He fused poetic modes but also linguistic registers. His extensive and deliberate use of vulgar street language (he started to collect and write down Baghdadi colloquial obscenities

and curses while still a boy) ensured that his audience would not be restricted to the elite. A manual for teachers from the 14th century, three centuries after Ibn al-Hajjāj's death, instructs its readers to punish boys if they are found reciting his poetry. Ibn al-Hajjāj was emulated by many poets in later centuries. By the 15th century, he himself had become a topos, and anecdotes about him and his poetry appear in other works of erotica, such as *Nuzhat al-albāb* [*The Sojourn of the Hearts*] by al-Tifāshī.

### Biography

Abū Abdullāh al-Husayn Ibn al-Hajjāj was born in Baghdad in 932 CE to a Shī family of government officials. He was trained by the famous Abū Ishāq al-Sābī to be one himself and worked as a secretary for a short period. However, realizing that his poetic talent promised a more lucrative career and future, he quit his post and pursued a highly successful career as a poet. He was briefly appointed the market inspector of Baghdad (973–977). He died in Baghdad and was buried near the shrine of the imam Mūsā al-Kazim.

SINAN ANTOON

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# IBN HAZM

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994–1064

Muslim jurist, theologian, and man of letters

Ibn Hazm is in the West the epitome of the Muslim theorist of profane love—as distinct from divine or even mystic love—who tried to describe natural or passionate love. Ibn Hazm’s only attempt in the field of literature was the book *Tawq al-hamâma fî-l-ulfa wa-l-ullâf* [*The Dove’s Neck-Ring, or on Love and Lovers*].

One should distinguish between the essays, epistles, or treatises dealing with natural love and the essays that integrate natural love—*tabî’î*—into a larger approach to love, including spiritual and divine love. It was not rare for authors to blur the line between natural and divine love, so that the lover loved an anonymous Beloved, who was in fact God.

Although it may sound strange that a Muslim theologian dealt with sex and love, neither of these can be separated from God’s creation, and are allowed in married life. Outside of marriage, passion is not forbidden, but sex is. A famous *hadith*—an authorized report on the Prophet’s words and attitudes—holds that “the one who loves remains chaste, keeps his secret, and dies,” that one is a love’s martyr, *‘achîq chahîd*. Erotology is a matter for a theologian to expand upon, teach, and imagine in the name of God. Besides, one and the same word, *nikâh*, means coitus and marriage.

*The Dove’s Neck-Ring* is a prosimeter of 30 chapters which theoretically relate the successive moments of a love’s story, from the beginning to the fateful and necessary end. The book is introduced by a narrator in Játiva who meets the desire of a dearest friend in Almeria by writing an epistle on truthful love, its various meanings, causes, and accidents, “neither adding anything nor embroidering anything.”

Ibn Hazm anonymously records his life in Córdoba, describes each loving phase, illustrates it by supposedly edifying stories, drawn from personal experiences, hearing, and reading. Theory and example are always intertwined with poems reiterating the chapter’s thesis. Ibn

Hazm also quotes other Muslim writers’ poems but distinguishes himself from mystics by inserting his own verses and expressing his own subjectivity. Ibn Hazm, a theorist of profane love, soberly and perceptively analyzes the outer manifestations of natural love. However, his vision of love is not devoid of any spirituality, as it partly derives from Plato’s *Symposium* and *Phaedrus*’s idealized view of love.

Sex does not automatically translate to passion, but is alluded to in various stories. The narrator can’t always avoid details that awaken, entertain, titillate, or even ignite his reader’s desire or erotic imagination. He concludes his epistle with two chapters that sum up Islam’s prohibition of sex and illustrate the author’s moralism. Still, he reports an old lady’s narrative which is indirectly far from being exemplary:

[N]ever have too good an opinion of any woman. . . . I took ship many years ago now, returning from the pilgrimage, for I had already renounced the world; with me on the same vessel were fourteen other women, all of whom had likewise been to Mecca. . . . Now one of the crew was a fine upstanding fellow. . . . On the first night out I saw him come up to one of my companions and show off his virility to her. She surrendered to his embraces on the spot. On the following nights each of the rest accepted his advances in turn, until only I was left. I said to myself, “I will punish you for this, you scoundrel.” With that I took a razor and grasped it firmly in my hand. He came along as usual that evening and behaved precisely as he had done on the preceding nights. When he approached me I brandished my razor, and he was so scared that he would have run off. I felt very sorry for him then, and grasping him with my hands I said, “You shall not go until I have had my share of you.” So, the old lady concluded, he got what he wanted, God forgive me! (Chap. 29)

The narrator aims at stigmatizing sin, but each sequence of the story might develop into an erotic sketch. He refrains from going further but can’t help taking delight in relating such stories, which take place mostly in the Umayyads’ time, for which Ibn Hazm is nostalgic.



Ibn Hazm's *The Dove's Neck-Ring* was by no means the first book on profane love in the history of Arabic or even Muslim literature. It was preceded by *Kitâb az-zahra* [*The Book of the Flower*] of Ibn Dâwûd al Isfâhâni (d. 909), the forerunner of profane love theory and possibly of Western courtly love, who tackles all the items of love to be found in later epistles, including the ideal passion that leads to death, as well as boy-love poetry by other poets.

Ibn Hazm's work belongs among a number of writings that constitute a genre characterized by the structural fact they don't infringe upon the sphere of divine love or, if so, only by metaphor. Conversely, mystic works certainly tend to use metaphors of profane love to evoke divine love, and erotic effects may arise, but these don't forge a theory of profane love in its own right (although the mixed character of all of these texts makes any strict generic classification difficult).

In natural love, through loving the beloved [*mahbub*], the lover [*muhibb*] loves nobody but himself and the act of love, *hubb al-hubb*. In spiritual love, the lover loves both himself and the beloved, who can also be and mostly is the Beloved, that is God—hence, the difference between Ibn Hazm's mundane epistle and, for example, Ibn Arabi's (d. 1240) essay on sacred love in chapter 178 of *Kitâb al-Futûhât al-Makkiyya* [*Meccan illuminations*].

### Biography

Ibn Hazm al-Andalusi was born in 994 in Al-Andalus (Spain), a Muslim territory dominated from 756 until 1031 by the Umayyad Caliphs in Córdoba. He witnessed the decline of the Umayyads, vainly devoting his short political career to their dynasty, his lifelong love's object. Then he retired from political life in 1024. A large part of his work, probably written between 1025 and 1030, was concerned with law and theology. He died in 1064.

GÉRARD SIARY

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# IHARA SAIKAKU

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1642–1693

Japanese short story writer and poet

The authorship of several of the works of prose fiction attributed to Ihara Saikaku has been questioned by some modern critics, one theory alleging that all but the first, *Kōshoku ichidai otoko* [*The Life of an Amorous Man*] (1682), are by his followers and disciples. Be that as it may, we can discern two main divisions of subject matter in his writings: erotic works [*kōshokubon*] in the period 1682–1687, and fiction centering on the lives of ordinary city dwellers and their financial and economic worries [*chōninmono*] from 1688 to 1693. There are also other groupings of a variety of stories, such as *Shokoku banashi* [*Tales from the Provinces*] (1685).

*The Life of an Amorous Man* gained Saikaku a great reputation. It describes the sexual adventures of its hero, Yonosuke, and the women (and on a few occasions the youths) with whom he has passionate but fleeting affairs. The son of a rake and a courtesan, Yonosuke finds his sensual vocation early when, at the age of seven, he becomes fixated on love to the great amusement of the maids in his household. While still a youth he and a companion escape from a wily courtesan who has tried to entrap them with too well-worn a story, comparing him to a handsome prince who once threw snow into her bosom to match its whiteness. At age fifteen, in the first year of his manhood, he has some sexual encounters with a group of kabuki actors who are going around the villages looking for clients. When in bed, his lover tells how these activities will help to purchase his freedom but that he is meanwhile obliged to accept any male who comes along, just as he has already made love to a woodcutter in the forest and a naked sailor on the beach, and even an old man covered in sores could not be refused. Yonosuke cannily suspects that this tale, like the courtesan's, is largely invented, but this does not spoil his pleasure. The narrative is picaresque, following Yonosuke through his many and varied encounters:

there are well-observed details of courtesans, prostitutes, and ordinary women both young and old, married and free, together with depictions of their behavior, conditions of life, dress, and demeanor in many expected and unexpected places of assignation. Teahouses feature prominently, but so also do bathhouses, tumble-down shacks, and dilapidated cottages in the countryside. The series of events moves swiftly from the story of a widow who develops too great a familiarity with her servants, to how Yonosuke becomes the business manager for groups of effeminate wandering youths—an ignoble trade, he feels, though despite his poverty, the hiring of amorous women never fails to attract him. A pretty, young girl, who disguises herself as an ugly old woman at a village religious orgy to escape the attentions of the local youths is seduced by Yonosuke. They live together in penury for a while, and then go their separate ways.

Yonosuke is now twenty-eight. Even when thrown into prison, he fraternizes with the roughs and glimpses a woman there through the bars of his cell. The story develops a strange, macabre, and almost whimsical quality at moments: he writes to the woman with ink made of the prison cobwebs, then she is violently reclaimed by her husband when Yonosuke and she are unexpectedly released. Yonosuke later comes across some grave robbers hard at work, who explain that they need only the corpse's nails and hair, since the courtesans in the nearby town pay good prices for the supply of allegedly personal love tokens they can give to their clients. The corpse, is, of course, that of the woman from the prison, thus eliciting Yonosuke's comment, which seems appropriate to many of the incidents narrated in the book, "How frail indeed is life."

Ghosts of Yonosuke's past loves to whom he falsely vowed fidelity come one night to attack him in frightening shapes—half woman, half monster: "There is no fury like a woman deceived, especially *after* she has been driven to

suicide.” But the narrative is not overtly ironic. Yonosuke refuses to be manacled by amorous ties to any woman. He is always on the move, and is by now widely admired for the enviable notoriety of his erotic adventures. An encounter with another band of kabuki actors results in the unexpected and amusing sight of an amorous priest hidden in the branches of a tree waiting for his lover to acknowledge him. Yonosuke puts the pair together: “Dallying with these youths is like seeing wolves beneath scattering cherry blossoms, whereas going to bed with prostitutes gives one the feeling of groping in the dark beneath the new moon without a lantern.” The narrative ends with a short chapter that foreshadows, it seems, a sort of erotic utopia for worn-out reprobates. Yonosuke has become gray haired and ugly—but so too, he reflects, have all the women he has known. Together with some companions in a like state of decrepitude, he builds a tiny ship to sail to the island of Nyogo, where all the women will aggressively seize hold of them. The sail is made from the silken inner garments of his former courtesan wife, and the ropes are fashioned from prostitutes’ hair. There is to be no return. This is a witty summation of Yonosuke’s amorous life and his convivial wantonness, for which he is not condemned. It seems strangely like an apotheosis. The book is “meant obviously to be understood as a plebeian version of the courtly lover Prince Genji in *The Tale of Genji*” (Schalow), though it may be doubted that its overall tone is parodic.

The second book, *Shoen Ōkagami* [*The Great Mirror of Loves*] (1685), chronicles the amorous adventures of Yonosuke’s son. The third book, *Kōshoku gonin onna* [*Five Women Who Loved Love*] (1686), narrates in separate stories based on actual events the fates of five heroines enmeshed in romantic love. Respectability is sacrificed to the pursuit of passion, and four of the affairs terminate in death. Even the fifth affair/story, “The Tale of Gengobei,” was probably based on a real-life event which ended in suicide. But here it is given an upbeat ending, and also provides a wry twist on the theme of the woman who captures her beloved by adapting her strategy to his tastes. The hero, twenty-six-year-old Gengobei, worships in succession two incomparably beautiful youths who both unfortunately soon die. Unlike women, Gengobei swears that he will not take a new lover (but, of

course, we see the irony that he has already been unfaithful to the memory of his first love). However, a young girl named Oman is consumed with love for him and, having noticed a book on male love in his collection, dresses as a boy and seduces him. The vicissitudes of life are again deftly caught in this narrative, and Gengobei concludes that there is little difference between being in love with men or women. He is thereafter happy and sorrowful in turn.

The fourth book, *Kōshoku ichidai onna* [*The Life of an Amorous Woman*] (1686), is another picaresque novel, plausibly interpreted as a parody of Buddhist confessional literature. At the start, the narrator comes to the “Hermitage of Voluptuousness,” according to the sign that an old crone has put up on her dilapidated retreat in the wilderness. He overhears the story of her life, which she tells to two unexpected (but evidently very welcome) male visitors. This female “Rake’s Progress” charts her fall from prosperity to destitution and from youth to old age through a series of erotic adventures and sexual employments. She is first dismissed for making love to her handsome prospective father-in-law while his ugly wife lies asleep in bed with them. She takes this with a light laugh. Then she is wrongly blamed by fellow concubines, who are erotically overheated, for causing her new lord’s impotence. At sixteen she is sold to a teahouse because her father is heavily in debt. Here she learns how to conduct herself as a courtesan, describing both her pleasant and her disagreeable duties and experiences. Her clients are varied and demanding—many are inexperienced and need to be aroused; one snores heavily; what is going on in adjacent rooms seems far more sexy.

Next on the downward path she becomes a courtesan of the middle rank, reduced to social humiliation, fewer clients, and only two layers of mattress. She learns the rule that men will often ruin themselves with courtesans, but in her case three of her clients are business failures and she is left alone when she starts to lose her hair. On the next level in her descent, she is down to one layer of mattress and has blunt, vulgar clients. She now learns more tricks to inveigle men. In a hurry she services shop assistants and, following the rules of the house, bundles her clothing quickly out of sight. At one point she is so glad to have a customer that she does not even ask what he looks like.

She is sold again into even cheaper prostitution. Later she establishes a writing school for girls, though this is a front for composing love letters to order for young men, since she knows how a girl's passion works. She becomes a maid-servant and seduces her employer when he is dressed up for a Buddhist ceremony. She joins a group of singing "priestesses," who are in reality prostitutes. She mistakenly tries to seduce an old man, who turns out to be a woman in disguise.

In many of these episodes a delicate form of ribaldry is fused with cutting observations on the vulnerable state of women who fall too low and have to survive. Toward the end of her story—and now, of course, of her life—she reflects on the quantity and quality of her lovers and seems, perhaps, poised for repentance. It was, she candidly but no doubt shrewdly admits, a shameful and demanding career. Since she could not possibly save enough from her small earnings, she simply made a companion of her *sake* bottle. And now that her beauty has faded, she still has hopes that there are "worms who prefer nettles." But as the story ends, it is far from obvious that the old woman regrets her past, except in the sense that she cannot experience it all over again. In what has every appearance of mock innocence, she asks her male visitors: "You may call it a trick of my old trade, but how could my heart be so impure?"

The fifth book, for which Saikaku is perhaps now chiefly remembered, particularly in the West, is *Nanshoku Ōkagami* [*The Great Mirror of Male Love*] (1687), which, by its title, could be thought to form a pendant to *Shoen Ōkagami*. The author states that he has tried to reflect in this "Great Mirror" the various examples of the love of men which his readers may all too soon perhaps forget. This large collection of short stories is divided into two main parts, the whole comprising eight sections of five stories each. In a mythological preface, Saikaku wittily outlines the origin of the love of youths, which is held to have precedence chronologically and aesthetically over the love of women. This idea is developed in Story 1.1 which poses the question why, in Saikaku's time, people remained unaware of the subtle and elegant pleasures afforded by such love. After narrating several examples of lovers of boys, including the priest Yoshida Kenkō, who tarnishes his reputation by writing one love letter to a lady when his friend

has asked him to do so, an amusing and sophisticated list is made of the comparative charms of girls and boys. Which should be preferred: the young girl preening herself before a mirror? or a lad of the same age cleaning his teeth? No comment is offered, though in this example, artifice is set against natural cleanliness. Judgment is left to the connoisseurship of the (male) reader. The parallels conclude with the observation that a woman's heart is twisted like the wistaria with all its lovely blooms, whereas a youth may have a thorn or two, but he possesses the fragrance and beauty of the plum tree's early blossom.

The first 20 stories focus on the Samurai ethic of nobility, loyalty, and honor. They describe other examples of selfless devotion, too, as in Story 1.2, which narrates an idyll of boy love shared by two students at school. Their mutual devotion inspires watchful anxiety in their misogynistic teacher and admiring passion in the heart of an eighty-year-old Buddhist priest. An episode in Story 2.1 captures with some irony the moment of freedom when a youth has just passed the peak of his good looks, which are now beginning to fade. His lord, who would not previously have allowed him to commit *sepputu* (ritual suicide), has now transferred his affections to another boy, thus making suicide allowable but no longer honorably motivated. Another story (2.2) well illustrates the code of love, honor, and revenge. Here, a boy's unadorned beauty strongly attracts his lord, who declares himself willing to die for him. But the boy proudly responds that forcing him to yield is not true love: his heart remains his own; and should he ever find a true lover, he will lay down his life for him. A lover materializes and the lord cuts off the youth's arms and head. Later the lover himself cuts off the lord's arms and kills him before committing *sepputu* in a temple at the age of twenty-one. Those who hear the story of such deep love approve strongly of the conduct of the two lovers.

The tales in this section come from traditional literary sources. The love which men and youths swear to uphold, though erotically charged, was intended to last in this world and the next—hence the nobility attached to *sepputu*, which provides an honorable conclusion to several of the tales and the justification for exacting revenge which springs from outraged honor. The relationships are usually between an attractive youth (*wakashu*, up to the age of nineteen) and

an older man. One lord can have several youths who all owe him social and sexual allegiance, but as a consequence they dare not respond to another's love without risking severe punishment. In this world, emotional and sexual bonds create obligations of trust which cannot be violated without danger, though transgressions are sometimes pardoned, as in Story 3.5, which tells how an impoverished Samurai falls in love with the handsome favorite of a powerful lord. After many years he declares his passion by means of an account of the long history of his feelings. The youth is therefore in a quandry and tells his master that if he refuses the man's affection, he will betray his honor as a follower of boy love. On the other hand, if he responds, he betrays his lord. He therefore asks to be allowed to commit *seppuku*. The lord is, however, magnanimous: he forgives the youth and gives money and robes to the Samurai, who then says farewell to his lover and becomes a monk. The second part of the collection focuses on the love of youths among kabuki actors and male prostitutes in the "floating world" of the pleasure districts of Saikaku's own time, which he knew firsthand. By 1651 boys and women had both been banished from the stage, so adult male actors alone remained. Saikaku's stories wittily paint this milieu, with its love intrigues between actors and youths, its thirty-year-olds archly pretending to be young, its sexual exploitation, its sufferings, and its shabbiness.

The stories in this section are peopled by city dwellers, unsophisticated provincials, greedy tradesmen, and hypocritical priests. With dry humor and irony they show both the good and the bad sides of the picture as complementary elements of human life. In Story 6.1 a lover of the handsome Itō puns on the youth's name, calling him a "burial ground" because his fee for a single night is three pieces of silver. Another tale (6.3) relates how a man has such lifelike pictures of the actors that he can enjoy himself all day long in solitude at home. But soon he falls in love with a kabuki prostitute and the intrigue develops from there. A more facetious story is told in 6.4: the beautiful female impersonator Kichiya sells his own attractive brand of face powder to many eager women, one of whom very discreetly invites him to her house. He is disguised in his woman's clothes, but the lady's husband returns unexpectedly and takes him for what he is not. In bed with him,

however, the husband is more than delighted at his mistake and the two men spend the night together to their mutual satisfaction.

In Story 7.1, the problems encountered by a boy prostitute are narrated with sophistication and: on one occasion he is with a group of pilgrims, who draw lots, as a result of which he is assigned to a repulsive old man. He resorts to using his "secret thigh technique" but fears his ruse will be discovered. The narrator adds that none of his efforts ever brought him in much money, since his manager took it all. In the same tale a cloud of fireflies, which are emblematic of sodomy, are let loose by a priest at a party, reminding the revelers of an incident in bygone days when the insects were placed in the palanquin of a certain lady. The narrator comments that it seemed suspiciously like an unusually refined confession of love. In Story 7.4 a group of high-spirited actors, who, being well over twenty-two dare not reveal their true ages, are with their lovers when an uncouth Samurai arrives on the scene and demands to pair off with Tamamura Kichiya, the most beautiful among them. Kichiya temporizes before craftily shaving off half of the Samurai's beard. Saikaku's urbane narratives describe a connoisseurship of the love of youths which signals a high measure of sophistication and culture in his society. Although some of the male admirers of male beauty are portrayed as misogynists, perhaps for ironic or humorous effect, this is not a widespread attitude, and the stories demonstrate that a variety of sexual tastes was accommodated in 17th-century Japan.

In modern times Saikaku has found new fame. Rediscovered toward the end of the 19th century, along with the introduction of realism into Japanese literature by writers such as Ozaki Kōyō (1869–1903) and Kōda Rohan (1867–1947), he has benefited from the lifting of censorship and from more open attitudes since 1946. The appreciations of Takeda Rintarō (1904–1946) and Oda Sakunosuke (1913–1947) mark a significant moment in the renewal of public interest in Saikaku, and in the West a selection of stories from *The Great Mirror of Male Love*, translated with an appreciative and explanatory preface by Ken Satō, appeared in French in 1927 (this shortened version was translated into English in 1931). In recent years a number of his works have become available in English. His attraction for us is not so much as

an historical witness to a certain moment in the development of social attitudes in Japanese culture toward hedonism and erotic experience, but as a refined and witty teller of tales who leaves salacious details understated and sensual enjoyment understood.

### Biography

Ihara Saikaku was born in Osaka when it was a recently developed busy trading town, and belonged to the mercantile middle class. His real name was probably Hirayama Tōgo. He used several aliases in the course of his career as a famous composer of *haikai*, for which he was especially renowned, and, from the 1680s to the end of his life, as a successful writer of fiction. He adopted the style “Saikaku” [West Crane] in 1673. His wife died in 1675. In 1677 he is reported to have taken the tonsure, without it necessarily implying the profession of Buddhist vows, and to have journeyed throughout central Japan as a mendicant for several months at a time. This is allegedly the period when he gathered the stories which were to supply the material for his collections of tales. The Genroku period under the Tokugawa regime when he was writing was a time of growing prosperity and relaxed hedonism after the rigors and uncertainties of four centuries of civil war. Saikaku was a contemporary of several great artistic men: Hishikawa Moronobu (1618–1694), the artist who perfected the technique of woodblock illustration and incidentally provided the erotic pictures for a number of Saikaku’s novels, adapting Saikaku’s original witty designs and also pirating an edition of the *Life of an Amorous Man* in Edo in 1684; Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694), the poet in whose hands the haiku reached its zenith; Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1725), the great dramatist; and Ejima Kiseki (1667–1736), following in Saikaku’s footsteps, a writer of stories and anecdotes describing fugitive pleasures (e.g., *Yakusha Kuchi-Jamisen*

[*The Actor’s Vocal Samisen*] 1699, which deals with the lives of kabuki actors, and *Fūryū Kyoku-Jamisen* [*The Elegant Samisen Virtuosités*], which is in the form of a confessional by a decrepit ex-courtesan and an old man who was formerly an effeminate kabuki youth). It was also the time when pleasure districts (*yūri*) were set up in the larger cities of Kyōto, Osaka, and Edo. In these *yūri*, which were separated from the main urban area and provided with independent access, teahouses afforded sexual relaxation in the context of formal etiquette, together with a strict and complex hierarchy of courtesans (*tayū*, the predecessors of the modern geisha) and prostitutes ranging from the very exclusive to the cheap and unsophisticated girls and women of the back streets. Those who could be found there have been brought back to life by Saikaku’s piquant anecdotes.

PATRICK POLLARD

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# İLHAN, ATTILA

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1925–

Turkish poet, novelist, and essayist

Attila İlhan, a very prominent Turkish intellectual and author, has published novels, film scripts, and collections of poetry and of critical essays on politics and literature. His politically engaged work focuses on the establishment and progress of the nation-state in Turkey and unconventional sexual attitudes. His works blend popular genres and politically and sexually charged themes, making him the most controversial Turkish author of the last six decades. The role of sexuality in his works distinguishes Attila İlhan from other Turkish socialist realist intellectuals. İlhan's several visits to Paris beginning in the 1940s determined his approach to literature and politics, as well as sexuality.

In his poetry, Attila İlhan employs an original stock of images involving female same-sex desire. In his poem "Triangle," a lesbian relationship was depicted for the first time in Turkish poetry, and lesbian sexuality is also featured in "The Kingdom of Cem the Second." In "A Country named Claude," a poem of nine stanzas, the title character, a woman, faces her desire for other women:

A country named Claude where black palm trees  
change and kiss young girls every night  
that Raphael draws in the form of young boys  
with doubtful lips lined with down

.....  
a country named Claude, nobody has visited  
its silence that is deeper than oceans;  
it is cut out of the map of the world  
a howling dog is put in its place

Beginning with *Kurtlar Sofrası* [*The Feast of Wolves*] (1963), which contains a severe criticism of the relations between the Turkish state and newly forming corporations, he started a five-volume series of novels with the general title *Aynanın İçindekiler* [*Those Inside the Mirror*] (1973–1987), in which he developed characters that not only are politically involved, but also have unconventional sexual identities. These

novels, though still widely read and discussed, had a mixed reception by critics due in large part to their unfamiliar and blunt sexual content.

In a period when sexuality was perceived as secondary in status to the problem of social inequality by rightist and leftist intellectuals, Attila İlhan depicted women characters who explored their sexuality without any limitations. Indeed, they appear as dominant partners in sexual relations. In his novels, sexual identity itself doesn't determine the political convictions of a character; however, it may have consequences on personal development. This discrepancy between the political and the sexual morality of the protagonists creates a tension that is never resolved by the author. Marxist critics harshly criticize his distinguishing sexual and political personae, since this is against a holistic perception of the individual.

The novel in which Attila İlhan develops his conviction of the necessary destruction of the dualism between femininity and masculinity is the highly controversial *Fena Halde Leman* [*Leman Badly*] (1980). Due to its unfamiliar sexual content, *Leman* met with hostile reviews, as many critics condemned İlhan for exploiting sexual themes to make profit.

This subversive novel starts as the protagonist, a famous businesswoman, Leman Korkut, strikes a deal with a French company just after the military intervention of 1971 in Turkey. A left-wing journalist witnesses the making of this deal and decides to investigate further. He later meets with Leman, who is disturbed by his investigations; but far from being dissuaded from pursuing them, he is intrigued by the juxtaposition of Leman's coarse, manly voice and her beauty. The journalist realizes that Leman Korkut is the wife of a deceased politician, Ekrem Korkut, who had committed suicide in Paris, where he exiled himself after the 1960 military coup. He also finds out that she was originally named Jeanne and is a half-Jewish French woman who later married Ekrem during the 1950s, changed her name, and settled in Turkey.

After Leman Korkut's sudden death in a car accident, the journalist receives her memoirs, which tell the story of a few months during an unspecified period between 1964 and 1970 when Leman went to Paris, lured by a mysterious letter concerning her husband's suicide.

With the memoirs the dry and measured narration of the journalist is replaced by a confusingly ornate narrative in which we learn the story of Leman Korkut's whole life through flashbacks. During her stay in Paris, she also meets some of her late husband's friends: the narcissistic Cécile, daughter of a rich family, who never lets anyone touch her but enjoys having someone else watching her masturbate; Lili, alias George, a blond, femme-fatale transvestite with a taste for physical pain, who is trying to raise money for a sex-change operation; Bobby, alias Victoire Kaunda, an African woman of male gender who is a sadist and impersonates women in night clubs; Pasha Nuri, an ex-communist Turk who is a masochist and surrenders to the tortures of an old woman for money; and finally Madame Pellegrini who pursues very young boys and pimps Lili.

As the narrative unfolds, even Leman appears as a sexually complex character, and we learn how she fell for her mother-in-law Haco Hanım during the early years of her marriage to Ekrem Korkut. Haco Hanım, who dies while making love to Leman, was the third wife of an Ottoman officer, whose earlier life and initiation into lesbian sex by one of her co-wives in her husband's harem are recounted by Attila İlhan in another historical novel, *Haco Hanım Vay* (1984).

In Paris, while simultaneously attracted to the two transvestites—Lili, the femme-fatale man-to-woman, and Bobby, the muscular woman-to-man—Leman starts to lose her sense of self, and she finds out that her husband has always wanted to have her as a boy, while she had strived to be a “real” woman for him, and that, never becoming conscious of each other's desire, they ruined a possibly harmonious relationship. She escapes back to Turkey to a dream world, in which the journalist would meet her as a businesswoman.

Curiously, although *Fena Halde Leman* is crowded with polysexual characters, the phallus is conspicuously missing in the novel. Apart from Lili's penis, which is mentioned once in a passive mood, and Bobby's rubber penis, the presence of the phallus is always made known by its conspicuous absence. Even though Ekrem's homosexual tendencies are implied, his sexual relationships with Cécile and Lili, are never fully depicted in the novel; nor are Leman and Ekrem's lovemaking scenes. In fact, Attila İlhan clearly focuses on the feminine sexual potential of women in his novels, while men, with suppressed feminine tendencies, are sexually silent.

In *Leman*, İlhan's belief that femininity and masculinity one day will merge into each other, erasing gender difference, is unabashedly put forth. While expressing this conviction, he creates one of the most intriguing explorations of gender confusion. Attila İlhan expressed his ideas on gender in two volumes of essays: *Hangi Cinsellik [Which Sexuality?]* (1976) and *Yanlış Kadınlar Yanlış Erkekler [Wrong Women, Wrong Men]* (1985). In these essays İlhan, exploring the progression of the merging of genders in world history, produced the first balanced work about diversity of gender roles in Turkey.

Unfortunately İlhan's work has yet to be translated into any of the European languages. This is possibly due to Attila İlhan's creative use of Turkish. Ornate with unconventional metaphors and archaisms and incorporating local usages and social codifications in order to reflect class and generational differences, Attila İlhan's language, as well as his innovative approach to sexuality, continues to have a profound impact on modern Turkish literature.

### Biography

Attila İlhan was born in Menemen, Turkey. His first book of poetry, *Duvar [The Wall]*, appeared in 1948.

SELIM S. KURU



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# IRELAND

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Ireland is not a country readily associated with the erotic. Censoriousness and repression in the modern period, both pre- and post-independence, have colored perceptions of the island as a place deeply inimical to writings on the pleasures of the flesh. Yet, from the earliest mythological tales to the writings of James Joyce and Edna O'Brien, the erotic has been an area of continuous preoccupation and interest for the Irish writer. The centerpiece of the eighth-century Ulster cycle of mythological tales is the epic account of a giant cattle raid, *Táin Bó Cuailgne*. The *Táin* is held to be a masterpiece of early Irish literature and is important in giving us insights into the mores of pre-Christian Ireland. A central character in the tale is the Queen of Connacht Medb, who is explicit in asserting her right to her own sexual pleasure and makes love to one of her captains, Fergus, with the approval of her husband, Ailill, and indeed the tale ends with Medb urinating and menstruating three lakes. As Medb tries to recruit warriors to fight against her deadly foe, Cú Chulainn, she frequently offers the "companionship of [her] thighs" to her allies; and her daughter, Finnabair, is similarly free with her sexual favors. Such was the discomfort caused by the sexual frankness of the *Táin* that it would be 1976 before the first full, uncensored edition of the greatest epic in Old Irish would appear in English translation.

In another set of stories from the Ulster cycle on the birth of Cú Chulainn we are introduced to Fergus, whose name has been translated as "Male Ejaculation Son of Super Stallion." His virility was quantified by the claim that seven fists fit into his penis and that his scrotum was the size of a bushel bag. Such was the voraciousness of his sexual appetite that it took "seven women to curb him" unless he slept with Medb or with Flidais (the Deer Goddess), who used to "change thirty men every day or go with Fergus once."

One of the obstacles facing the transmission of erotic writing from earlier periods is that a considerable amount of secular literature was in

fact written down by monks in the highly active centers of learning that were Irish monasteries in the early medieval period. The new patriarchal culture of Christianity viewed with deep suspicion the matricentered elements of pre-Christian Irish culture, and many early Irish lyrics depict monks heroically resisting the sexual allure of women. The shadowing of pleasure by the strictures of the evangelists can be seen in the ninth-century poem "A Bé Find" [Lovely Lady], where the poet situates his utopia in the sexual license of pagan Ireland but is aware of the finger-wagging of the Christian present, "Srotha téithmilsí tar tír / rogu de mid ocus fin / doíni delgnaidi cen on / combart cen peccad, cen chol [All around gentle streams entwine / Mead is drunk, the best of wine / The people have not learned to hate / It's not a sin to copulate]. The erotic in the early and late medieval period often finds its outlet in the displacement from the secular to the religious domain, with poems to Mary and the goddess-turned-saint Bridget particularly common in the Irish literary canon. Another motif is the monk who finds himself transformed into a woman, with the erotic confusion and excitement that ensues from this morphological twist. The influence of the *amour courtois* tradition from continental Europe makes itself keenly felt in late medieval Ireland, and many of the recensions of tales from the period, particularly the *Fiannaíocht* cycle, bear the traces of the oblique ecstasies of courtly love. In the most famous love story from the period, *Tóraigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne* [*The Pursuit of Diarmaid and Gráinne*], Diarmaid, a bosom companion of the warrior chief Fionn, elopes with Fionn's young fiancée, the love-struck Gráinne, who has placed Diarmaid under a spell. Initially, Diarmaid puts a fishbone between himself and Gráinne to prove to the pursuing Fionn that they have not been unfaithful to him. However, one day as they are crossing a stream, a spurt of water strikes Gráinne's leg and she notes that it is bolder than Diarmaid, and it is not long before they become lovers.

Their story became inscribed in the Irish landscape as the *dolmens* (ancient burial portals), which consist of one flat stone raised on top of two others, often referred to as the “beds of Diarmaid and Gráinne.”

As a result of the Anglo-Norman invasion, English and French were spoken as minority languages in late medieval Ireland, and it is from the latter half of the thirteenth century that we get an English-language text written down in Kildare, *The Land of Cockayne*, which is an anticlerical satire in verse, with copious couplings between various members of the clergy. Prominent in this text, as in Irish-language texts of the period, is an exuberant celebration of orality, with eating, drinking, and fornication linked in a charmed circle of excess. The Tudor and Cromwellian conquest of Ireland, which would begin in earnest in the late sixteenth century and see the final military pacification of the native population by end of the seventeenth century, causes the collapse of the Gaelic and Anglo-Norman aristocracy who were patrons of the Gaelic-language poetic elite. Irish still remained the majority language of the population, and the eighteenth century would witness the production of the great erotic masterpiece in Irish of the period, the 1,026-line *Cúirt an Mheán Oíche* [*The Midnight Court*], by the schoolteacher and poet Brian Merriman. However, as English became the sole language of public life, an English-language literature began to emerge which would eventually bring Irish eros to the forefront of world literature.

A spate of English-language translations of French drama for the Dublin theatre in the late seventeenth century provided the impetus for the work of Irish dramatists who began to form and exploit the genre of Restoration drama. Foremost among these dramatists were George Farquhar and Richard Brinsley Sheridan. In George Farquhar’s “Love and a Bottle” (1698), his first play staged in London at the Drury Lane Theatre, we meet Wildair and Roebuck, “Irish Gentlemen of wild, roving temper,” who ally libertinage and economic self-advancement. In Sheridan’s most successful plays, *The Rivals* (1775) and *The School for Scandal* (1777), the plots are rich in sexual suggestiveness, and much use is made of metaphor and figurative language to signal erotic subtexts and subplots to the audience. Indeed, part of the popular success of these dramatists related to their manipulation of

theatrical conventions as a way of testing the sexual proprieties of the period. The Irish tradition of gothic fiction in the nineteenth century, from Charles Mathurin’s *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) to Sheridan Le Fanu’s *In a Glass Darkly* (1872) and Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) would explore transgression and extreme mental states in their various forms. Sexual tension and the erotic would be central to much of the speculation of Irish gothic novelists on the relationship between the sexes; and a constant preoccupation, articulated most fluently by Stoker, is the undermining of conventional reason by powerful, transgressive sexual urges.

Oscar Wilde, who was related to Mathurin, professed his strong admiration for *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), and gothic elements are strongly to the fore in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1889). Wilde, who was much influenced by writers of the French Decadent era, used the theme of the double in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* to explore the highly ambiguous nature of Gray’s sexuality, and in Wilde’s essay on Shakespeare, “The Portrait of Mr. W.H.,” he explicitly addresses the question of Shakespeare’s alleged homosexuality. His earlier *Poems* (1881) had already hinted at the erotic possibilities of forbidden love. Wilde’s biblical drama *Salomé* was refused a license in London in 1892, partly on the grounds of the undisguised eroticism of the relationship between Salomé and St. John the Baptist, and would not be staged until 1896 in Paris. Wilde would endure, of course, imprisonment and public opprobrium for his homosexuality, but his defense of homoeroticism both at his trial and in his posthumously published letter to Lord Alfred Douglas, *De Profundis* (1905), made him an emblematic figure for gay-rights activists in the twentieth century.

Wilde was not the only Irish literary figure who would attract the attention of the courts for what was deemed an unseemly interest in the erotic. In *Ulysses* (1922) Joyce explored the manifold varieties of the erotic and situated sexuality at the heart of the quotidian preoccupations of his Dublin men and women going about their daily lives. Molly Bloom’s soliloquy which ends the book was found to be particularly shocking because a female character was frankly assuming her sexuality and describing its pleasures. The Society for the Prevention of Vice had the serial publication of *Ulysses* in the *Little Review*

## IRELAND

stopped in 1920 on the grounds that it was pornographic. As a result, Joyce was forced to publish *Ulysses* in Paris in 1922.

That same year, the Irish Free State came into being, strongly influenced by the moral teachings of the Catholic hierarchy. The Censorship of Publications Act of 1929 initiated a period of sustained censorship of any material that was deemed to be “indecent” or even remotely touching on the erotic. A trenchant critic of the new legislation was William Butler Yeats, who in *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933) gave voice (particularly in the “Crazy Jane” poems) to the full power of the erotic and deplored the baleful influence of life-denying prudery. Kate O’Brien, who broached lesbian sexuality in her writing, had two of her novels, *Mary Lavelle* (1936) and *The Land of Spices* (1941), banned in Ireland. Another pioneer in the literary exploration of the sexuality of women, from a heterosexual perspective, was Edna O’Brien, whose novel *The Country Girls* (1960) also fell foul of the Irish censor. The passing of a new Censorship of Publications Act in 1967 coincided with the beginnings of the liberalization of Irish society, which would gain momentum throughout the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. Writers now dealt much more freely with erotic experiences in different-sex and same-sex relationships in both English and Irish-language writing. Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, Caitlín Maude, and Biddu Jenkinson have all explored variations of the erotic in their Irish-language poetry. Colm Tóibín in *The South* (1990), Desmond Hogan in *Leaves on Grey* (1980), Keith Ridgway in *Standard Time* (2001), and Jamie O’Neill in *At Swim Two Boys* (2001) have given expression to the subtle permutations of pleasure in the lives of their gay characters. Emma Donoghue in *Stir Fry* (1994) and *Hood* (1995), Mary Dorcey in *The Noise in the Woodshed* (1989), and Cherry Smyth in *When the Lights Go Up* (2001) have detailed the coming-of-age of the sexual awareness of their lesbian heroines and narrative personae.

Two distinctive notes on contemporary Irish writing on the erotic are, firstly, the foregrounding of a darker side to human sexual encounters

and, secondly, the continuing presence of the satirical or the parodic. The first feature is exemplified by the writing of Dermot Bolger, in which the sexual is often a potent metaphor of frustration and failure; in novels such as *A Woman’s Daughter* (1987), the malignant consequences of a deeply repressive religious culture express themselves in exploitative and demeaning sexual relationships. The second feature is to be found in the work of writers such as Anne Enright, John Banville, and Aidan Mathews, in which the erotic is often the occasion for high comedy and, as in late medieval satire, the ridiculous and the sublime are to be found in close proximity. Constipated solemnity in the presence of eros is not often to be found, and there is frequently a kind of Beckettian wryness in the observation of human ecstasies. The Irish erotic tradition in literature has withstood the repeated assaults of church and state over the centuries to produce more than one thousand years of written celebration of the endless transfigurations of bodily pleasure.

MICHAEL CRONIN

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# IRIARTE, TOMÁS DE

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1750–1791

Spanish dramatist, poet, and translator

## The Erotic Poems

Cerezo and Millares Carlo-Hernández Suárez have attempted to clarify the textual status of poems scattered in manuscript and miscellaneous printed editions, but Iriarte's erotic poems have yet to be properly edited or seriously studied. The main sources are (1) Biblioteca Nacional (Madrid) Ms. 3744, entitled *Poesías líbricas* [*Lubricious Poems*] (probably added by a cataloguer), which brings together 19 texts, sometimes repeated and in different hands, and (2) the poems contained in *Cuentos y poesías más que picantes* (1899). The latter includes the outstanding "Perico y Juana," copied in various contemporary manuscripts and reproduced in printed collections from 1872 onward and recently the object of serious textual and critical attention. Though attributed to José Iglesias de la Casa in some early collections and appearing under alternative titles ("El siglo de oro" [The Golden Age], Iriarte's authorship now seems secure.

Written in the Italianate meter of the *octava*, used for pastoral or lyric poetry, "Perico y Juana" exhibits features of a popular style in its fluent narrative manner and simple, though refined, poetic language. The 24 stanzas move from a quarrel between Perico and Juana to their eventual reconciliation through making love. The context is pastoral, since the encounter takes place in the countryside, and the moral of the couple's behavior is drawn by the shepherd, who praises the value of reconciliation to girls from the nearby village. The original break in the relationship is provoked by Juana, but she equally initiates the action which leads to their making up. Her elegance and attractiveness is highlighted by the narrator as she makes her way to the shady valley where she asks to meet Perico. While waiting, she ties a garter to her leg,

erotically lifting the lace-edged petticoats. A voyeuristic pleasure is transmitted through the narrator's voice, in exclamatory and even broken phrases, but without lowering the linguistic tone; thus when her underwear is raised, she reveals the "maravilla octava" [eighth wonder of the world]. The wonderment transfers to Perico, as he arrives, unseen by Juana, and admires the beauty of her body, which under thin clothing appears almost naked. Again her beauty, which the restrained, unexplicit description extends to hips, waist, thighs, and breasts, indirectly communicates her capacity to arouse. Perico's arousal affects both his imagination and his senses, and he embraces Juana with a "dulce fuego" [sweet fire] burning in his veins. His words focus on her breasts and mouth as he expresses the pleasure he receives from her embrace. But his boldness angers her, and ashamed at having caused offense, he retreats.

Once alone, Juana meditates on the capacity of love to blind; women who play hard to get and ignore their natural impulses fail to enjoy the pleasures which love offers. She attempts to rejoin Perico but catches up to him when he is "meando" [pissing], against a tree. This unexpected, and sole, use of a vulgar word is prepared for by the narrator's doubts as to whether to use it. The earlier voyeurism of Perico now transfers to Juana, who hides in order to see the previously covered parts of her lover's anatomy, the poem reverting to euphemism ("crecidas insignias de varón" [swollen male attributes])—and not without erotic literature's customary exaggerations about size. Rushing to clasp Perico, Juana makes the pair fall to the ground with their now bare lower parts coming into contact. Commenting that the couple enjoyed a golden age that morning, the narrator turns away from physical details to evoke the simplicity of lovemaking in the open and then, surprisingly, to note that the so-called frail sex readily sustains a male body in such circumstances. The physical responses become more passionate, and their coupling, in which Juana leads, is conveyed in terms of boats

entering narrow straits. The intensity of movements and caresses leads to a climax which reduces Juana to silence. Perico, taken aback, speaks to restore her to normality, whereupon Juana slaps him, inducing a temporary faint. After further movements, they both fall asleep with Juana on top. A shepherd appears and marvels at the harmonious outcome of what earlier was disagreement and discord. The moral lesson addressed to the village girls seems male-centered, suggesting that Juana used her beauty to bring the reconciliation. The previous narration, however, revealed her as protagonist and equal participant in the lovemaking, while the mutuality of their feelings and pleasure are stressed.

Iriarte's other erotic poems are slighter pieces, many in shorter forms such as sonnets or the popular, 10-line *décimas*. Several are improvisations or responses to challenges from other poems, mostly belonging to what Spanish literature terms "festive poetry." The "Casóse el mayordomo" *seguidillas* (popular songs) exploit, in their light, rapid meter, the legendary insatiability of women, provoking a smile in the hearer. The sonnet "Con licencia, señora," a response to the question as to the finest feature of a woman's body, plays on the reader's expectations during the quatrains to end up answering in the tercets that it is her fine bottom. The sonnet "Cuando estoy del Amor, Filis, picado" is a spirited celebration of male pleasure in penetration. The *redondilla*, or round, "Dos finos amantes," concerning a pair of lovers who make love in a toilet, is not erotic, but merely stresses the power of passion to achieve satisfaction. The popular "En viendo la recatada" explains why different types of women yield to and enjoy sex. The sonnet "A una dama que fingió desdenes" rejects women's false show of disdain at being the object of sexual attention and at their capacity to arouse men. The sonnet "La resistencia" is a witty monologue by a woman during clandestine lovemaking, apparently not keen on it, but equally not resisting; it moves to a climax in appropriately halting phrases, ending with her desire for a repeat performance the following day. The sonnet, "La semana adelantada" wittily points up sexual inequality between an elderly husband and young, nubile wife—he claims he can be of service only once a week, which she accepts, thinking the situation could be worse, but ends up asking for a week on account. The thoughts contained in these poems belong to a

venerable tradition, which Iriarte expresses with wit and in polished verse. An acceptance of sexual appetite is evident, as is the mutual enjoyment of both sexes, and hypocrisy is rejected.

### Biography

Tomás de Iriarte belonged to a family of intellectuals hailing from the Canary Islands; his uncle Juan was Royal Librarian in Madrid, and his cultured brothers Bernardo and Domingo were prominent in cultural, political, and diplomatic life. Tomás was famed as a dramatist, poet, and translator, achieving celebrity outside Spain in translations of his literary fables and didactic poem on music. His linguistic skills gave him access to philosophical writings in English, French, and Italian, and an Inquisitorial investigation of him in 1779 confiscated works by Voltaire (*L'Évangile de la raison, Dictionnaire philosophique portatif*) and d'Holbach (*Le Bon-Sens, Système de la nature*), as well as a representative selection of erotic narratives in French (*L'Académie des dames, Thérèse philosophe, Les délices du cloître*, among others). His interest in materialist philosophy extended to sexuality, finding literary expression in a series of poems which were unpublished—and unpublishable, given government and Inquisitorial censorship—in his lifetime.

PHILIP DEACON

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## ISTARÚ, ANA

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1960–

Costa Rican poet and dramatist

Istarú's work—both her poetry and her plays—is characterized by her fiercely political commitment to the political and sexual liberation of women in Central America. It is marked by its erotic content, its subtle humor, and its giving of voice to women who have been victimized by political intolerance, economic injustice, and gender-based oppression. Istarú is an outspoken critic of social conventions that limit women's potential and of the political neglect that has imposed on women a greater burden of poverty and lack of opportunity.

Istarú's poetry is best known for its erotic content. Her goal, as she has argued frequently, has been to produce an erotic poetry that breaks away from the objectification of the female body that has characterized male erotic poetry in Latin America. This male-centered poetry has led to the creation of stereotypical images of the sexual woman, the most positive of which depict women's bodies as passive recipients of men's desire. Her objective as a poet has been to eschew these male patterns of female erotic representation by linking women's sexuality to both their inner lives (love, emotions, conflicts) and external concerns (politics/nation, economics). Her poetry, as a result, has been described by critics as work that seeks to sever connections to established molds, by extending women's erotic life to encompass most aspects of their being in society. Sexual delight, explicitly described, is never separated from the oppressive sexual mores of Latin American machismo, never far

from a critique of the double standards applied to women as sexual beings, and never forgetful of Istarú's responsibility to strive for political and sexual freedom for women. In its celebration of women's sexuality and openly expressed desire, Istarú never forgets that the expression of women's erotic freedom is linked to political freedom and economic power.

Istarú's most mature plays are satiric comedies that sparkle with mordant wit, intelligent dialogue, and plenty of double entendres. *Madre nuestra que estás en la tierra* [*Our Mother Who Art on Earth*] (1996), with its irreverent feminist take on the Lord's Prayer, had its first performance at the Compañía Nacional de Teatro in Costa Rica in 1988. *Baby Boom en el paraíso* [*Baby Boom in Paradise*] (1996) is a one-woman show which Istarú has performed herself on many occasions, narrating the adventures of the female egg from ovulation to conception and then through pregnancy, detailing a woman's changing emotions and their impact on others. Its impudent comedic approach to pregnancy and labor has earned it admirers throughout Latin American and Europe.

In 2000, Istarú wrote and performed in her most critically lauded play to date, *Hombre en escabeche* [*Men in Prickling Brine*], a biting portrayal of Latin American sexual morality. The satire, whose main character is a young woman looking for love in all the wrong places, follows her relationships with the many men in her life (all played by the same actor) as they disappoint her, abandon her, or crush her heart. The gallery of men—which include her father,

brother, first boyfriend, and most recent lover—constitutes an assembly of social types in familiar situations which Istarú dissects with sharp irony and satiric wit. The play, whose point of departure is a father's inability to love, allows Istarú to argue that men's disassociation of sexuality and love ultimately condemns them to incomplete lives and contributes to women's feelings of lovelessness and sexual frustration. These themes are linked in the text to Costa Rica's search for political stability in the tricky terrain where Marxism, neoliberalism, and a benevolent despotism lurk.

### Biography

Ana Istarú was born in San José, Costa Rica, in 1960. She received a degree from the School of Dramatic Arts of the University of Costa Rica and is well known as a poet, actress, and dramatist. Istarú gained recognition as a poet at the age of fifteen, in 1975, when she won a national competition for young poets with *Palabra nueva* [*New Word*]. Her second book, *Poemas para un día cualquiera* [*Poems for Just Any Old Day*], was published in 1977, when she was just sixteen, followed by her third, *Poemas abiertos y otros amaneceres* [*Open Poems and Other Dawns*], in 1980. *La estación de fiebre* [*Season of Lust*], a collection of highly erotic verse, won the EDUCA (Editorial Universitaria Centroamericana) prize in 1983 and became a best seller in Costa Rica and throughout Latin America. It has been translated into several languages. Her other collections include *La muerte y otros efímeros agravios* [*Death and Other Ephemeral Grievances*] (1989), *Verbo Madre* [*Mother Verb*] (1995), and *Raíces del aire* [*Roots of the Air*] (1996). Her poetry has appeared in translation in highly regarded journals and anthologies in the United States and Europe. A selection of her poems, *Poesía escogida*, appeared in 2002.

Istarú is equally known for her work as an actress and dramatist. She claims to have learned to love poetry through her father and to have drawn her passion for the theater from her mother. As an actress, she has performed in her own plays as well as in Latin American and European classics and is the recipient of several awards, chief among them the Costa Rican National Award for a Beginning Actress in 1990, the National Award for a Lead Actress in 1997, and the Áncora Theater Award for the 1999–2000 season.

Besides the dramas mentioned earlier, Istarú also wrote *El vuelo de la grulla* [*The Flight of the Crane*] (1984). She has earned accolades internationally as the recipient of the María Teresa León Prize for Dramatists (1995), given by the Spanish Association of Stage Directors, for *Baby Boom en el paraíso*, and the Machado Theater Prize (1999), given by the municipal government in Seville, Spain, for *Hombre en escabeche*. Her work has been performed in Spanish and in translation in Costa Rica, Spain, Mexico, France, and the United States. She penned the script for *Caribe*, an award-winning 2004 Costa Rican film directed by Esteban Ramírez.

LIZABETH PARAVISINI-GEBERT

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## JAHIZ, AL-

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c. 776–c. 868  
Arab essayist

Abu ‘Uthman ‘Amr, known as al-Jahiz, wrote prose works on a variety of subjects, including a number of erotic-polemical works that provide a striking contrast to the “libertine” literature of his time. Al-Jahiz’s erotic writings must be understood in the context of the extraordinary flowering of Arabic literature in the early Abbasid period (749–945), in which authors devoted serious attention to the conflicts between their desire to follow the dictates of the Qur’an and their love of pleasure. While writers like the poet Abu Nuwas extolled the joys of drunkenness and the pleasures of sexual relations with young men, al-Jahiz’s work shows his unease with this love of pleasure. One finds him praising women and love, but condemning adultery and homosexual activity. He did not hesitate to write frankly of sexual matters, and even provided justifications for doing so when it suited his purposes. Elegant and ironic, the writings of al-Jahiz ultimately defended a conventional Islamic morality and a relatively strict interpretation of

Qur’anic law, in contrast (and in reaction) to the libertine writings of many of his contemporaries.

Much of al-Jahiz’s work on sexual themes (including his “Difference Between Men and Women” and his “Diatribes Against Fornication”) is lost. Surviving compositions are often known only from fragments; thus his “Diatribes Against Sodomy” appears to have been part of a larger lost diatribe on schoolteachers and follows the general trend of al-Jahiz’s writings against homosexual relations. The most important of al-Jahiz’s surviving works on sexual themes are four compositions that secure his position as an important figure in the history of erotic literature. They are significant in part because they are so frequently cited and quoted in later Arabic works. The writings of al-Jahiz had a profound impact on the shaping of erotic discourse in the medieval Islamic world.

### *Love and Women*

In *Love and Women*, al-Jahiz articulated his theory of the nature of love between men and



women. He distinguished between affection and passionate love, seeming to praise the latter, although his analogies make it clear that there is a certain irony at work and that he is, in fact, satirizing the excesses to which many of his contemporaries went in pursuit of their passion. Al-Jahiz devotes much of this work to a discussion of women as love objects—their natures, the differences between free women and slaves, and the ideal appearance of a woman—but displays a viewpoint that is more sympathetic to women than was customary in his time.

### ***Epistle on the Singing Slave Girls***

This work is in the form of an open letter, ostensibly a defense of the institution of the *qiyān*: female slaves trained as singers and hired out as companions. The letter begins with a detailed justification of relations between men and women, appealing to pre-Islamic and early Islamic social practices as a seeming justification for the companionship of the singing female slaves. Al-Jahiz then gives a detailed description of these women, their talents, and their training. The real intention of al-Jahiz's epistle becomes clear toward the end: it is, in fact, a criticism of the merchants who own, train, and sell the services of these women. Pretending admiration for their sharp practices, al-Jahiz satirizes the owners of these slaves and, by extension, the men who deal with these slave traders. The work concludes with an ironic postscript disclaiming responsibility for the reader's possible offense.

### ***Boasting Match between Girls and Boys***

This composition, along with *Superiority of the Belly to the Backside* described below, is part of a tradition of literature debating the respective merits of young men and women as objects of sexual desire. It begins with al-Jahiz's famous defense of the use of "obscene" words by citing the use of such terminology by famous religious figures. He then places his work into the context of other such debate literature, abruptly leading into the actual debate between the lovers of young women and the lovers of young men ("fornicators" and "sodomites," respectively). The lovers of young men alternate between praising their beauties and making misogynistic observations, while the lovers of young women frequently invoke Islamic law and custom. Both

debaters make frequent quotation of favorite authors, in some cases turning the same author to different purposes (as when the poet Abu Nuwas is first cited in favor of young men, then of young women). Al-Jahiz's sympathies were clearly with the lovers of young women, whom he permitted to have the final say. Al-Jahiz concluded this work with a series of anecdotes about sex to illustrate various aspects of the foregoing debate; these stories include jokes about sexual positions, penis size, gendered differences in the enjoyment of sex, and homosexual activity.

### ***Superiority of the Belly to the Backside***

This brief work purports to be a response by an uncle to his nephew's treatise in praise of the backside (and, by extension, the love of young men) and is written in a high-blown, elaborate style. It begins innocuously enough with a general comparison of the relative importance and beauty of the belly over the back in nature, and the narrator elaborates on his theme of the general superiority of bellies to backsides (for example, one cuts with the "belly" of a knife, not with its back, whereas the backside is what is always beaten or chastened). All this is, of course, a prelude to the main thrust of the argument: the superiority of sexual intercourse with women (via the ventral position) over sex with men (focusing on the dorsal) and, by extension, love of women over the love of men. The overall tone of the work is highly moralistic, with frequent appeal to the Qur'an and Islamic law presented as familial advice, and, in contrast to the *Boasting Match* described above, the language of the text is restrained and nonspecific. Al-Jahiz takes advantage of his avuncular narrator to present the argument in a condescending way, as the affectionate but firm scolding of a wayward young nephew, attempting to talk him out of his love of men.

### **Biography**

Al-Jahiz was born Bahr al-Kinani al Fuqaimi al-Basri, in Basra (in modern Iraq) around 776. Educated in Basra; despite lack of literary background, decided to become an author. Early writings attracted the attention of the Abassid caliph al-Ma'mun in 817–8; moved to Baghdad shortly thereafter. Worked briefly as a scribe

and teacher, but apparently held no official posts and relied on income from the dedications of his writings and (possibly) a governmental allowance. Retired to Basra in 861 in ill health, and died there in 868/9.

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# JAPANESE: MEDIEVAL TO NINETEENTH CENTURY

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## The Archaic Period to the Nara Period (710–794)

At the time when the Shintô, the way of the Gods, the ethereal cult of nature, was the unique identity of the Japanese, we note the parallel existence of *Norito*, a body of earthy rituals and magical formulas for down-to-earth problems, such as those collected during the *Engi* era in 927, dating back sometimes to the 7th century. For example, the "ritual of great purification" lists such offensive acts as cutting the skin, incest, or being subjected to the calamity of crawling worms. From the beginning, ugly reality is opposed to a quest for purity.

The *Kojiki* [*The Book of Things That Are Now of the Past*], published at the beginning of the 8th century, relates, among other facts, the birth of the Japanese islands in a cosmic sexual act, followed by the union of Izanagi and Izanami, each child being a new island in the archipelago.

More than in the *Nihongi*, the mythical image of a supernatural feminine figure can be found in the *Kojiki* with Amaterasu, an "angry mother," in a Jungian sense, angry because she was the victim of sexual violence, but at the same time

showing her genitals, dancing in a naturist ecstasy. Unveiling her genitals, or her breast, can paralyze the enemy or stimulate the warrior's courage. Amenouzume's dance can awaken the whole of nature. These primitive representations of feminine sexual power will be later found in modern literature.

The *Manyôshû* was collected around 760 and contains *sômonka* [love poems] and *banka* [elegies]. Passion is expressed in a very subtle manner, but directly. Most of *Manyôshû* focuses on the private relations between men and women. The *Azuma no uta* (poems from the oriental provinces) show how lovers met various obstacles. Above all, love was supposed to increase the harmony of the group.

## The Heian Period (794–1186)

The Heian was the period when the ideal of Japanese civilization was seen. During the 10th century, life reached a high degree of refinement, especially in literature. Poets and aesthetes were numerous, as were amorous affairs. These behaviors were very open, though a mere

sensual passion was never the ideal. The lover is aware of the seasonal changes, and feels a deep melancholy.

Poetry is present with the *Kokinshū* (collected in 905); popular poetry, such as the *Iroha-uta*, along with prose about both genders, such as the first tales (the *Taketori*, *Ise*, and *Yamato Monogatari*). In the *Kokinshū*, one of the main lyrical themes is love, but it is quite different from the transitive, physical love of foreplay and sexual intercourse, as appears in the *Man'yōshū*. Rather, the Heian period presents an intransitive, contemplative love [*mono omou*] which is the subject of abstract reflection. This tradition presents the image of the lover in a dreamworld, with the best-loved poems being descriptions of misty landscapes. But there were some exceptions, such as poems written by court ladies like Ono no Komachi and Izumi Shikibu in the *Shinkokinshū* and in the *Goshūishū* (11th century), which treat more practically of a psychology of sexual relations.

Fujiwara no Akihira compiled the *Honchō monzui* in the middle of the 11th century. It contains several pornographic pieces, such as the “Danjo kon’in fu,” which begins by describing the sentimental attractions, then proceeds to a detailed description of sexual acts. Another example from this collection is the “Tettsuiden,” which is a parodic discussion of the penis in the formal manner of a biography from Confucian wise men whose names are all suggestive of the male organ. These themes come from Chinese literature, in which pornography appeared in both prose and poetry.

In numerous tales in the *Ise Monogatari* (905–951), sometimes funny, mostly sentimental, are related the amorous exploits of a *mukashi no otoko*, an ex-lover, an “old boyfriend,” supposedly Ariwara no Narihira (825–880), a nobleman and great seducer of women. He is known for his libertinage and for his poetic talent. He is never ashamed of his passion and always takes great pleasure in sex with many partners. This stance is historically significant, because the *Ise Monogatari* expresses for the first time an individual ideal of hedonism between the sexes. The *Ise Monogatari* gave birth to an aesthetic form and a Don Juan-like figure essential to understanding the Heian culture. Love is possible on both single and multiple levels, is never to be refused, doesn't decrease with age, and is not divided into carnal and sentimental love. This

foundation will be reaffirmed and integrated into the modern age.

Upper-class women in the Heian period had two options to escape from boredom: love and literature. Hence, the masterpieces of the Heian were written by women, in pure Japanese syllabary, both as novels and diaries. The *Makura no sōshi* of Sei Shōnagon (first years of 11th century), for example, is not chronological in the sense of being a *nikki* (diary), but is a *sōshi*, more like a journal capturing the feelings and fantasies of the writer. Both the *Makura* and the *Genji Monogatari* [*Tale of Genji*] (c. 1000) depict Japanese eros at length. The famous *Tale of Genji*, by court lady Murasaki Shikibu, tells of the love affairs of the radiant and handsome Prince Genji, focusing on his amorous adventures and on the court intrigues surrounding him and his son after him. The *Tale* is supposed to be illustrative of the vanity of all things human, especially human love. The sexual act is always suggested in an indirect way, and love is manifested in terms of psychology and emotion. In the poems, instead of using explicit terms for coitus, the verb “to chat” is often used.

The *Genji Monogatari* is an invaluable source for analyzing Japanese eros. For example, the best-loved part of feminine beauty is long hair, and the naked body is appreciated even less than a “nice hand,” that is, beautiful calligraphy. The ideal of femininity is then crystallized, and the *Tale* is precisely a quest for the essence of women. We see this quest echoed in Ihara Saikaku's character Yonosuke, who seeks an encounter with femininity through cultural criteria. Prince Genji is not a Don Juan, despite his numerous relations with at least ten featured female characters and plenty of anonymous ones. The Heian organization of relations was based on polygamy. Concubines didn't arouse jealousy, and the women benefited from a relative sexual freedom. Love experience was merely part of the transient nature of human life. It was also an aesthetic one and a cultural emotion, as much as a pure physical pleasure. Pleasure was connected to clothing and to a stagecraft of love. Infidelity was neither definitive nor absolute. Feelings were enriched by a subtle balance between faithful and unfaithful love.

These works were written by and for literary and highbrow courtiers. By contrast, the *Konjaku Monogatari* (c. 1120) is based on anecdotes belonging to popular literature. The *Konjaku* gives

us a very raw image of everyday life during the Heian, with no subject forbidden. It is written in a cinematic way, showing the reality of death and physical love, which would have been in extreme bad taste according to the criteria of the lady Murasaki Shikibu, for example. And yet, though explicit, the *Konjaku* is not perverse—in contrast to the swing toward treatments of sexual perversion in court literature after Lady Murasaki's *Genji Monogatari*. The world of the *Konjaku* is one of quick action—one story inspired Akutagawa Ryūnosuke to write *Yabu no naka*, which became the basis for Kurosawa's film *Rashōmon*. The sexual organs are a matter of general interest. The most vile love is described, such as sexual intercourse between the empress and a demon in front of the court, including the emperor. Heichū, the famous libertine and poet, is driven by his interest in scatology, and all sorts of excess are described in the 30th book, devoted to love stories. Especially of note are those tales devoted to the couplings of monks and beautiful ladies of the capital, which inspired popular songs.

The violence and crudity of these pictures of a society at this point in time can be linked to the fact that this society was at the end of its existence. The noble and idealized world of the court is reverted to real life, full of lust and violence. The Heian period ends with the reign of uncultured warriors from the provinces, such as the first *shōgun*, who ruled Japan from Kamakura. From Heian to Edo culture, the warriors seemed more inclined to homosexuality or wild sex and didn't pay much attention to faithful women—except to sentence adulterous women to death, an idea that will not be shared by the middle class.

### **The Kamakura Period and Beyond (1186–1603)**

During the Kamakura (1186–1332), poetic creation continues with the *Shinkokinshū* (1205), among many other poetry books, and the most famous collection of all, the *Hyakuninissshū* [*One Hundred Poems by One Hundred Poets*] (c. 1235). The semiotics of love are common to both this and the Heian period. The frozen or wet sleeve in the winter night, the grass, the wind, and the cold dawn express indecision—a sleeve wet with tears is also the image suggested by archbishop Jien (Kamakura period) to indicate separation

and longing. Sorrow at parting with one's lover is expressed through images such as damp or fallen flowers. And although life is short, Ki no Tomonori writes: "to meet you / I would give it without regret" (*Kokinshū* 12, 615). In short, what is exalted above all is a romantic image of love suffering through separation and wait. The pleasure of love and the sensual aspects of it are rarely expressed in these poems.

The Nambokuchō period (1332–1392) and the Muromachi period (1392–1603), like the Kamakura before it, are not rich in literature, though the monk Kenkō's *Tsurezurekusa* (c. 1335) is an original essay about many feelings and ideas, especially women and the sensual desire of men. Even those most attuned to spiritual life can't escape the lusts of the flesh: incense, white legs, and beautiful hair arouse sexual desire. But the monk is mainly misogynistic.

Beginning with the Heian period, neither homosexual nor heterosexual relations were mentioned, except rarely. But in the *haikai renga*, the Muromachi period, and there alone, allusions to male and female sexual organs are numerous, in total contrast with Heian court poetry. The effect is humorous and iconoclastic, and these poems were very popular. The ballads called *ko uta* are love songs, some of which treat of sexual passion.

### **The Tokugawa Period (1603–1868)**

The moralist Kaibara Ekiken (1630–1714) represents the vulgar pleasures as quickly changed into sufferings, and is well known for his educative role. He published the *Onna Daigaku*, which was an aristocratic manual for girls education. This kind of book was quickly adopted as sexual education books later on. According to the Confucian idea, women should be submissive to their husbands and should not have any kind of intimacy with any other men. If they deviated from these rules, they were ostracized and subject to great community shame. This strict code is apparent in the coming novels, especially those of Ihara Saikaku.

### **The Edo (1603–1686) and Genroku (1688–1704) Periods**

The *chōnin* [merchants] were the premier literati of 17th-century Japan, their novels describing the real social life of that time. In an urban

culture, the new meeting points for artists and writers were usually in the “pleasure world,” which included prostitution districts like Shimabara in Kyôto and the Yoshiwara in Edo. Ihara Saikakuto (1641–1691) dedicated himself above all to erotic stories, and described thoroughly the life of debauchery in these places.

*Kôshoku ichidai otoko* (1682), one of the first *ukiyo-sôshi* [“social novels,” *romans de mœurs*], is a portrait of Yonosuke, a middle-class erotomaniac of the Edo period, obsessed with sex, women, and beautiful young boys. He paid for sex thousands of times with women in *kuruwa* [brothels]. The novel has no direction except for what is provided by the multiple sexual episodes, but it does describe the somnambulism and brutality of clients. This is also a feature of *Kôshoku ichidai onna* (1686), which is the story of a voluptuous woman—a courtesan and a whore—detailing the events of her generally picaresque life.

*Kôshoku ichidai otoko* ends with a trip on a boat called “Yoshi-no-maru” [The Voluptuous Boat], sailing to the “women’s island” [*Nyogo no shima*], a no-return trip into sensual exhaustion. This finale is linked to the Buddhist philosopher’s island—a device also found in Nosaka Akiyuki’s *Pornographers* (1966) and in some masterpieces of the filmmaker Imamura Shohei. The seducer in the “Maboroshi” [ghost, illusion] chapter of the *Genji Monogatari* comes to a similar end.

Yonosuke is looking to seduce as many women as possible; he is a maniacal collector of spoils (as was usual for clients of courtesans), but he has no emotions. He is incapable of affection—compared with Prince Genji, who aimed at knowledge about women more than at sensuality. Prince Genji experiences variety to find the ideal, which would not be far away from the coming ideal of the geisha. He savors the passing of time in a positive way to remember his many loves fondly, while Yonosuke is never satisfied with time. His accounts as a “collector” and fetishist is done in a negative way. Among the perversions presented is sacrilege, in the depiction of the profanation of priestesses in a Shintô temple, but this is considered a game and a social gaffe rather than a sin. There are few perversions expressed in the *Genji Monogatari*; one of these is Genji incestuous desire for his absent mother. Although he never actually passes to the act of incest. The myth of the

androgynous is not present, but there is a narcissism rooted in the original incest of Izanami and Izanagi (myth of the origins of the country). Yonosuke has only one major perversion, and that is fetishism (hair, nails, underwear, images). In the *Genji Monogatari*, signs such as calligraphy, poetry, music prepare the erotic encounters. The most intimate encounter is with the face of a woman, not with her naked body. Clothes are particularly erotic, and the feminine body is a fictive one, of phantom-like beauty, as will be suggested later on by Tanizaki Jun’ichirô in *In’ei raisan* [*Praise of Shadow*] (1933). Eroticism is cultural, and linked to dream and illusion. The naked body is not attractive, but clothes enable it to be explored in an extension of foreplay in the darkness, sometimes leading to mistakes, but pleasure nevertheless.

Clothes and perfumes are means for the conquest of the other. Modesty is another essential part of the erotic code—for example, the woman hiding the lower part of her face, or her mouth. Shame (*haji*) excites male desire. The term *hazukashii* [“I feel ashamed”] is often used by women to entice desire, and is a medium for sexual pleasure. The physical act is never described precisely by Saikaku, the reader is able to perceive it indirectly. Often, there is no communication, and coitus takes place in silence, with a sleeping beauty (anticipating the necrophilia of Kawabata or Tanizaki). It is a fundamental aspect of Japanese eros. Through drunkenness, too, a distance is created, and there is no significant contact with the other’s soul.

The story of Yonosuke can be seen as a parody of the *Genji Monogatari*, in so far as the hero similarly fades into legend. The way the hero argues about the qualities and defects of women is related to a systematic erotic quest; Yonosuke, like Genji, can be subject to melancholy. The difference lies in a new challenge: create an authentic love with courtesans trained to pretend to be in love. In the literary point of view, the celebration of natural beauties (flowers or moonlight) has to be replaced successfully by the description of the *kuruwa*. An idealization of courtly behavior—the *sui*, or *iki*—emerges. It is an art of life with pleasure, elegance, and ostentation. One sex is striving toward the other, in a pre-orgasmic eroticism. This code of gallantry, *iki*, evolved into *ikiji*, courage, which was borrowed by the *bushido* [the way of warriors], and into *akirame* [resignation to a situation].

Sexual desire was to be cultivated without any genuine affection, which was a departure from the Heian ideal of love. The Edo ideal was a gallantry based on a fantasy. The perversion lay in the consciousness that the venal love was only an elegant comedy. The *sui* spirit was a perverted heroism and mysticism, because the middle class had no political power. To spend one's money and energy with courtesans was the only challenge available.

However, the novels of Saikaku contain a bitter charge against prostitution: he denounces the violence under its erotic refinement. The relation between sex and money came to obsess the author. After his death, five posthumous books were published, among which was *The Moon of That Floating World* (1693). It deals with the destiny of brothel clients, and is a testimony to the "floating world" (*ukiyo*) he described so well. One theme of these short stories is the client ruined because of courtesans. The book strongly condemns the hypocrisy of the *kuruwa*: theatricality based on money. The complete destruction of the client is the only way to put an end to the farce. The prestige of the pleasure districts is replaced by disillusionment and misery. This universe is one of ruin and solitude, but it also leads to detachment and freedom. In *The Life of Wankyu*, the title character is inspired by the kabuki theater and by a real Osaka merchant. The debauchery leads to ruin and insanity. He becomes a champion of eros. Symetrically, the merchant's ethic is no longer unidimensional (accumulate a fortune or be ruined). In the pleasure world, the merchants have acquired a sense of elegance, or sacrifice. The ruined client, banned from the courtesans' districts, has a free mind like the warrior ready to die.

Yonosuke was also a ruined *daijin*. The kabuki theater created a type of the ruined young man rejected by his family, which is not the *daijin* type. Yonosuke, thanks to a large fortune, becomes a super-*daijin* (dai-dai-daijin) and is desperate because he cannot put an end to his money with courtesans. Yoden, in *The Great Mirror of All Pleasures*, can be considered the prototype of the *daijin*. In the end, he immolates himself over a fire made with all the letters he received from courtesans. We can deduce that at the end of the 17th century, money took over male seduction in the pleasure districts. *Sui* could not be attained since financial ruination would come long before.

The middle class tends to appropriate the trappings of aristocratic culture. It takes its inspiration from Urabe Kenkō, a retired aristocrat, and to his *Hours of Idleness*, where it is considered that love is an essential experience for sensitivity.

The warrior ethic has as its finale death or entry into Valhalla, but homosexual love introduces an internal contradiction. As for *nanshoku* [homoeroticism, or male-to-male love], we can note the success of *Nanshoku ōkagami* [*The Great Mirror of Male Love*] (1687) published simultaneously in Osaka, Kyōto, and Edo. The men in power, the samurai, could only approve the entry of *nanshoku* into the Japanese literature tradition. It is not synonymous with homosexuality in a Western sense, because neither homosexuality, heterosexuality, nor sodomy were operant concepts in the Japanese 17th century.

*Nanshoku* is opposed to *joshoku* [woman-to-woman love]. *Nanshoku* is the sexual pleasure experienced between men. It is neither a court model, like that of the Chinese, nor a popularized version of the kabuki *nanshoku* pattern. In the Heian period, *nanshoku* was considered as immature and was marginalized.

*The Great Mirror of Male Love* is divided into two parts. The first is dedicated to monks and samurai; the second to the prostitute-actors of kabuki theater (where the female roles were played by *onnagata*, men). The social intermixing through sex, above all hierarchy, was intensive, but the perfect *nanshoku* way is expressed by warriors and monks.

The Japanese tradition goes back to the Chinese model (*nanfeng*, or "passion of the cut sleeve"), and extended through the urbanization of Japan. The feudal model was based on seniority, and the cadet was subordinate to the elder. Young men, sometimes vassals, were used as domestics. Around 1600, the young partners were educated to be passive and to look like women, without behaving like them. A common pattern was for a samurai to become a pariah (*hinin*) or a wanderer (*rōnin*) but still be in love with his master (*daimyō*).

Middle-class men in this context are presented as having no other interest than money and sexual adventures. They experience *ukiyo* or *hakanai*, the ennui of world. The warriors have to wear a mask or hide their nature, but *nanshoku* is for them an ideal: the perfect warrior is young and part of the *nanshoku*. Many realities are to

be understood under that term: bisexuality; *onnagirai* [pure homoeroticism]; the taste for young men [*shôjinzukû*]; homophilia; or love of beautiful or girlish young boys. The physical appearance of the warrior is strictly defined. The hair is cut on the sides of the head [*maegami*], and a codified language is used (e.g., *kiku* [chrysanthemum] = anus).

As for monks, *nanshoku* became a main pattern of monastic life—the Buddhist Kûkai (Kobo Daishi) is said to have introduced the first coitus between men, in the monastery town of Mount Koya. For the monks, it was a compromise between abstinence and heterosexual love, the worst investment for Buddhism, and of less energetic cost in *yang* (i.e., maleness, creation, solar power). The *chigo* (novice) who enters a temple as a trainee becomes a partner in a fraternal and at the same time homosexual link [*kyôdaichigiri*].

No moral objections are made to male–male love, apart from those of Confucianism (one does not marry, one squanders the family fortune, one contributes to public disorder). On the contrary, the warriors deprived of glory in war could spend their fighting energy in that way. *The Great Mirror of Male Love* thus becomes Saikaku's *roman de moeur* [*ukiyo-sôshi*] serving as the mirror of what was expected by a society that mainly approved of *nanshoku*.

After the *ukiyo-sôshi*, came the *kusa-sôshi* [graphic novel] and the *sharebon* [the “smart,” or witty novelette or pun book], such as those of Santô Kyôden in 1787–1791, whose licentious tales were forbidden.

Two publishers in Kyôto, Ando Jishô and Ejima Kiseki, from Hatchimonjiya, published many licentious novels at the beginning of the 18th century, and then the movement spread to Edo with the *sharebon*, which would be forbidden by the government in 1711. Then the *ninjôbon* [books about human feelings] appeared, above all in the first half of the 19th century with Tamenaga Shunsui (1789–1842), but they were also quickly prohibited, as their basis was pornography.

At the same time Jippensha Ikku (1765–1831), introduced the comic novel [*kokkei-bon*] who would publish no less than 331 books. The *Hizakurige* (1802) is a well-known travel narrative on the Tokaido road. His gallic spirit and strong, realistic genius can be compared to that of Rabelais. Shikitei Samba (1775–1822)

wrote early in his life naturalistic and then comic novels. Among many works, the *Ukiyo-buro* (1809–1811), about the world of the public baths, and the *Ukiyo-doko* (1811–1812), about the world of the barber's, are composed of encounters and chats in the promiscuity of naked bodies of many kinds of people. In the *Ukiyo-buro*, Samba uses *kyôbun* [crazy prose].

## Drama

The kabuki theater is the popular and vulgar version of the Nô theater. It made its appearance in the Muromachi period. It can be linked to the *kyôgen* component of Nô. The origin of it is Okuni, a former Ise priest who fled to Kyôto, then went to Edo with a troupe of actors, and was considered to be of low morality. The women were no longer allowed to play in the kabuki theater from 1629. The courtesans' theater was then replaced by a young boy's theater, which was forbidden again. Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653–1724) wrote more than a hundred plays and is considered to be the creator of the Japanese popular drama. Historical dramas were full of suicides, murders, and violent events; the comedy of manners related sensual passions. Takeda Izumo (1688–1756) was the direct descendant of Chikamatsu.

The love quest can become a death quest, if affected by dark impulses from the unconscious. Lovers sometimes have to escape, and this is a common theme of novels, such as those of Saikaku, like *Kôshoku gonin-onna*, and many dramas. Lovers are often sentenced to death, according to the bushido ethic, but readers and the public didn't approve of it. They often commit *shinjû* [double love suicide]. The government censored dramatists like Chikamatsu who made of *shinjû* the turning point in their dramas. Saikaku never showed *shinjû* because he denounced its idealization through the influence of the theater. The heterosexual love described by Saikaku is subversive according to the Tokugawa criteria: it is a total love, independent in death, like that of O-Sen and Maemon. The subversive heterosexual love of Oshichi, for example, may be traced back to the heretical celebration of love by the monk Ikkyû (1394–1481), author of erotic poems written under Zen influence. The experience of love in Saikaku's works is at the margins of official Buddhist thought.

## Manuals and Poetry

Two essential fields are to be mentioned, because they were long-term cultural facts, and because they were so popular that they concerned the major part of the society: the *makura-e* [pillow book], *shunga* [spring illustrations], and *higa* [secret drawings]. They are mentioned as early as the 10th century, and are not made for laughter, as may be suggested by one meaning of the term *warai-e* or *warai-bon*. They were intended to give a sexual education. In the classical sense, *warau* means sexual pleasure. The aim of these books was to show how the couple's affection can be expressed bodily, according to the *Kojiki* (the 8th-century tale of Creation), and to the first coitus of Izanagi and Izanami. Coitus expresses the natural pleasure within the lover's happiness. During the Edo period, these books were published especially for young people in order to give them precise help and advice for sexual life. This was particularly relevant for girls, who were supposed to be virgins and thus completely ignorant of the physical nature of men. The young men have to decipher the words uttered by girls during coitus. These books were anatomically precise, describing organs, as well as showing them in action. The qualities of the vagina are connected to the appearance of the face [*rokkaisen*]. Technical pages are devoted to dildos (or olisbos) and various accessories, while proper nutrition and medicines for the sex act are explained. In the spirit of the *kyōka*, or burlesque poem, noble classical language is subverted into an erotic one. It is not a sense of modesty that determines why figures are drawn not entirely unclothed, but rather a sense of aesthetics, for complete nudity was not considered to be sexually attractive.

For example, the *Manual to Have a Hard-On Like Shimekawa in Order to Possess Women* is a parody of a famous book for female instruction, *The Teaching Letter of Imakawa for Women*, written in 1394 by Imakawa Ryōshin. The former book is attributed to Takeda Kichi, and was republished more than 20 times between 1687 and 1865; dozens of other books were published under a similar title during the same period. So, the meaning of the parodic title was common knowledge.

The second fact is that haiku was associated with comical poetry: parody, pun, and comical situations were their basis. After Saikaku's

novels, around 1700, everything seems to be a subject for poems. The topic (*maeku*) given by a master receives an answer (*tsukeku*) written by the client. It is a new exercise called *maekuzuke*, which becomes a craze all over the country. Senryū, born in Edo in 1718, becomes the master of it, in 1757, under that pen name. From 1844, after the death of that master, *maekuzuke* was designated as *senryū*. Any kind of subject could become a *senryū*, such as the neighbor's life, conjugal life, and the Yoshiwara courtesans. The themes—"husbands-lovers, domestics, courtesans"—were placed inside the books in parallel series. The erotic *senryū* deal with the monastic world, the inaccessible court ladies (known through the olisbos they ordered, for example), the widows, couples, courtesans, and domestics. To give an idea of the importance of *senryū*, the Yoshiwara was the theme of at least 110,000 of them, among those selected by masters. The authors could know by experience the life of a monk or warriors but the life of court ladies had to be imagined, as a fantasy world. The main books published in Japan during this period were *Yanagidaru* [*The Willow's Barrel*] (1765–1838) and *Suetsumuhana* [*The Flower of the End*] (erotic *senryū* written from 1776 to 1801). The erotic poems were related to real places of Edo and the surroundings of Yoshiwara. At a time when Christianity was being implanted in Japan, and with it the idea of "sin" and "purity of the body," the writing and reading of these poems was a kind of antidote.

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## JAPANESE: TWENTIETH AND TWENTY-FIRST CENTURIES

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It is difficult to separate the 19th and 20th centuries in any study of Japanese literature, as the turning point in modern Japanese history is marked by the beginning of the Meiji period, which spanned from 1868 to 1912. This was the real starting point of modern Japanese literature, and of Western influence. On the other hand, Japanese literature is very coherent, and traditions are passed on from one period to another and developed with continuity. Ueda Akinari is a good example of this process, in his *Ugetsu Monogatari* [*Rain and Vague Moon Stories*], published in 1776, and his *Harusame* [*Spring Rain Tales*], which was published prior to the 20th century. Both deal with abnormal or supernatural events. Ueda was very talented in describing ghosts and beautiful women of fantasy. Mori Ogai is another case of an author of the Meiji and the succeeding Taishô period (1912–1926). In 1890, his short story *Mahimé* [*The Dancer*], a love story of a Japanese student and a young girl from Berlin, marked a sudden change in Japanese literary tradition and caused a significant aesthetic quarrel.

Young writers were attracted by Zolaesque Naturalism, which was taken to be a holistic system of understanding life, especially the sensual awakening of the individual through sexual feelings. The first work in the Zola manner was *Jigoku no hana* [*Hell's Flower*] (1902) by Nagai Kafû. Writers began to use their own experiences in first-person novels [*watakushi shôsetsu*]*—e.g., Shimazaki Tôzon, whose actual relationship with his niece was revealed in his novel Shinsai* [*New*

*Life*] (1918) and caused a scandal. Also scandalous were the life and works of Tayama Katai (1872–1930), whose taste extended to detailed observations and raw descriptions of life. Though he didn't seek immoralism, his *Futon* (1907) was a form of defiance against traditional morals. Considered obscene at the time of its publication, it describes the repressed love between young Yoshiko from the country and Tokio, a writer who is supposed to teach her the art of writing. Tokio has a moral choice between satisfying his desire for Yoshiko and fulfilling his social role as a protector. Tokio is jealous of Yoshiko's lover, Tanaka, and the crux of the novel is whether Yoshiko and Tanaka have slept together. As a modern “Meiji girl,” Yoshiko probably has. Mori Ogai deals with various themes, from love to the description of sexual experiences, in *Vita Sexualis* (1910). He reacted to Naturalism in a negative way, calling it “impudent.” *Vita Sexualis* was for him an anti-Naturalist manifesto, with his medical knowledge employed to create a parody of realism, but the book was temporarily forbidden as immoral.

In the margins of Naturalism, around 1910, writers like Kafû Nagai (1879–1959) began to appear. He published short stories with a poetical aesthetic linked to cynicism, a perspective to be further developed by Tanizaki Jun'ichirô (1885–1965). Kafû was unable to reconcile the social pressures he observed at the end of the Meiji period, and a sort of renunciation led him to cynicism. Proclaiming himself the heir of Edo Ukiyo-sôshi and the “Gesaku” (entertainment)

authors of the Meiji, Kafû dedicated his works to the description of the new pleasure districts, trying to capture some of Edo's old prestige. He embodied the "man of taste" [*fûryûjin*] and the *bunjin* tradition of refined cultivation. At 37, he dedicated himself completely to literature, as a sort of refuge, and to elegant works for the theater, like *Sumida River* (1909) and *The Nights of Shimbashi*. Kafû wasn't driven to suicide out of a sense of regret, like Arishima Takeo, who wrote about his deep love affair and struggle against hypocrisy in *Aru Onna* [*A Woman*] (1919)—rather, Kafû fell in love with a married woman and committed suicide with her. This act was reminiscent of the dramas of Chikamatsu, at a time when *shinjû*, or suicide pacts between lovers, was still popular. Yet, in *Waidan* [*A Squalid Affair*], Kafû examines the circumstances of and condemns adultery. A libertine, he was proud to have had sexual relations only with geishas, or professionals, of whom he wrote accurate observations. He could not understand the experience of Arishima. His play *Sumida River* represented an escape to the Yoshiwara "village" of pleasure houses. In the face of the Occidentalization of Japan at the end of the Meiji, his final answer was to become a *gesakusha*, or entertainment writer, so as to lose himself in dealing with only the world of pleasure.

Tanizaki Jun'ichirô was strongly encouraged by Kafû, and professed an amorality he called "diabolism," which was rather provocative. Tanizaki was a prolific twentieth-century writer and compared himself to Kafû, whose conception of "art above all" won his admiration. However, he disapproved of Kafû's erratic sexual life and charged that Kafû despised women as inferior and doll-like—an observation also made by Nosaka Akiyuki. Tanizaki himself, on the contrary, considered women to be superior to men. He spent most of his life as a married man, and his writings explored love in middle-class society. Although both he and Kafû took male-female relations as their primary source of inspiration, the two writers belonged to different cultural traditions—Kafû to the *bunjin* and Tanizaki to the *yoruri* [chanted recitative]. The *bunjin* were delighted with *iki*, or being "chic," and hated falling in love; love and suicide was exalted by their dramatists, like Tsuruya Namboku (1758–1829), who celebrated the impulses of cruelty and submission. These elements were to be the basis of Tanizaki's literary

world. He was drawn to his beautiful mother with an almost oedipal force. The beauty of her skin in particular and her way of walking attracted him. As a little boy, he had been a victim of sadism, which may have forced a predilection for masochism into him. His first sex-maniacal works may be traced back to Western models, such as those of Poe, Baudelaire, and Wilde.

*Shisei* [*The Tattoo*] (1910) is characteristic both of Tanizaki's Decadent inspiration and of diabolism. The work is about a woman with a spider tattoo on her back who is a kind of femme fatale. The tattoo master Seikichi takes pleasure in having his clients suffer through needles. Then, he introduces the soul of a dead cruel Chinese princess into the tattooed girl, and becomes the first victim of that beautiful monster.

In *In'ei Raisan* [*In Praise of Shadow*] (1933), Tanizaki describes woman's beauty as being like a ghost, with her fragile body wrapped in the kimono. He develops also the idea that Japanese skin is slightly colored from the inside, and his explanations refer to a very peculiar erotic taste. He establishes a contrast between Western and Japanese cultures in terms of the explicit and the implicit, the liberated and the repressed. From 1935 to 1938, he was engaged to translate the *Genji Monogatari* [*The Tale of Genji*] into modern Japanese, but he had to expurgate the amorous passages, and he had to interrupt the serialized publication of his own *Sasameyuki* [*The Makioka Sisters*] (1943–48), because military censorship during this time was all-powerful.

In representative Tanizaki works such as *Shunkin shô* [*Story of Shunkin*] (1933) and *Kagi* [*The Key*] (1956), affective and sexual relations are examined out of any social or economic context. Two kinds of relations can be observed. In the first one, a man is devoted to a woman, or becomes attached to her, and takes pleasure in the sufferings she gives him (e.g., *Chijin no ai* [*An Idiot's Love*], 1924). In this scenario, a woman may have several lovers. The second kind is a detached observation through fictional narrative of the sexual relations of a couple, from *Tadekumushi* [*Some Prefer Nettles*] (1928–29) to *Kagi*. In this scenario, a third person, usually a man, is introduced into the triangle. In *Kagi*, jealousy arouses sexual desire. The husband wants to give and receive suffering at the same time. For instance, as an aphrodisiac, he puts his drunken wife into a scalding hot bath

before taking pictures of her. He asks a young man to develop the photos in a shared voyeurism; he also encourages adultery, with the help of his own daughter. He is driven to his death through oversexed sexual activity, using drug injections to be able to have intercourse until the last moment. The point is that he and his wife share hidden diaries, and the key to their diaries is also the key to their sexual and unconscious worlds. This bold treatment of the amorous was a first step toward freedom in the Japanese literary expression of sex. The elements of perversion must be distinguished from mere pornography because they are treated with artistic detachment.

With *Fûten Rôjin Nikki* [*Diary of an Old Man*] (1961–62), Tanizaki takes up the subject of sex in old age, a variation on his earlier themes. The diary is that of a decrepit old man, suffering from high blood pressure. Though impotent, he is attracted to his daughter-in-law, and takes pleasure in kissing her feet and biting her toes. The story reaches a climax when he identifies her with a Kan'on figure and takes a print of her foot dabbed in red ink to be carved on his tombstone. The nearly dead man indulges in a masochistic fantasy of being walked on by a holy femme fatale. This dream of the old man is a summary of Tanizaki's lifelong concern with the quest for eternal womanhood. We see this fixation also suggested in *Haha o kouru ki* [*Yearning for Woman*] (1919), in the form of an idealized figure who arouses foot fetishism. Tanizaki managed to describe various types of sexual love which he then applied, macrocosmically, to Japan. For example, he dealt with peculiar subjects, such as the daydreams of a blind man about feminine beauty, or sex between a young blind woman and a man who becomes blind in his turn. The novels where sadomasochistic relations are described are numerous, and the male characters often behave in fetishistic ways.

Women are able to attract and master men, whereas men seem to identify and fulfil their lives through a woman's body. These carnal relations are not presented in terms of the Christian dichotomy of body and soul. The flesh is not sinful, and sex has no diabolical origin. The Buddhist disgust for life's pleasures is not present either. Man has to grasp the physical nature of his life. The Confucian ideological system began to collapse during the Meiji period, worn

out by individualists such as Kafû. It then became possible to represent characters living an absolute love. Other heroes, by being very close to death, are likewise delivered from social constraints and can let a hedonistic sexuality come out.

Inspired by the *Konjaku Monogatari* [*The Tale of Konjaku*] and other stories, Akutagawa Ryonosuke (1892–1927) was obsessed with madness, before he committed suicide, and his “vague uneasiness” became everybody's concern. The insanity of his mother produced in him the fear of becoming himself insane. Mixing the images of his mother and his sister as a composite, he idealized an eternal female figure. While still a student, he published *Rashômon* (1915). The director Kurosawa combined it with another tale, *Yabu no naka* [*In the Grove*] (1922) for his renowned film. In these novels begins Akutagawa's obsession with the infernal, a central theme in *Jigoku* [*The Hell Screen*] (1918). Set in pre-feudal imperial Japan, the story focuses on the painter Yoshihide, nicknamed *Saru-hide*, “monkey-like face,” who finds difficulty in finishing a work in which the central scene is of a woman enveloped by flames in a carriage. The model of the woman is his own daughter. His demonic passion predominates; he has no attachment to the lives of others and sacrifices his daughter to the desires of Lord Horikawa. This same infernal vision of life is seen in the classic Rashomon story *Yabu no naka*, in which although the fact is clear that the bandit Tajomaru raped the wife of a warrior, who is found dead, so many variations of interpretation are woven in the narrative. Akutagawa didn't expose his real life in the sadomasochistic manner of the Naturalists. He was talented in creating historical fiction drained of the context of his own life. To him has been attributed an erotic tale called *Akaibôshi no onna* [*The Red Hat Girl*], and to Kafû *Yojôhan fusuma no shitabari* [*The Secret of the Small Room*]. The first was published by Seisaburô Oguro in his review *Sôtai*, which between 1913 and 1930 published the works of the *Sôtaiikai* group of about 300 writers doing research in sexology. The second was first published in 1940, and then in 1947. The story of their publications is enmeshed with that of censorship and interdiction.

In the life and works of Kawabata Yasunari (1899–1972), a tension exists between life and death, between abstraction and sensuality; the

author's consciousness of beauty is melancholy. His *Yukiguni* [*Snow Country*] (1934–1947) follows a very coherent plot. Shimamura, a married man, is attracted to two different types of women in a mountain resort. Yôko is inaccessible, in the manner of the childlike entertainer in the author's earlier *Izu no odoriko* [*Izu Dancer*] (1926), toward whom the protagonist is compelled to feel only brotherly affection. In contrast, the geisha Komako gives herself to him. Thus, Shimamura lives a tension between his entirely physical love for Komako and his ethereal love for Yôko. But ironically, it is Komako who belongs to the world of transience, while Yôko is made of flesh and blood. Kawabata's sensual approach to beauty not only is related to the feminine body, but spreads to objects like a piece of Chijimi linen and to the snowy landscape. His sensibilities, like those of haiku poets, are sharp and precise. And the precision becomes suggestive. In a *Nô* perspective, Komako appears like the *shite*, or main character, and Shimamura as the *waki*, or foil. The last scene, in which Komako rushes to embrace the body of Yôko, who has burned in a fire, has the powerful effect of a *Nô* drama's ending. Even the stars in the night sky and the play of lights can have an erotic effect on the narrator. Kawabata was especially interested in the connection between the beauty of young girls and traditional arts, as in the novel *Sembazuru* [*A Cloud of White Birds*]. He describes the beauty of a cup as if the light would give it a sensual aspect, like a woman's skin. The same type of images can be found in *Yukiguni*. The woman can be fondled like porcelain, and the objects become sensual. This aesthetic attitude toward women is continuous. Women are always beautiful objects. The extreme of this attitude is reached in *Nemureru bijo* [*The Sleeping Beauties*] (1960–61), in which, in a strange house, an old man contemplates and caresses a drugged young woman.

Other stories by Kawabata, like *Tampopo* or *Kataude*, express the idea that women have to be seen (and cannot see their lovers during orgasm), or are reduced to the most erotic part of their bodies. He used the short story to express his peculiar sensuality and his sense of beauty. Women and men are only one aspect of various sensual impressions.

*The Sleeping Beauties* is a farewell to what Kawabata loved: the female body. The girl is

completely anonymous and is offered for caresses and longing. After a few hours, the client will enjoy the pleasure of dreams, remembering forgotten loves and faces, thanks to drugs. This is a deep meditation on women's mystery. Eguchi concludes by thinking that they are infinite. Another aspect is that the old man feels that his virility is going away. He can scarcely bear his impotency, in a country where the phallic symbol is so very important. His loss of potency is mirrored by the girls limp body. Beauty and sadness are closely linked. Kawabata may belong to the genre of tender and feminine literature [*taoyameburi*], but as the woman is at the center of Japanese literature, even the self-styled *masuraoburi*—virile literature—is rather feminine.

This is exemplified in the works of Mishima Yukio (born Kimitaka Hiraoka, 1925–1970), a psychological and aesthetic writer. *Kamen no Kokuhaku* [*Confession of a Mask*] (1952) is the autobiography of a homosexual. It has been said that Mishima glorified erotic death. In fact, he associated eroticism and death in the precious style of the Japanese romantic school. He represents the emotional and Eros-related part of Japanese culture, as in *Yukoku* [*Patriotism*] (1961), one of his many works made into films. The integrity of the lieutenant and of his wife through death is identified with their passionate lovemaking. Mishima was influenced by Georges Bataille's theory of Eros. In *The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea*, a young widow, a sailor, and a teenager meet. Voyeuristic activity is featured on the part of the teenager, who observes the sailor nude, in a scene in which male nudity is exalted over that of the female. Discovered, the young peeping tom is disgusted by the sailor's lack of a virile reaction, and he decides to kill him. Mishima became immersed in bodybuilding and built himself a more manly body by lifting weights. He strove for a moral strength in Japanese society which he saw as having been eroded by Dazai Osamu, who succeeded at last in committing suicide with his last girlfriend. Mishima too killed himself with his male lover. He created his own right-wing army, the *Tate no Kai*, a sort of harem of young men drawn from among the Jietai (the Japanese Self-Defense Forces). He considered that Japan without an army was like a woman that could be raped by anybody, whereas an army would be a phallus for a reconstituted

man. He dreamt about the young samurai of the Tokugawa period, who hoped to restore imperial power in an erotic love for their master. Through his *seppuku*, or ritual suicide, he found union with one of his obsessions, the martyrdom of Saint Sebastian, for which he posed in a carefully staged scene. The beautiful body suddenly driven to death is a very sensitive theme, linked to the love for cherry blossoms, the symbol of the samurai.

It is easy to detect literary elements in Mishima's works: he was fascinated by Mauriac, Radiguet, and the sadism and satanism of Baudelaire. The morbidity and frailty of Mishima were disguised, contrary to Dazai Osamu, Mishima's contemporary and rival. Mishima wore a mask. Yet, *Confession of a Mask* treats clearly of sexual perversion. Mishima was drawn to Joan of Arc, whom he misconceived as a man. His perversion was connected to death through a fascination with soldiers. The picture of Saint Sebastian by Guido Reni led him to his first experience of ejaculation. Death, love, and eternity stand out from the beginning in his works. His sensual perversion and inability to love women emerge from other characteristics. The mask may be the hero himself who pretends to love women and yet is unable to do so. *Kinkakuji [The Golden Pavilion]* (1956) is the story of a satanic criminal. He adheres to beauty as an ideal aesthetic value, and therefore, he cannot attain the fullness of life, and is again unable to make love to a woman. *Shiosai [The Sound of the Waves]* (1954) finds a positive value in the perfection of physical beauty. In that short story, the main character embodies the fullness of life through an ideal of physical strength.

Among postwar writers, Kobo Abe and Oe Kenzaburô produced important works. Both of them deviate from Japanese tradition. The novels of Kobo (born in 1928) present the alienation of the individual trapped by society like an insect, beginning with *Suna no onna [The Woman in the Dunes, 1962]*. The Kafkaesque allegory depicts how a man, in a state of deprivation, takes on beast-like instincts as he metamorphosizes. The woman is associated with an animal and with sand, or nature. Teshigahara's film shows well the mineral appearance of her skin and focuses on the grain of her naked body. The insect catcher falls into the sand-hole where

she lives, and the two become sexually intimate, out of any sentimental love. The sand-hole can be associated with a vagina. Kobo Abe likes to describe how a man can be driven to a complete loss of identity. For example, the insect catcher doesn't want to go back home anymore after he knows that the woman is pregnant. In the story, Japan and Japanese society play no role, except in terms of a peculiar sensuality. The woman is for him at the same time a liberation and a destruction through sexuality. He is swallowed, and the images become repetitive, in an archaic way of life, similar to the return to the origins, the forest in the island in Oe Kenzaburô's works, like *M.T. and Other Stories of the Forest*. Born in 1935, Oe Kenzaburô received the Akutagawa prize for *Game Raising* (1966). He is representative of the youthful spirit after the war.

MARC KOBER

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# JAYA DEVA

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Twelfth-century  
Indian poet

## *Gita Govindam*

The *Gita Govindam* is a highly acclaimed poem which opens with the description of the ten *avatars* (reincarnations) of Vishnu, the god in Hindu mythology who nurtures and sustains all living beings in the world. Its author, Jaya Deva, was a dedicated devotee of Lord Jagannath, the deity of Puri in Orissa, and was also a disciple of Nimbarka, founder of the Radhavallabha sect, whose members gave hitherto unknown prominence to Radha as the loving consort of Lord Krishna. Legends claim that Padmavathi would sing with him the verses of the *Gita Govindam* at the newly built temple in Puri, and it was the only song to be sung in front of the Elder Lord (Balarama) and the younger lord (Jagannath) during their ritual bedtime worship, a practice continued to this day. The *Gita Govindam*'s fame has spread to every corner of India, inspiring great mystic saints like Chaitanya Prabhu and Bhakta Meera Bhai and a host of others all over India, and is part of the daily chant at the Rameswaram temple in the southernmost tip of India.

The *Gita Govindam* enjoys a unique position in Sanskrit literature due to the fluid cadences of its lyric sequences and a perfectly knit poetic structure, which together create a peerless combination of poetry and music. The song's cadences are based on alliteration, rhymes, and captivating words that enthrall the reader. The book features the springtime love play of Radha and Krishna, featured in various *ragas* (fully developed melodies) and strung together as richly orchestrated symphonies. The poem is divided into twelve *sargas*, or chapters, of 24 songs, including the first 2 invocatory songs in praise of Lord Vishnu's 10 avatars, titled *Dasavatara stuti*, enumerating the 10 avatars: Matsya (fish), Kurma (tortoise), Varaha (boar), Narasimha (man-lion), vamana (dwarf), parasurama

(divine), Rama (virtuous one), Balarama (Lord Krishna's brother), Buddha (Gautama Buddha), and finally, Kalki (mighty warrior). Each incarnation addressed a particular human need and the divine, benevolent response to it, which always showed unlimited compassion and infinite variations of mood, temperament, and ability, and emphasized the ultimate truth—the goal of a final communion with the divine being.

Blending devotion and mystical experience, the songs feature only three characters, Radha, Krishna, and the girlfriend-cum-messenger. An enchanting lyrical drama, the *Gita Govindam* depicts the divine lovers' inevitable estrangement and final reconciliation. The songs essentially are distributed between the three of them as their speeches, and the links of the story are provided by verses introducing each *sarga*. Using familiar rhythm and rhyming verses, Jaya Deva evokes a picturesque narration depicting the three stages of love between the divine couple: incidences of Lord Krishna's flirtation with the Gopi (cowherd) women of Brindavan, which is reported to his consort Radha by the girlfriend, followed by Krishna's penitence and Radha's rejection of him despite her inner longing. Finally, due to Krishna's entreaty and her friend's advice, Radha forgives Krishna, and thus brings about their reunion and the final consummation of their love. All human emotions associated with love—jealousy, desire, hurt, anger, separation, persuasion, and reunion—are expressed in full lyrical ebullience, and inimitably connote humans' quest for a spiritual union with God.

The open eroticism, lucid descriptions of the attractions of the female body, and graphic recital of the various aspects and details of the love play between Radha and Krishna are unique features of this poem, which evidently symbolize the final union of the individual soul [*atman*] with that of the universal [*paramatma*], achieved through total abandonment and complete surrender. The language and imagery are truly indicative of the intensity of the devotee's love in

all its multifarious moods. The true value of the poem rests in its rich devotional content and the spiritual expression it gives to the devotee's yearning for the blessings of Lord Krishna and Radha. A highly original composition, the *Gita Govindam* is a trendsetter in its use of simple Sanskrit (devoid of the classical rigor that characterizes the language of earlier poetry), new idioms, and extensive melodious rhyme, and its break from the classical mould in form and metrical formation. It also served as a precursor to later Bhakti (devotional) poetry that came to be written in Indian vernacular languages and which was characterized by the effusion of love for the godhead. The *Gita Govindam* perfected and popularized the idea of Radha as the eternal consort of Krishna. Through the depiction of their amorous love play, the *Gita Govindam* established the pivotal role of Radha, and thereafter the idols of the celestial couple were installed and worshipped at several temples in eastern India.

The verses of the *Gita Govindam* have inspired dance forms, specifically *Odissi*, in which the lyrics are set to different *ragas* and have evolved into great musical compositions, which to this day delight enthralled audiences. Jaya Deva's poetry also animates Rajput and Pahari miniature paintings, the temple architecture of Orissa, and a host of other art forms all over India.

### Biography

A native of Orissa-Bengal in the northeastern regions of India, Jaya Deva lived during the

latter half of the twelfth century CE and served as the court pundit of Sri Lakshmana Sena, the king of Bengal. Born to Bhojadeva and Bama-devi, Jaya Deva was raised in the Birbhum district of West Bengal in a village called Kendubiva Gram, and was married to a temple dancer, Padmavathi. An annual festival called Jaya Deva Mela marks the anniversary of his death, which falls on Pausha Sankranti Day and is still celebrated today at the Puri Jagannath temple.

RAVI KOKILA

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## JAYE LEWIS, MARILYN

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1960–  
American writer and anthologist

Marilyn Jaye Lewis (1960– ) is a prolific writer and editor of erotica, working in several genres from queer erotica and bondage-discipline/sadomasochism (BDSM) to heterosexual erotic

romance novels. She worked as a singer-songwriter in New York City folk clubs over a thirteen-year period in the 1980s and early '90s, meeting with minimal success. During the queer zine explosion of the early 1990s, she began writing erotic short stories with same-sex and BDSM themes. Her first published story,

“Draggin’ the Line,” a lesbian BDSM story, was published in *Bad Attitude* in 1990, and “The Urge Toward Jo,” in which two girls experiment with spanking and masturbation, was published in *Frighten the Horses* the same year. She published several stories in queer zines during the following years and later was frequently published in anthologies.

Continuing to write mostly queer-oriented fiction, she worked in 1996–97 as head writer for *Dada House*, a bisexual CD-ROM game that won Best Adult Game of 1997. Becoming interested in electronic media, she began a website, *Other Rooms*, in 1997, featuring the work of several well-known erotica writers. Following this, she produced *Marilyn’s Room*, a multimedia website, in 1998–2000. The site featured erotic stories, art, films, photography, and nonfiction, and at its peak was attracting 3–4,000 visits daily. She founded the Erotica Author’s Association, with an accompanying website, in 2002, though the group became moribund by the end of the following year. She currently has a personal website at <http://www.marilynjayelewis.com>

Lewis worked as a Web producer for the New York erotica publisher Masquerade Books, which published her first book, *Neptune and Surf*, in 1999. The book contained three erotic novellas, including the title piece, set in Coney Island, about a romantic entanglement between a prostitute and a client.

Her writing won her the Erotic Writer of the Year award in the UK in 2001; the *Mammoth Book of Erotic Photography*, which she coedited with Maxim Jakubowski, was nominated as Erotic Book of the Year in the same competition in 2002. She was also a finalist in the William Faulkner Writing Competition in 2001 and won the New Century Writer’s Award that year.

Working from time to time as an editor of anthologies, like her collaboration on *The Mammoth Book of Erotic Photography*, she also presented *The Big Book of Hot Women’s Erotica* and *That’s Amore!*, a collection of four erotic novellas to which she contributed as a writer as well. In 2003 Lewis began working in the erotic romance market, with her first three books in that genre—*When Hearts Collide*, *In the Secret Hours*, and *When the Night Stood Still*—published by Magic Carpet Books. In 2004, Alyson Publications published *Lust: Bisexual Erotica*, collecting the best of Lewis’s short stories,

many of them previously published in anthologies during the preceding ten years.

Lewis’s work always features a superb use of pacing. Writing at lengths of from 1,500 words to novels, she shows a marked ability to bring a scene up to speed with economy and focus, but also to weave a multitude of character threads into a scene to give it context and weight. Unhesitant to use the most bawdy or direct language when necessary, she gives a scene erotic tension by making it clear why an encounter matters to the characters, what they’re risking, and what they stand to gain. Lewis’s writing is also marked by a willingness to push her characters’ comfort levels. Many of her stories feature a heroine whose sex life is varied and experienced but who in the course of the story discovers an unexplored area (often anal sex, sex with another woman, or both) and embraces it. Other stories feature interplay between an innocent and more experienced, older lovers; but contrary to the reader’s expectations, the ingenue’s combination of simplicity and purity winds up confounding the more experienced characters even as they seduce her. Another striking feature of Lewis’s work is that no matter how outré the sexual acts, they are rarely depicted as horrid or filthy. Alienation and depravity are rare. Even when one of the characters is taken aback by another’s desires, the desired act invariably is an expression of love.

## Biography

Born July 22, 1960 in Columbus, Ohio; educated in Ohio public schools, graduating high school in Columbus in 1978; studied recording and audio engineering 1981–83; moved to New York City and worked as a professional singer-songwriter in folk clubs 1982–94 under her maiden name, Marilyn Jaye, and later as Marilyn Jaye Lewis.

MARK PRITCHARD

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## JELINEK, ELFRIEDE

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1946–  
Austrian author

Elfriede Jelinek's third novel, *Die Ausgesperrten* [*The Excluded*] was originally published in 1980 and started life as an audio play produced by and for German radio in 1978. In 1979 the text was also worked into a film script by the author and the director Franz Novotny, although the cinematic production was not released until 1982, with Jelinek herself in a cameo as a stern schoolteacher.

In some ways, Jelinek's novel is reminiscent, both in conception and style, of Bataille's *Story of the Eye*—and the French philosopher is intermittently (mis)quoted by the book's protagonist—yet it draws much more extensively on the meanderings of internal monologues (direct speech is the exception, which greatly reduces the relational dimension of the book's language) and is more broadly concerned with formulating a critique of sociopolitical constellations and a certain type of mass-market ideology. *Die Ausgesperrten* is also less overtly pornographic than Bataille's work (although descriptions of sexual acts are by no means absent), and its eroticism is predominantly situated in its pangaic of the intellectual and sensual pleasures of senseless violence. In its depiction of eroticism as a self-serving expression of interpersonal cruelty, emanating from deep-seated emotional and ideological discontents, the book induces a more complex and less negotiable set of effects than the erotic literature of transgression, and is more profoundly disturbing than explicit novels in the pornographic genre.

In *Die Ausgesperrten*, Jelinek draws upon an actual 1960s case of a Viennese high school student who brutally assassinated his entire family after reading the work of Albert Camus, in order to portray the hopelessness, despair, and estrangement of four youths who embark upon a project of senseless violence as a means of escaping the suffocating hypocrisy and absurdity of their social living conditions. Set in Vienna in

the late 1950s, when the promising future of the *Wirtschaftswunder* (the postwar economic “miracle”) left many people hopeful yet also alienated and in search of new securities, the novel offers an extraordinarily bleak picture of the degradation of a traditional class society. In addition, it makes the reader privy to the difficult gestation of a new Americanized culture and the self-delusional aspirations of adults and youngsters, parents and children, regardless of class and background. In this fragile network of relationships, violence is shamelessly eroticized, eroticism is selfishly instrumentalized, and cruelty is either trivialized as a pleasant pastime or glorified as a sublime aesthetic value, all in the service of pseudo-philosophical ideals of annihilation. Tragically and mercilessly, love is reciprocal only in the narcissistic fantasies of the protagonists. Outside these fantasies it is merely a deceitful commodity, which is used either as a ransom or as a pretext for the pursuit of self-aggrandizing goals.

The group of “misfits” around which Jelinek's narrative revolves is made up of the unbearably pretentious Rainer Maria Witkowski; his talented but not very attractive twin sister, Anna; the ethereal rich kid, Sophie (von) Pachofen; and the working-class hero Hans Sepp: four disenchanting adolescents representing three social classes and one personal ideal, that of transcending the meaninglessness of their existence through the paradoxical affirmation of the virtues of non-meaning. Under the supposed leadership of Rainer, the group's individuals detach themselves, each in their own way, from what they experience as the ideologically tainted norms and values of their social world. Like most adolescents, they hate their parents, despise rules and regulations, and believe themselves to be intellectually superior, above the law, and endowed with a unique critical sense. What makes them different, however, is that they express their sense of entitlement (and the emotional unease associated with it) through random acts of violence and, especially in the case of the Witkowski twins, a

progressive mental detachment from communal, “massified” life. Yet Jelinek also shows how the most self-absorbed withdrawal and the most deeply felt hatred for social conventions is hidden behind a deceitful, mendacious mask of compliance. This is especially conspicuous in the case of Rainer Witkowski, although it is difficult to gauge which of Rainer’s two faces (his private persona of solipsistic nihilism or his public appearance of materialistic indulgence) is the most truthful one.

Perhaps inevitably, the group’s antisocial pact and the specific internal dramas of each of its members are also an obstacle to the development of solid relationships within the group and to the maintenance of the group as such. Rainer is in love with Sophie, and so is Hans, yet Sophie is not interested in either of them, despite the fact that both Rainer and Hans are convinced that she is. Hans has sex with Anna, who is in love with him and who believes that the feelings are mutual, yet Hans is interested only in sex, and really only in sex with Sophie. Shockingly, Rainer has to admit that he cannot plant a bomb in the school because he cannot jeopardize his final exam, and so Sophie and Hans do what the “weak leader” is incapable of doing because of his conventional concern for his own academic future. Equally shockingly, Rainer does not take revenge on Sophie and Hans, but brutally assassinates his twin sister, his father, and his mother in a cold-blooded orgy of death and destruction, before turning himself in.

In 1990, Jelinek’s book was translated into English with the ironic title of *Wonderful, Wonderful Times*. Despite the international acclaim her work has received (culminating in the 2004 Nobel Prize in Literature), Jelinek’s literary oeuvre, and especially *Die Ausgesperrten*, remains rather understudied in the Anglo-American world. Most of the secondary literature (criticism, textual analysis, and biographical research) is in German and awaiting translation.

### Biography

Elfriede Jelinek was born on October 20 in the town of Mürzzuschlag in the Austrian province

of Styria. Her father was of Czech-Jewish origin and her mother came from a prosperous Viennese family. She studied music at the Vienna Conservatory and theatre and art history at the University of Vienna. She was, controversially, awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature in 2004.

DANY NOBUS

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# JEWISH EROTIC LITERATURE

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Judaism is a tradition built on archaeological strata of textual sources, and each of these layers reflects the interaction of Jewish culture with the cultures that surrounded it. For the Bible, the foundational text of Judaism, which was composed when ancient Israel was a small, beleaguered nation, the predominant issue connected to sexuality was fertility. The repeated stories of infertility, especially in Genesis, may well reflect the need of this small nation to ensure its survival. Thus, the priestly author of the first creation story has God utter a blessing of fertility on the first man and woman: “Be fruitful and multiply” (Genesis 1:26).

In the second creation story, human beings are created immortal, and when they acquire knowledge of sexuality, they become mortal. While later traditions, both Jewish and Christian, understood the expulsion from the Garden of Eden as a “fall from grace,” for the Bible itself it seems that the story came to explain the difference between humans and God: while human beings procreate and die, God does neither, a fundamental difference between the biblical deity and the gods of other ancient Near Eastern religions.

Erotic attraction was not considered problematic in biblical culture; the Song of Songs, in which two unwed lovers pursue each other with something close to gender equality, represents one of the greatest works of erotic literature. The sexual prohibitions in the Bible are generally to be found in the priestly laws of purity, where they may be understood as part of the priests’ preoccupation with guaranteeing fertility through proper unions. At the same time, some key narrative texts subvert these strict laws. This is particularly true of the various stories of King David’s ancestors in which strong women (Tamar and Ruth) violate the laws in order to become pregnant and ensure David’s line.

In the first centuries of the Common Era, a body of literature parallel to the Bible, the Talmud (called the Oral Law or “rabbinic law”), was formulated and set in writing by scholars

called rabbis. The attitude toward sexuality and the body in rabbinic literature can best be understood in the context of late antiquity. For Greco-Roman thinkers, such as the Stoic philosophers, the body itself posed less of a problem than did the passions, which could overpower one’s reason. The rabbis were also preoccupied with the passions, especially the sexual drive, which they called the *yetzer ha-ra* [evil impulse]. They held that the law is designed to restrain and challenge erotic passions—which might otherwise lead to evil—into constructive activities. But, like the Stoics, they generally viewed the body itself as a neutral vessel.

The rabbis held that all men must marry and father children (the law in this case is directed only toward men). Men also have an additional obligation to give sexual pleasure to their wives. At the same time, the rabbis had ambivalent feelings about male sexuality. Their position seemed to be that the sexual desires of the body are legitimate and even holy, but only if the sexual act is performed with the proper restraint. Sex must be potentially procreative, hence masturbation, for example, is labeled a capital crime, something unknown to the Bible. Nevertheless, all sexual positions are “legal,” if perhaps not desirable from a medical point of view: in discussing this issue, the Babylonian Talmud unabashedly describes different sexual practices. While the rabbis never endorsed celibacy, as did the Christian Church fathers, there is evidence that they were also attracted by scholarly abstinence. In some texts, the study of Torah (i.e., biblical and rabbinic law) is invested with eroticism, suggesting that intellectual activity might compete with the desires of the body.

In the Middle Ages, under the influence of Greek philosophy, Jewish thinkers often denigrated the body as representing the purely material. Moses Maimonides (twelfth century) denounced sexuality, condemning the sense of touch as the lowest of all human faculties. Yet, as a physician and expounder of Jewish law, Maimonides recognized the importance of the body’s

desires and tried to strike a middle ground, emphasizing moderation and self-control.

A different school of medieval thought was the mystic (often called "Kabbalah"). A thirteenth-century erotic text called the *Iggeret ha-Kodesh* [*Letter of Holiness*] criticizes Maimonides by asking how the sense of touch could be evil, since God had created the body and called it "good"? The text insists that Adam and Eve had had sexual relations in the Garden of Eden and had done so without any sinful pleasure.

However, the *Letter of Holiness* also places severe limitations on sexuality and the body. According to the mystic tradition, God consists of male and female elements which are engaged in a kind of spiritual intercourse: the thirteenth-century *Sefer ha-Zohar* [*Book of Splendor*] contains elaborate descriptions of divine eroticism. Proper human sexuality can be directed toward God by the correct thoughts, causing the male and female elements in God to unite sexually. But improper sexuality or improper thoughts cause these elements to break apart. Sex without the proper intention is "idolatry," since it causes a rupture within the divine.

This doctrine from the thirteenth century was to have tremendous implications for Jewish thought in the subsequent centuries. In the eighteenth century, a pietistic Jewish movement in Poland, called Hasidism, created a popular theology based on the earlier Kabbalah. Some Hasidic doctrines celebrated the material world and spoke of worshipping God through the material. Others, on the other hand, saw the purpose of the worship of God as emptying the material of its divinity. These latter led to a much more ascetic approach to the body, particularly in the realm of sexuality: any sexual act that involved pleasure was sinful.

The Zionist movement, starting in the late nineteenth century, attacked these attitudes. Traditional Judaism, the Zionists argued, had denigrated the body in favor of pure spirituality, and as a result, Jews had become physically weak and politically impotent. They wished to return bodily vigor to the Jews by creating what

the Zionist ideologue Max Nordau called "muscular Judaism." They also favored an erotic revolution that would liberate the Jews from the sexual constraints of both traditional Judaism and bourgeois conventions. Some of the radical communes that the Zionists established in Palestine in the early twentieth century opposed the institution of marriage. But while many suspected these communes of fostering free love, the reality was often highly ascetic, as the members were exhorted to put collective values above the satisfaction of individual desires.

Far from negating Jewish tradition, this secular nationalism reproduced the historical tensions over sexuality and the body. At times affirmed and denied, the many genres of Jewish literature never ignored the erotic: the "people of book" can never be divorced from the "people of the body."

DAVID BIALE

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# JIN PING MEI [PLUM IN THE GOLDEN VASE] AND GELIAN HUAYING [FLOWER SHADOWS BEHIND THE CURTAIN]

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Seventeenth-century Chinese erotic novel and sequel

## *Jin Ping Mei*

*Jin Ping Mei*, first published in 1618 or shortly thereafter, is the first major Chinese novel to have a cohesive narrative, to be written by a single author, and to be an original creation. It is unlike almost all earlier Chinese novels—which developed from the repertoire of professional storytellers—engaging in new modes of literary representation. *Jin Ping Mei* is acutely aware of its divergence from the established form of the vernacular novel in China, which allowed it to incorporate an almost encyclopedic range of texts and genres, such as jokes, popular songs, comic skits, and short stories, which were all made available to a wider audience than ever before because of the boom in commercial publishing. The novel is a rich historical source for those interested in daily life in Ming China, and is an entertaining story of deceit, revenge, jealousy, and retribution.

*Jin Ping Mei* [*Plum in the Golden Vase*] (also known as *The Golden Lotus*), is a milestone in the development of narrative fiction in world literature. With the possible exceptions of *The Tale of Genji* (1010) and *Don Quixote* (1615), there is no earlier work of prose fiction of comparable sophistication and depth. It is notorious in China and abroad as a work of pornography, recounting the many sexual exploits and perversions of Ximen Qing and his wives. While “Plum in the Golden Vase” is a provocative image, the sound of the title in Chinese also puns, through near homophones, with “The Glory of Entering the Vagina.” Both titles are recalled in an episode

when the male protagonist ties one of his wives to the bedposts using the wrappings of her bound feet, and then throws frozen plums into her vagina from across the room. Despite its notoriety as a work of pornography, *Jin Ping Mei* is also counted among the six great novels of the pre-modern period due to its quality, complexity, length (about 2,000 pages), and sophistication.

The novel was circulating in manuscript among a small group by 1595, and good arguments have been made for an original publication date of 1610. The characters are taken from another novel, *Shui Hu Zhuan* [*Outlaws of the Marsh*], which itself is an aggregate of many well-known tales. The action of *Jin Ping Mei* takes place between chapters 23 and 27 of *Shui Hu Zhuan*, but, as many critics have pointed out, *Jin Ping Mei* is much more sophisticated in structure, creativity, and literary innovation than its predecessor, on which it is only very superficially dependent. The narrative is tightly structured (though occasionally containing contradictions that could be textual corruptions as easily as authorial error). It certainly is the first major work of long fiction in the Chinese vernacular tradition that has the sort of unified cohesion that allows it to bear criticism under the rubric of a novel.

The plot of *Jin Ping Mei* essentially chronicles the rise and fall of Ximen Qing, a wealthy urban merchant, his household, and all but one or two of its residents. Most spectacularly, it focuses on the moral decline of Ximen Qing and the three female protagonists who lend their names to the title (Pan Jinlian, Li Pinger and Pang Chunmei). The most notorious of these, Pan Jinlian (whose name in translation serves as the title of the Clement Egerton translation, *Golden Lotus*), kills her first husband so that she may marry

into the Ximen Qing household. Ximen, along with most of his wives, has many affairs with those in and outside of his house. Additionally, Ximen Qing has accrued great wealth—not through the traditional means of gaining official employment by taking rigorous exams, but through currying favors, double-dealing, and bullying those in office. He is attended by various sycophantic friends, who advise him and try to benefit from his patronage.

The story takes a turn when Ximen meets a strange foreign monk, who is described as looking quite like a bloated male member. The Buddhist monk uncharacteristically eats meat at a banquet that Ximen has prepared for him and then offers Ximen a powerful aphrodisiac, which he keeps in a penis-shaped pill box. With each pill, Ximen is given sexual potency, but is warned never to take more than one at a time. Over the course of the novel and his many sexual exploits, it seems that the pills in the box represent Ximen's vital essence and its corresponding diminution over time. Ximen ignores traditional medical wisdom that the vital *yang* essence will safeguard his health and spends it frivolously, leaving him susceptible to harmful influences of ghosts, spirits, and the elements.

One night, coming home drunk from an evening of lovemaking with a friend's wife, Ximen thinks he sees the ghost of a man he killed. He is exhausted and is taken to bed with the help of assistants. His lascivious wife, Pan Jinlian, finding him too inebriated to maintain an erection, gives him an overdose of the monk's medicine and takes the last remaining pill for herself. After some coaxing, she straddles him, and eventually he ejaculates all of his semen, followed by blood. Ximen Qing then slips in and out of consciousness. The following day he is dizzy and his scrotum swells. His member still firm, Pan Jinlian continues to pleasure herself on it. Various physicians are unable to effect a cure, and finally his scrotum bursts, and he dies shortly after.

In *Jin Ping Mei*, most of the characters meet deaths that are also clearly retribution for their misdeeds. The house falls into disarray, the remaining members are scattered, and some of Ximen's wives remarry. Pan Jinlian is killed by the brother of her first husband, and Li Pinger bleeds to death from vaginal hemorrhaging. In the last chapter of the novel, the reader finds out that most of the characters have been redeemed from their suffering and reincarnated. Although

there is a crisis in the text that suggests two alternatives for Ximen Qing, none of the situations seem particularly odious and it does indeed seem that the characters have been redeemed through their deaths.

*Jin Ping Mei* employs themes of jealousy, mismanagement, and retribution strategically, conflating health and coin in terms of a sexual economy. Its themes and conceits are drawn largely from the corpus of fictional, medical, and sexual texts of its day. It incorporates and develops rhetoric from previous works of fiction, particularly those passages that describe the body in detail. It also appropriates older notions from medical texts warning of dangerous female sexuality. *Jin Ping Mei* is indebted to sexual manuals, and in particular what seems to be the earliest (early 16th century) and most well known piece of narrative erotica with graphic sexual depictions, *Ruyijun Zhuan* [*The Lord of Perfect Satisfaction*].

The general use of refined, lyrical language to describe sexual acts (with notable exceptions) has helped apologists defend the *Jin Ping Mei* against accusations of pornography. The most common defense is that the lascivious and selfish characters die prematurely, violating in most instances the Confucian dictum to procreate. The revelation in the last chapter of the novel, that Ximen Qing has been reincarnated as his own son, born shortly after his death, suggests that he has not yet redeemed himself but that he has a second chance to be a filial son and a good father.

Few novels that give an account of quotidian experience have been subject to such extremes of contrasting interpretation as *Jin Ping Mei*. One of the most interesting of these interpretations is that *Jin Ping Mei* was written as an act of filial piety. The 1695 text of *Jin Ping Mei* includes a preface that suggests that its author was one of the leading poets and essayists of his time, Wang Shizhen (1526–90). The story goes that Wang wrote the novel in order to avenge the death of his father, for which the evil minister Yan Song was mainly responsible. Yan Song died in 1568, but Wang set his sights on Yan's son, Yan Shifan (?–1565), who had risen in rank and was a model of corruption. While Yan was cunning and managed to escape many of the assassination plots against him directed by Wang, his fatal flaw was his penchant for licentious literature. So, Wang Shizhen set himself to writing a

novel that would be of interest to Yan. Some accounts say that he finished the 100-chapter novel in a matter of days, others say it took him three years, but when he finished, he soaked the pages in poison and hired a merchant to sell the book to Yan. Yan, falling prey to his desires, bought the book, and as he licked his finger to turn the page, over the course of the long novel, he eventually ingested enough of the poison from the pages to fall ill and die. The legend endured at least up to the time of Lu Xun, who taught it as legend in his lectures at Beijing University between 1920 and 1924. Wang's authorship of the *Jin Ping Mei* is almost certainly as fictional as the story of how he avenged his father's death, but the Confucian moral of filial revenge and retribution is embedded in the novel's prefaces and commentary and has formed an important school of criticism.

Related to the story of Wang and Yan is the interpretation that the novel is a work of social and political satire, meant to expose and dispose of corrupt officials and mock the current members of the Ming court by comparing them to their counterparts of an unsuccessful late Northern Song dynasty. Another extreme considers the work a result of Buddhist devotion and an effort to demonstrate the workings of karmic retribution and reincarnation. Defending the novel against accusations that it is solely a work of pornography has also become a well-established endeavor of *Jin Ping Mei* scholars and apologists, though it to some extent undermines the Wang Shizhen story, which relies on the novel's erotic aspects to exact revenge. A common way to defend literature against accusations of pornography is to liken the work to history, a strategy that works well with *Jin Ping Mei* because of its encyclopedic nature and its focus on the particular fortunes of characters.

Novels in premodern China were usually read in variorum-type editions, with the text of the novel surrounded by printed commentary in the margins, in between lines and at the end of chapters. They would often contain lengthy prefatory essays and appendices. Zhang Zhupo (1670–98) added an important commentary and many prefatory materials to *Jin Ping Mei* in 1695 that guided interpretation for centuries. Notably, his edition contains a preface entitled “Why *Jin Ping Mei* is Not a Work of Pornography.”

Lately, *Jin Ping Mei* criticism has considered the novel as having a complex relationship with

a society in which men interacted with women on the basis of domination, disdain, cruelty, and power. Traditional criticism is being reconsidered from standpoints of misogyny and sexual politics. Its representations of the “body” are also being reevaluated through material and medical considerations of physicality.

### *Gelian Huaying* [*Flower Shadows Behind the Curtain*]

One of the prefaces to *Jin Ping Mei*, written by “Dongwu Nongzhuke” [Pearl-Juggler of Eastern Wu], possibly a pseudonym of Feng Menglong, the famous connoisseur and purveyor of vernacular stories, argues that it is the reader's responsibility to interpret the novel correctly, “He who reads *Jin Ping Mei* and feels pity and compassion is a bodhisattva; he who feels apprehension is a noble-minded man; he who feels enjoyment is a petty man; and he who feels the desire to emulate the vices portrayed is a beast.”

Ding Yaokang wrote *Gelian Huaying* as a sequel to *Jin Ping Mei*, with seemingly the notion in mind that its readers hitherto had not clearly understood its moral of worldly retribution for indulgence, depravity, and treachery. This notion is made explicit in a preface to *Gelian Huaying* by “Xihu Diaoshi” [Angling Historian of West Lake], who argues that since *Jin Ping Mei* depicted much sumptuousness and depravity, its readers often “witnessed its descriptions without knowing its hidden meanings, saw its recklessness without knowing its restraint, and enjoyed its showing off without knowing its satire.” *Gelian Huaying* is consequently more obviously didactic than its predecessor, *Jin Ping Mei*.

Ding Yaokang (c. 1599–c. 1669) probably wrote the 64 chapter version of *Xu Jin Ping Mei* [*Sequel to Jin Ping Mei*] late in life, putting its creation sometime in the 1660s. *Gelian Huaying* is a shortened version (48 chapters) that seems to have appeared for the first time in 1880 and was attributed to the same author. The primary differences from *Xu Jin Ping Mei* are that the names of characters are changed. While in the *Xu Jin Ping Mei*, the original names of the characters are retained, the recension *Gelian Huaying* changes these names to those which thinly mask the originals. Certain place names are changed as well. There is little agreement as to why these changes were made. Lengthy

passages of historical and philosophical reflections were excised and the discussion of retribution is curtailed from the original, though it is obvious that the workings of karma to punish the wicked is the governing theme of the work.

The premise of the novel is to follow most of the main characters of *Jin Ping Mei* through their subsequent incarnations to witness all of the troubles that befall them as karmic punishment for their actions in *Jin Ping Mei*. The travails of Ximen Qing's primary wife, Wu Yueniang, who survives *Jin Ping Mei*, make up a large part of the story, followed and interspersed with reports of Ximen Qing, Pan Jinlian, and others. *Gelian Huaying* ignores the details of the characters' new names and families presented in the last chapter of *Jin Ping Mei* in favor of more explicitly undesirable circumstances. Ximen Qing is reborn as a blind boy who becomes a beggar, Li Pinger's new family is tricked into selling her into a brothel, and Pan Jinlian is reborn into a military family, loses her father when he dies in battle, and marries the man to whom she was betrothed at age six, who is now poor and paralyzed from a blow to the head.

*Gelian Huaying* states explicitly in the first few pages that the characters' early deaths have not fully atoned for their sins. An important distinction is made between retribution that happens during a lifetime and the workings of karma that follow particularly evil persons into the next. This is a fundamental difference between *Jin Ping Mei* and its sequel. While in the original, characters simply die early for their misdeeds, in *Gelian Huaying*, they must go on paying for them in a second, more miserable incarnation. There is a fairly simple reversal of fortune employed to depict the workings of karmic retribution. What was done by a character in *Jin Ping Mei* is done to him or her in *Gelian Huaying*. Those characters that were rich or lustful in a previous lifetime are denied wealth and intimacy in this one.

In addition to more explicit moral didacticism, *Gelian Huaying* presents fewer instances of sexual intercourse than does *Jin Ping Mei*, and those that it does represent are depicted using flowery, indirect language. While *Jin Ping Mei* seems to revel in some of the scenes of sexual debauchery, including lyrical descriptions of anatomy and occasional vulgar terms; the sequel seems to present sex primarily either as something for which the character will later

have to atone or as karmic punishment in the form of violence, as is the case with one of the more explicit sex scenes when Li Pinger sleeps with the coarse but wealthy man to whom she has been married. The narrative does not employ sexual metaphors of combat or economy as *Jin Ping Mei* does. The general lack of sexual interaction in *Gelian Huaying* seems misleading given the title, which implies catching fleeting glimpses of beautiful maidens hidden behind a screen, and the subsequent lust that such an image would normally produce.

Ding Yaokang relies heavily on Daoist and Buddhist texts to advise and warn his readers, while the author of *Jin Ping Mei* incorporates a wider variety of materials into the body of the novel. Ding plays the role of a preacher, claiming on the title page that his name is the "Recluse of the Purple Brilliance," and refers to himself in the novel and to his previous incarnations. Ding shows that he is a living example of the ongoing cosmic process of reincarnation, thereby lending further authority to the Daoist and Buddhist messages he is promulgating. He also seems to grant the characters ultimate escape from the wheel of karmic retribution, as most pay penance for their misdeeds and attain enlightenment.

### Biography

The author of *Jin Ping Mei* calls himself "Lanling Xiaoxiao Sheng" [The Scoffing Scholar of Lanling], which would make him probably the Confucian philosopher Xun Zi of the third century BCE. Xun Zi was appointed magistrate in Lanling and is now buried there, according to the *Shi Ji* [Records of the Grand Historian]. Although he did not refer to himself as the "scoffing scholar," an image of him as scoffing at corrupt officials is presented in Liu Xiang's (79–8 BCE) preface to Xun Zi's works, the only early biography of him other than that in the *Shi Ji*. Xun Zi's (greatly simplified) philosophy centers on the belief that human nature is evil and is redeemable only through arduous attention to reform.

See also **Hong Lou Meng; Xiuta Yeshe; Zhulin Yeshe**

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# JINGU QIGUAN [THE OIL VENDOR WHO CONQUERS THE QUEEN OF BEAUTY]

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Nineteenth-century Chinese short story

This Chinese short story in colloquial language came early to the notice of a readership curious about Chinese mores when it was translated into French and published in 1877 by the Dutch interpreter and Sinologist Gustav Schlegel (1840–1903). He appended to his translation, together with the Chinese text, an account of his visit to a Cantonese “flower boat” in 1861. It was more recently praised as being informative about brothel life by van Gulik (*Sex Life*). The Chinese text, in more than 20,000 characters, is the seventh of 40 chapters of the so-called anthology *Wonders of the Present and the Past*, completed around 1640 by an unknown compiler out of 200 short stories from a series of five 40-chapter volumes, published between 1620 and 1633, the first three by Feng Menglong (1574–1646) and the last two by Ling Mengchu (1580–1644). *The Oil Vendor Who Conquers the Queen of Beauty* is to be found in the third chapter of the third volume of Feng Menglong, but was probably penned by one of his contemporaries and friends, the unidentified “Langxian” [Libertine Immortal], perhaps enlarging an earlier tale in classical Chinese. Another story, possibly by Feng

Menglong, included in chapter 5 of *Jingu qiguan*, “The Courtesan’s Jewel Box,” offers a number of comparable features with *The Oil Vendor*, paradoxically opposing true love to venal love. “The Pearl-sewn Shirt,” likely penned by Feng Menglong, who published it as the first chapter of his first volume, had more explicit sex descriptions. It was retained in the *Jingu qiguan* as chapter 23. The most famous tale of a big-hearted courtesan in classical Chinese is attributed to Bai Xingjian (776–826), of which Dudbridge (*The Tale of Li Wa*) gives the best study, translation, and critical edition.

### The Story

The story is set some five hundred years before its publication, when the Northern Song capital, Kaifeng, fell unto the hands of barbarians (1126), sending a flow of refugees south to Hangzhou, the city which became the provisional capital of the Southern Song dynasty. The two main characters of the tale, a girl and a boy, are among them, soon to be lost and forsaken children. The girl is sold to a brothel and becomes at twelve a “Queen of Beauty.” The boy is bought by a childless old oil merchant

but is slandered by a jealous shop assistant and is forced to become an oil peddler. Now a young man, but still poor, he falls madly in love with the courtesan at first sight. Though nubile at thirteen, she had been deflowered when fifteen, and ever since has been in so great demand that a night spent with her would cost ten ounces of silver. The youth saves patiently for a year to accumulate the necessary amount, plus another six ounces of silver with which to buy the proper attire in which to be presented to her. Still the brothel “mother” has to introduce him stealthily, as the pampered girl would not have received a client of such low status. But on the appointed evening, the courtesan is so sick from overdrinking that the peddler, instead of demanding what he has paid for, soothes her with great care, wiping her vomit with his new clean clothes. She is deeply moved by the gallantry of the poor, but handsome lad. Later he saves her from a rich bully who abandons her helpless and barefoot on a river bank. Grateful, and in love, she brings to him her savings, enough to buy her out of prostitution, marry her, and turn the peddler into a wealthy merchant and landlord. The term “oil peddler” actually became then in the area a popular nickname for any considerate lover.

### The Dedicated Lovers

The plot of the story is cleverly unfolded, without any unaccountable coincidences, rather sparing in erotic explicit descriptions, as requested by the mood of sentimental pathos, for, though not promoting love without sex, the tale denounces sex without love. Never coarse or crude, it may have contributed to the birth of the sentimental short novel *Caizi jiaren xiaoshuo*, about a “talented young scholar and the beautiful learned girl,” in vogue between the mid-17th and mid-18th centuries in China. The oil peddler did not conquer the Beauty through poetry, as is usual in those codified novels, and find happiness in turning into a respected married merchant. Besides reproving social snobbery, the story gave a new currency to the theme of the big-hearted courtesan (the “whore with the heart of gold,” in Western terms), so much so that Li Yu (1611–1680) disclosed its romantic fallacy in one

of his ironic short stories (translated by Kaser as “Reine de cupidité”).

Numerous singers, storytellers, and dramatists over the centuries have reworked the story of the *Jingu qiguan* and brought it to the attention of ever-larger audiences. It has been translated or retranslated many times in Japanese, Russian, German, and other languages. The original edition of the *Jingu qiguan* is lost, but hundreds of early and later ones testify to its steady popularity.

ANDRÉ LÉVY

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## JOANOU, ALICE

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1966–  
American novelist

Alice Joanou's career in erotic writing began with her interest in extreme expression. As an artist, she wants to go where people generally do not: deep into the roiling id. Her first forays into the genre were assignments to rewrite formulaic erotica for Richard Kasak at Masquerade Books in New York. She convinced him that she could write a better novel, and the result was her debut collection of stories, *Cannibal Flower* (1991), available, as are all of Joanou's books, through Rhinoceros Publications. In those 13 stories, she adapts myth and fairy tale—Salome, Penelope, Delilah, Rapunzel—to modern themes. Like Borges, she is interested in a psychosexual rearrangement of reality.

*Tourniquet* (1992), a collection of 24 stories, opens with "A," a wicked comedy of adultery. In it, transgression is the stimulus for passion. Through a web of dream and memory, the narrator describes a single act of adulterous sex that she commits with the husband of a woman who has passed out drunk, in her wedding dress, on the kitchen floor. Next to her prostrate body the narrator makes love to the bride's husband, moving between rhapsody and exact physical description, between observation and participation in the tragicomic farce she has created. "L'Enfer" means "hell" in French, and it is also the name of a chillingly unusual nightclub in France as imagined by a female Rimbaud. In this story, the narrator is a gigolo whose mistress is married to a rich old man. Fancying that his mistress is a beautiful woman in front but a boy from behind, he proposes a gender-switching game.

*Black Tongue* (1995) is Joanou's third book of short stories, a dozen fractured narratives à la J.G. Ballard and Kathy Acker which take us to horrifying places in the imagination of lust. The first story, "Spain 28," is forensic poetry married to science fiction in which the narrator

describes her adolescent malaise, controlled by the mass media.

Joanou's first novel, *Maya 29*, was published in England in the Eros Plus series in 1995. In it she examines the erotological relationship between doctor and patient, and the transformative nature of each sexual emotion. Dr. Lazar is a psychiatrist who is visited by a schizophrenic Sheherazade named Maya. As she confesses to him, he is drawn into her nightmare, and when he meets a literary agent named William St. John, he is drawn deeper into a murderous reality. Maya is forced to work her way through 29 personas in an attempt to heal herself. *Maya 29*'s exploration of feminine madness is reminiscent of Paul Ableman's *I Hear Voices*.

*The Best of Alice Joanou* (1998) contains 17 stories taken from her three story collections. Joanou writes disturbing prose poems and longer, complex, experimental narratives in which unbridled sexuality can lead to disaster—or into an alternate universe of lust in which anything can happen and usually does. People make love in a crowded subway car ("Scylla and Charybdis") and no one notices; a famous Andy Warhol-style photographer has a most Dorian Gray-like finish after he has sucked up the souls of 20 young models.

As much a romantic as Anne Rice or Anaïs Nin, Joanou is a delicate, deadly poet of eros. Each inlaid paragraph of her exotic stories provides the reader with that combination of mystery, experiment, explicit sexuality, erotic intelligence, and lyrical emotionalism that are the ingredients of a distinctive literary voice.

### Biography

Born in Los Angeles. She attended the Los Angeles Art Center College of Design, and took an MA in sculpture at Yale in 1990. She teaches in San Francisco.

MICHAEL PERKINS

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## JONG, ERICA

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1942–

American novelist, poet, short story writer, essayist

Although not all of Erica Jong's works are erotic, the concern of all of them has been sexuality: Many of her works focus on female sexuality as a means for gauging, exploring, and developing identity as well as the interrelationship between writing and sexuality. The intermingling of sexuality and identity is a constant theme, and writing is a way of discovering it. As she herself said in 1999 of Anthony Burgess's erotic Shakespearean fantasy, "without language, Eros is dumb."

Even in her first book, *Fruits and Vegetables*, there is a celebration of the body that is both physical and intellectual. The central poem of this volume, "Arse Poetica," intertwines inspiration and intercourse, depicting the poet as female sitting upon the passive male muse, so that "penetration" can be "at its deepest." The other poems in this volume are less blatantly sexual, but are imbued with the spirit of this seduced muse. Thus a Chaucer class in "The Teacher" becomes the arena for erotic attention concentrated on the instructor, who is "naked before them" and is eventually devoured by the students. The final line instructs the reader to relate to literature in the same way: "Eat this poem." *Fruits and Vegetables* was followed by *Half-Lives* in 1973. The poems in this book already betray Jong's sensitivity to the virulent criticism of her erotic/literary propensities. "Beware of the man who denounces women writers," she writes as warning 3 in "Seventeen Warnings in Search of a Feminist Poem," "his penis is tiny & cannot spell." But despite the public reactions that might have made another writer fall silent or hide, many of these poems develop the open erotic vulnerability of her previous work. "Touch," for example, exposes the secrets of "the house of the body," and "Gardener" focuses entirely on the womb, its processes and demands. Jong combines the characteristically American "confessional" mode of Theodore Roethke, Anne Sexton, Robert

Lowell, and Sylvia Plath with the openly erotic search for self. Like her friend Sexton, she writes about sex, but unlike Sexton, she uses sex metaphorically as well as graphically and as a means to communication. More significantly, she is different from the "confessional" poets in her embrace of life. As John Ditsky notes, Jong is "a Sexton determined to survive." Sexuality for Jong is not an escape from confrontation but the confrontation itself, and the graphic descriptions in her verse are means to this confrontation. Her poems have garnered awards from *Poetry* magazine (Chicago), the Poetry Society of America, and the Borestone Mountain Poetry Anthology, and were praised by Louis Untermeyer as "sly but penetrating, witty but passionate, bawdy and beautiful."

But it was her groundbreaking first novel, *Fear of Flying*, which pushed her name, as well as the entire concept of open and active female sexuality, into the limelight. In *Fear of Flying*, Jong quotes a prominent work of 1967, *The Normal Woman*, as summing up sex in "three P's: procreation, pleasure, and pride." Pleasure, however, is considered superfluous, "the prize in the cereal box." It is this assumption, so basic to American society of the time, that Jong's entire novel is aimed at disproving, and it for this reason that Henry Miller hailed *Fear of Flying* as "a female *Tropic of Cancer*." "This book will make literary history," said Miller in the *New York Times*, "because of it women are going to find their own voice and give us great sagas of sex, life, joy, and adventure." His words proved right.

Isadora Wing—young, bookish, beautiful, Jewish, and frustrated—goes to a convention in Vienna with her conventional psychiatrist husband and meets a Laingian psychiatrist, Adrian Goodlove. Seeking in Adrian and in the Laing alternative alleviation for the frustration of women's role, she embarks on a passionate but unsatisfying relationship. Her fantasies may be of sex for its own sake, but her experiences are different. Despite the fact that Isadora's

term, “zipless fuck,” is associated with this book, her desires are far more extensive and all-encompassing than the term has come to mean. Isadora’s husband, Bennett, though silent and boring and antithetical to the colorful Adrian, is the better lover. Although *Fear of Flying* traces Isadora’s every sexual encounter from the age of fourteen, the conclusion of the book has her disappointed with Adrian and trying to transcend the need for relationships as the means to self-fulfillment. “People don’t complete us. We complete ourselves.” This is an answer to Freudian theories of psychiatry which stress the adjustment of women to their supplementary roles and incomplete anatomy, as well as a response to the marginalization of female sexuality and fulfillment in the popular contemporary depiction of the “normal woman.”

Although the positive reception was not unmitigated, and critics like Alfred Kazin and Paul Theroux found the book “vulgar,” *Fear of Flying* was greatly praised by numerous writers, such as John Updike, who compared the novel to Chaucer and *Catcher in the Rye*. *Fear of Flying* catapulted Jong to international fame and became one of the top ten best-selling novels of the 1970s, selling more than 12.5 million copies worldwide, 6.5 million in the United States. It has been translated into 15 languages and was reissued in 1997.

The affirmative Whitmanesque poem which begins *Loveroot* (1975) and inspired the title of the book opens with “I, Erica Jong,” having endured “three decades of pain ... declare myself now for joy.” The poems of this collection explore this search for joy, its pitfalls, and the possibilities of success. Identifying the coldness of men as danger and torture in the section entitled, “In the Penile Colony,” “Sexual Soup” presents a man whose illness is defined by his lusts “for nothing,” and is therefore destructive to the giving woman. She will be destroyed by masochistic relationships as many female icons have been destroyed. In the next poem, “Sylvia Plath Is Alive in Argentina,” Sylvia Plath, Norma Jean, and Zelda Sayre are “done in” by men. Yet the final poem, dedicated to Anne Sexton, “Eating Death,” reaffirms the salvation of erotic love.

Selected by Anthony Burgess as one of the 100 best novels since 1939, *How to Save Your Own Life* (1975) develops the idea of the author as character, as self, as object and subject. Isadora

Wing, heroine of Jong’s previous novel, is now herself the author of an semi-autobiographical erotic best seller, *Candida Confesses*, and bears the freedom fame has bestowed upon her as well as the self-consciousness and responsibility inherent in the role of representative woman she has acquired. Isadora, Jong’s own creation, examines the ways in which Candida Wong (Isadora’s creation) is similar to and different from Isadora herself, just as Jong in her life examined in interviews her own biographical comparisons to Isadora. The point of this post-modern analysis is the ancient one of developing self knowledge, just as the books to come featuring Isadora will present the protagonist as a representative woman in a stage of contemporary development. As “representative” heroine, Isadora must of necessity experiment with as many options as possible, even if they appear strained and artificial to her as she experiences them. Jong repeatedly notes in interviews that her novel is satirical and is not therefore limited by facts. Yet many critics judge her works in general by “realistic,” pop-culture novelistic standards, not satirical and picaresque ones.

The structure of this novel is clearly picaresque and leads to an affirmative conclusion. Isadora leaves her husband, goes to Hollywood, widens her sexual repertoire, and experiences some of the devastations undergone by her friend Jeannie Morton (Anne Sexton). But while Morton commits suicide, Isadora chooses love as a positive alternative, and the novel ends in violent passion.

The poetry books that alternate with her novels are often conclusions drawn from the previous novel and direct expressions of stages the next novel will illustrate. In *At the Edge of the Body* (1979), Jong describes poetry as a Zen experiment beginning with “Letting the mind go, / letting the pen, the breath” (“Zen & the Art of Poetry”). This book deals with matured sexuality. “Flesh is merely a lesson. / We learn it / & pass it on,” she notes in “The Buddha in the Womb.” As Benjamin Franklin V notes, “She has repeatedly stated her openness to all experience, and once she accepts life’s totality, as she does explicitly in *Loveroot*, then death becomes a topic she has to address.” Experience, release, sense of self, and the future: these are the topics of her next “confessional” work. In “Without Parachutes,” she even invokes this next direction: “Send parachutes & kisses! /Send them

quick! / I am descending into the cave / of my own fear.”

Transcending the cave of her fear in her next work, however, Jong works with a very different direction and perspective. *Fanny, Being the True History of the Adventures of Fanny Hackabout-Jones* (1980) is a, feminist, mock-eighteenth-century novel of a woman seeking independence and erotic fulfillment, and a revisionist view of John Cleland's *Fanny Hill*. As a thinking, feral, female Tom Jones, Fanny does not stumble once and fall forever like traditional women in the English novel, but develops from virgin to whore to mother to writer. By reconceptualizing women characters of the past, Jong creates new potential for women characters in the present. By rewriting the stereotype of the pornographic heroine as masochistic victim, Jong has opened the way for the vast potential for female erotica.

In her preface to her next book of poems, *Ordinary Miracles* (1983), Jong notes the interrelationship between her poetry and prose, that the poetry foreshadows the novels and that “my poems and my novels have always been very much of a piece.” This is a significant indication of how to read her work as a chronological whole. In “Poem for Molly's Fortieth Birthday,” Jong reveals her role as provider of previously hidden information for the next generation to learn from: the author not as role model but as source material. Her next novel, *Parachutes and Kisses* (1984), embodies this concept of source material about being forty rather than the woman as role model. It returns to Isadora Wing, now a maturing libidinous heroine, re-experiencing and reevaluating erotica and placing its function differently in existence. Her numerous erotic encounters (with, among others, a real estate developer, a rabbi, an antiques dealer, a plastic surgeon, and a medical student) are attempts to seek love within the context of her identity, and not confirmation of her identity.

Although it might appear that *Shylock's Daughter* (1987) is the antithesis of *Ordinary Miracles*, with its escape into the past and the romanticism of Venice, this novel actually humanizes and domesticates the Jewish ghetto of the Renaissance as well as Shakespeare's own gigantic character. Jessica Pruitt, a middle-aged actress, returns to the past in Venice to become the dark lady of Shakespeare's sonnets and come to terms with her mother's death, her own middle age, and her need for direction. In *Any Woman's*

*Blues* (1990), however, maturity is far more complex and less easily achieved. The middle-aged Leila Sand, an artist, is an obsessed self-termed sexaholic. Her downward spiral into alcoholism, sexual dissoluteness, and drugs recalls the blues songs of Billie Holiday, but her analytic maturing vision enables her to eventually take back control of her life. Sexual obsession in older women is common, unique in its manifestations, and very rarely discussed. *Any Woman's Blues* opens the discussion.

The poems in *Becoming Light* (1991) concern the development of sexuality in the light of maturing wisdom. It is this that makes the combination of selected and new poems unique—they integrate the erotic vision of the earlier work into the present mellow vision. The opening poem, “Lullaby for a Dybbuk,” has the dybbuk “tweak my clit, / hoping that my sexaholic self / will surface / and take, me back, back, back / to the land of fuck,” and her response is to love the dybbuk into submission, including the past turbulence in her present, rather than rejecting or forgetting it.

In recent years Jong's range and control of the subject of sexuality has increased, and her analytic skills have become focused upon explaining erotica in literature and society as well as telling good stories about herself. In *Fear of Fifty* (1994) she talks candidly about her own passionate experiences, successes, and failures, revealing her weaknesses as well as her strengths. She continues dialogues with writers who were influenced by her, such as Susie Bright, in subjects that have become popular as a result of *Fear of Flying*, such as female fantasies. She also continues dialogues with those who influenced her, even her mother. If *Fear of Flying* was intended to help herself and others overcome their flying fears, *Fear of Fifty* intends to prove that there is life in middle age—a growing, sexual, and exciting life—and the individual does not cease to grow and desire. This is also a major function of her long look at Henry Miller in *The Devil at Large* (1994). A friend, teacher, and inspiration, Miller's influence on Jong continues here in essays, stories, and an imaginary dialogue.

The novel *Inventing Memory* (1997) continues the broader reach and the attempt at a greater scope of the same subject. Three generations of women are depicted—in their continuity, rebellion against continuity, and interrelationship. At least two of the essays in *What Do Women*

*Want? Power, Sex, Bread & Roses* (1999) deal with the subjects introduced in previous work. Questions of the mother–daughter dialectic and its influence on feminism, sexuality, and backlash relate back to *Inventing Memory*, and an essay on Henry Miller develops the subject of pornography and creativity. But her scope continues to expand. It is the nation’s sexuality that interests her here: the significance of the Clinton marriage in “The President’s Penis,” the puritanical reception of the film of Nabokov’s *Lolita*, the reception of Viagra. Jong’s future work includes a book about the quintessential erotic poet, Sappho. Clearly she has more to say on this subject.

### Biography

Born March 26 in New York City to Seymour and Eda (Mirsky) Mann, Erica graduated from Barnard College in 1963, completed an MA at Columbia University in 1965, and, turning her back on doctoral studies, continued postgraduate study at the Columbia School of Fine Arts, 1969–70. Married Michael Werthman, 1963 (divorced, 1965); married Allan Jong, 1966 (divorced, 1975); married Jonathan Fast, 1977 (divorced, 1983); married Ken Burrows, 1989; children: Molly Miranda Jong-Fast. English faculty, City College of the City University of New York, 1964–65 and 1969–70; faculty, University of Maryland, Overseas Division, Heidelberg, Germany, 1966–69; instructor in English, Manhattan Community College, 1969–70; instructor in poetry, YM/YWCA Poetry Center, New York City, 1971–73; instructor, Bread Loaf Writers Conference, 1981, and Salzburg Seminar, 1993. Judge in fiction, National Book Award, 1995. Member, New York State Council on the Arts, 1972–74. Awards include: American Academy of Poets Award, 1963; New York State Council on the Arts grant, 1971; Borestone Mountain Award in poetry, 1971; Bess Hokin prize, *Poetry* magazine, 1971; Madeline Sadin Award, *New York Quarterly*, 1972; Alice Faye di Castagnolia Award, Poetry Society of America, 1972; Creative Artists Public Service (CAPS) award, 1973, for *Half-Lives*; National Endowment for the Arts fellowship, 1973–74; Premio International Sigmund Freud, 1979; and United Nations Award of Excellence.

KAREN ALKALAY-GUT

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## JOUHANDEAU, MARCEL

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1888–1979  
French writer

### *Écrits secrets*

The first volume of this trilogy, *Le voyage secret*, chronicles a journey the author made away from his wife, Élise, in the company of a group of men, designated by capital letters only, including particularly H and X. In a series of dense, poetic meditations the author reflects on the emotional and moral implications of living his obsessive passion for X: how can or should such a fascination be realized and how could X—and others in their entourage—be expected, if they knew, to react to it? Given that the very intensity of his passion depends on a taboo which prevents its resolution or reciprocation, he returns home both relieved and reenergized.

The second volume, *Carnets de Don Juan*, contains analytical or anecdotal reflections on the body—its pleasures, its affects, and its expressiveness—and a lyrical hymn to an irresistible love of men which combines mysticism and eroticism, the abject and the sublime. Then follow the author's fraught, impassioned encounters with a series of youths: Raoul, a gauche

literary admirer; the elusive, imperious Jean-Pierre; the potentially dangerous Albert; the well-proportioned, golden-haired, and uninhibited Louis, who, according to the ever-watchful Élise, plays that season's Giton to Marcel's Socrates. However brief or seemingly reprehensible Marcel's relationships, he remains, however, an unregretful and unapologetic Don Juan. In final sections, he claims to endow himself, his partners, and their pleasures with the respect and the nobility their beauty deserves. As before, the abject plays host to the sublime.

The third volume, *Tirésias*, is a paean to the bathhouse boys who, in their twenties, gave Marcel, around sixty, his greatest joys, initiating him magisterially into the pleasures of sodomy (hence the sexual ambivalence of the Tirésias of the title) and developing a sense of mutual respect and friendship. Although Richard, Philippe, "The Dwarf," and Pierre are in a sense interchangeable, this very interchangeability strengthens their semi-mystical animal appeal: cumulatively they represent not just men but "Man." Each boy is an unself-conscious sexual athlete, with his own physique and personality, and together they transform the author's sexual, moral, and emotional life. He remains unrepentant—and free from disease. If the reappearances



of one of the boys disconcertingly near his home means that the boy is the Devil, then he is a Devil whose fascination warrants the threat of exposure, in the same way that the pleasure of sodomy repays the initial pain of penetration.

### *Chronique d'une passion*

Very different in tone and focus, this work charts Marcel's passion for J.St. (Jacques), a man some twenty years his junior whom he sees regularly over a period of time and who, as it happens, has painted a portrait of him before they met: the *Prélat*. Although clearly physical, this relationship is more important for the all-consuming and thus, in a sense, purifying effect it has on Marcel and for its devastating impact on his wife, Élise, who destroys the painting and vows to murder the lover. She eventually changes her mind when she realizes this may play into the couple's hands, but, in return for her restraint, Marcel promises never to see J.St. again. The passion that hitherto had superseded the divine finally seems to present an image of Hell.

### *De l'abjection*

Like *Chronique*, *De l'abjection* is a heady mixture of the ecstatic and the detached, the sacred and the profane, the visionary and the documentary, the pure and the erotic. The author alternates between aphoristic explorations of his inner world and emotive accounts of his early sexual experiences which eventually reveal his "different" sexuality whose association with evil gives it—and him—both excitement and insight: his vice and his virtue is Man. After further lyrical evocations of a naked male lover, the book closes with an apologia of the poignancy and the nobility of abjection.

### *Bréviaire; Portrait de Don Juan; Amours*

In the first of these short texts, *Bréviaire*, Jouhandeau's "Je ne regrette rien," the elderly author recalls the joys of his meetings with the anonymous but appreciative men of Mme Made's *maison close*: if homosexuality is an ethic and an art, desire for men and virtuoso sex are the mainsprings of his life. The second, *Portrait de Don Juan et son esprit retrouvé chez un homosexuel*, chronicles the variety of homoerotic

pleasures available to the author who, as *flâneur-voyeur*, savors chance sightings of men in the streets or who, as solitary dream-lover, recaptures the beauty of partners such as "The Swimmer" and Jean-Pierre. A third text, *Amours*, contains letter-poems for men, whose charisma not only defies both reality and imagination but exceeds any distinction between reality and imagination, presence and absence. Marcel's erotic experiences have an almost mystical, magical force, taking his life to its uttermost limits and placing him on a par with the angels.

### Biography

Jouhandeau was a prolific novelist, essayist, and diarist. The writings he acknowledged include novels set in the fictional town of "Chaminadour," portraying Monsieur Godeau and the Pincengrain family (1936–1941), and an account of his turbulent marriage to Élise in *Chroniques maritales* (1935 and 1938). Unsigned writings include *De l'abjection* and the three texts of *Écrits secrets*.

OWEN HEATHCOTE

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## JOUISSANCE

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The idea of orgasm as heightened pleasure during sexual intercourse was prevalent even in classical cultures. For example, in his account of human reproduction, the second-century anatomist and medical scholar Galen described how the act of conception was accompanied by “a great pleasure.” Aristotle too noted that the processes of procreation were “usually accompanied by pleasure in man and woman alike.” Although these descriptions might be recognizable to us as depicting orgasms, the medical theory behind these sensations differed strongly from our understanding of orgasm today. The nature and function of orgasm produced divergent and sometimes opposing views in the classical period; but broadly speaking, orgasm was considered to be the culmination of bodily (specifically genital) heating, during which substances were emitted by both partners. These substances (and thus orgasm itself) were deemed necessary for procreation, a view which endured until the end of the eighteenth century. Thomas Laqueur has attributed the popularity of this understanding of orgasm to the predominance of the “one-sex body”: the view that the female body was an inverted (and imperfect) “copy” of its male counterpart.

Even though the physical manifestations of orgasm were widely documented even by classical authors, it would be centuries before this phenomenon became as well defined linguistically in the English language. Indeed, it was not until the early nineteenth century that the term *orgasm* shifted its sense from its seventeenth-century meaning of “violent excitement” and became widely used to describe sexual pleasure. Although the exact cause of this change is not known, the French language is the most likely influence: the word *orgasme* had been used in French to describe sexual pleasure since 1777. The necessity to express the concept of orgasm at all may have been provoked by the political, social, and intellectual revolutions which took place in France during the eighteenth century. In addition to the growing strength of feminist

calls for sexual equality which sought to overturn ideas of a hierarchy of the sexes, an increasing amount of medical evidence demonstrated that female orgasm was not necessary for procreation, as had been believed since antiquity. This separation of sexual pleasure and procreation opened up a range of possibilities of sexual behavior which required definition in language. It is important to note that irrespective of this discovery, conception and female orgasm continued to be linked until the beginning of the twentieth century. Indeed, the nineteenth century did not see great advances in the understanding of female orgasm partly because researchers tended to overlook the idea of female sexual pleasure.

Studies on sexual behavior published in the twentieth century have ensured that orgasm has been transformed into one of the most discussed aspects of human sexuality. At the dawn of the twentieth century, Freud threw out the conventional wisdom of female sexuality by privileging the vaginal orgasm as the norm amongst adult women, an aspect of female sexuality which had hitherto been ignored in favor of the clitoral orgasm. Freud’s work would have a lasting influence on attitudes to sex and would serve to obscure the predominance of the clitoral orgasm until its “rediscovery” by feminists in the latter half of the century. Kinsey’s studies on male sexuality (1948) and female sexuality (1953) shocked America by laying bare previously hidden aspects of sexual experience, including graphic descriptions of the physiology of male and female orgasms. Some conservative social commentators hold Kinsey responsible for initiating the so-called sexual revolution. This period of comparative sexual liberation which began in the 1960s and 1970s was facilitated by changes in the laws concerning homosexuality and abortion, as well as the advent of more reliable forms of birth control. These events widened still further the contexts in which orgasms were described and discussed and it is in this period that the first use of the verb *to orgasm* was

recorded. It is important to recognize, however, that not all studies of sexuality have placed orgasm at the center of their focus. Shere Hite adopted a different methodology in her study of the family (1994), described by the author as “a combination of sociology, psychology, and cultural history, together with innovations relating to feminist methodology.” The breadth of experiences represented in the report implicitly challenged the presumed centrality of orgasm in human sexual behavior.

The French language adopted a term denoting pleasure in general and sexual pleasure in particular, much earlier than did English. The term *jouissance* and its associated verb *jouir* derive from the classical Latin *gaudere* (to please), which became *gaudire* in the Vulgar Latin used in Gaul. Initially spelled *goïr*, then *joïr*, the word *jouyr* was recorded from the thirteenth century. Its initial primary sense was “to take pleasure in,” with its secondary (legal) meaning being “to enjoy” (as in possess). Its connotation as a noun describing sexual pleasure was present from its earliest uses. Evidence of its sexual connotation from these times can be found in the sixteenth-century works of François Rabelais, who uses the phrase “jouir de leurs amours” to connote lovemaking. However, it is unlikely that all such occurrences of *jouissance* connoted sexual orgasm in the sense that it is understood today. It is not until the modern period that this became its predominant sense, to the point where the erotic values of *jouissance* have almost excluded its use in nonsexual contexts. The word *jouissance* is rarely encountered in current usage, as the French language adopted *orgasme* as a synonym in the late eighteenth century, as has already been mentioned. Today *jouissance* is

also a term used in psychoanalysis to connote an extreme pleasure indistinguishable from pain, gained from obtaining an object or condition which has been strongly desired. First used by Jacques Lacan, it has become a key concept in contemporary French feminist thought, where it has been particularly important in the work of Julia Kristeva and Hélène Cixous. Here it represents a feminine pleasure distinct from pleasure in general.

POLLIE BROMILOW

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# JOYCE, JAMES

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1882–1941

Irish fiction writer, dramatist, and poet

## *Ulysses*

Along with D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and the works of Henry Miller, Joyce's *Ulysses* is probably the most famous example of a 20th-century work that vividly illuminated the conflict between the wish to honor literary value on the one hand and the wish to censor erotic or obscene writing on the other. The entire novel of 600-odd pages takes place on a single day, June 16, 1904, in Dublin. It follows the lives of Stephen Dedalus, the protagonist of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, a while after the close of that book, and of Leopold Bloom, a Jewish advertising canvasser, and his wife Molly. Where Stephen is a brilliant intellectual obsessed by guilt for having left the religion of his dead mother, Bloom is a middle-aged father of a son who died shortly after his birth; he and his wife have not had "normal sexual relations in over ten years." On this day, Molly has an assignation with "Blazes" Boylan, and Bloom is staying away from home so as not to interfere.

Although the US Attorney's Office marked as obscene some 250 passages from the novel in preparation for the 1933 trial before Judge John M. Woolsey, the government's main objections were to two scenes: one where Bloom, watching one Gerty MacDowell leaning back at the seashore and exposing her "drawers," masturbates, and a group of passages from Molly Bloom's final soliloquy as she lies in bed thinking about her experience with Boylan and reviewing her life as a girl and as Bloom's wife. But neither of these passages in fact is very satisfactory as pornography. The first has a very strong comic element—Bloom's climax is only implied by a description of the fireworks bursting over the nearby fair—while in Molly's reminiscences there is no real continuous narrative, so that at times it is difficult even to tell which man she is thinking about.

On the other hand, she is, even by contemporary standards, strikingly frank in her thoughts about sexuality and very direct in her language. Indeed, passages from the soliloquy, such as the closing "yes I said yes I will Yes" have entered popular consciousness as an emblem of erotic affirmation. Nevertheless, Judge Woolsey's decision, recognizing the literary value of the book, pronounced that while in many places the effect of *Ulysses* on the reader "is somewhat emetic, nowhere does it tend to be an aphrodisiac."

## Biography

Born in 1882 in Dublin, Joyce was raised a Roman Catholic; his adolescent rebellion against that faith is a major theme of his first novel, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916). An important factor in his apostasy was his early sexual experience with prostitutes. After graduating from University College Dublin with a BA degree, he met Nora Barnacle, a hotel chambermaid from Galway with whom he was to spend the rest of his life. In 1904 the two left Ireland for Trieste without benefit of marriage, because of Joyce's refusal to acknowledge the church or state's involvement in the most intimate of relationships. Although they returned for brief visits, neither would live in Ireland again, instead making their home in Trieste, Rome, Zurich (during both world wars), and Paris. But despite his self-imposed exile, all of Joyce's fiction remained set in his native Dublin. Since 1904 Joyce had been working on a series of stories which he collected in 1909 under the title *Dubliners*, but the publisher who had originally accepted them changed his mind and Joyce was unable to publish the collection until 1914. This first, frustrating experience of censorship had less to do with any explicit erotic content of the stories than with Joyce's naturalistic use of existing Dublin locations and businesses. His subject matter is also at times debased, including the portrayal of a man whose pederastic tastes are clearly implied and a woman who tacitly

## JOYCE, JAMES

encourages her daughter to become sexually involved with a man so that she can blackmail him into marrying the girl.

Meanwhile, Joyce had been working on a semi-autobiographical novel that Ezra Pound arranged to appear serially in *The Egoist* magazine. It was published in New York in 1916 as *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. Although he had no censorship problems with this book, some critics found aspects of it shocking—one complained that on the very first page Joyce outraged decency with a reference to a child wetting the bed. Although it is clear that the protagonist Stephen Dedalus patronizes prostitutes, only one encounter is narrated within the book, and with such lyrical and metaphorical density that it is difficult to tell what is happening. Still, the boy's intense emotional experience of the erotic impulse is rendered with unprecedented vividness.

Although *Portrait* is now acknowledged as one of the most important novels of the century, Joyce's reputation was really made by his masterpiece, *Ulysses*, written roughly between 1914 and 1922 in Trieste, Zurich, and Paris and supported by grants from Harriet Shaw Weaver. Starting in 1918, the book was serialized in *The Egoist* and *The Little Review*, and in 1920 the latter magazine was enjoined from publishing further installments of the work on a complaint by the Society for the Prevention of Vice that it was pornographic. The book was published in Paris by the bookstore Shakespeare and Company in 1922 but could not be sold in the United States until Joyce's representatives won the landmark court case in 1934.

Immediately following the furor that greeted the publication of *Ulysses*, Joyce began work on his last book, which was identified only as "work in progress" up until its publication as *Finnegans Wake*. Written in a dense, experimental, and obscure prose that combined elements

of many languages besides English, it features characters whose names and identities might change from one sentence to the next and whose "stories" shifted equally often. In the near-total absence of what Joyce called "go-ahead plot," the *Wake* presents a dreamlike world in which everything is subject to change, and a majority of the words are puns of some sort. Thus, although it is likely that passages of the book might well have offended the sensibilities of the same authorities who wished to deny publication to *Ulysses*—passages hinting at an incestuous passion of the protagonist for his daughter, for instance, or those discussing the "depravity" of the artist figure Shem—the *Wake* was immune to prosecution because of its very obscurity. When he died suddenly in 1941, Joyce left a legacy of work whose difficulty, as he himself noted, would keep generations of scholars busy.

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# JUNNOSUKE YOSHIYUKI

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1924–1994

Japanese writer

Like Henry Miller, some of whose texts he translated, Junnosuke Yoshiyuki is attracted by the red-light districts, the world of prostitution, and the nightclubs where women can easily be met. He describes erotic relations very precisely, between a feeling of loneliness and the urge of desire. His writing traces its influence back to the *Shi-shosetsu* tradition. The cycle of stories *Fui no Dekigoto* [*Are the Trees Green?*]<sup>1</sup>—written in a style known as *rensaku*, which links themes and characters of stories but allows the book to be more flexible than a novel—reflects well the art of this writer. In *Yûgure made* [*Toward Dusk*] (1978), a middle-aged man yearns obsessively for emotional rather than physical virginity in his mistress. *Anshitsu* [*The Dark Room*], *Shûu* [*Sudden Shower*], and *Genshoku no machi* [*The Main Colors Town*], develop the theme of physical relationships as a quest for emotional purity. A peculiar bond appears when the narrator associates with prostitutes, because this kind of relationship remains uncluttered by egotism or heavy demands. The ideal relationship for this writer is one in which tenderness develops within an exclusive and sensual link, far away from any kind of social censorship. As a matter of fact, the male characters are either unmarried or separated from their wives, and they do not expect any kind of recognition through a professional career. The writer Nakata in *Anshitsu* has no professional obligations and is able to focus entirely on different kinds of sensual and erotic relationships. According to this writer, and maybe as a personal experience and idiosyncrasy, the essence of love is mainly sensual. As a consequence, far away from sentimental and social lies, it is the body that remains at the center of the human experiences described in the narratives.

However, he is not interested at all in describing sexual intercourse or fantasies (apart from lesbian relations). The casual relation with a prostitute is intended as an experimental method to improve his understanding of what love really

is, and a way to get more knowledge about the women he meets. Through sexual relations an emotional sensitivity increases, and the narrator comes to feel very deeply a few sensations related to sexual intercourse, or to the vision of a naked woman's body. These sensations may mean nothing more than the perfect achievement of the sensual relation: a blend of physical sensations where mere sexual pleasure is overwhelmed by the symptoms of it. The consequences of pleasure, or the side effects, become more important and tend to be analyzed like an enigma, the full distinctiveness of the individual experience inside the very universal frame of sexual intercourse. Then, sensual desire and pleasure are only the first steps in a wider quest for pure physical love, and a basic experiment in order to find the very truth of bodies and hearts. It is a quest for wisdom and knowledge, though not at all written in an abstract or intellectual way. On the contrary, the knowledge comes from the physical experience.

For example, in *Are the Trees Green?*, the main character, Iki Ichirou, realizes that he is in love with his student, Asako. A common theme is the double identity of the woman, as Asako is a barmaid and behaves like a prostitute toward clients. Her makeup is just like a painted mask to hide her true self. Iki wants to decipher her face's enigma and true identity. Sometimes, Yoshiyuki Junnosuke tries to understand the truth about the role of a client and lover in relation to a prostitute, and his importance for her. This is the case in *Fui no Dekigoto*, where a triangular relationship between Yukiko; Masuda, a weak Yakuza; and the narrator is described. One day, he smells on Yukiko's body a mix of emotion, makeup, and sweat. The smell expresses the inside being of Yukiko, though he seeks and finds an external cause. He can also read a vertical wrinkle between her eyes as a sign of climax, as if she were suffering. These side effects arouse his desire and remind him of other signs seen on women's bodies, such as a green and vivid line on a prostitute showing the

lips of her sex. The narrator splits his life between an underpaid career in journalism and the solace he seeks in the evenings spent in contemplation of women. Yukiko's body fragrance disappears as well as the pleasure wrinkle when she moves in with Masuda. The narrator understands through physical experience the strength of his pleasure and its limitations.

*Anshitsu* is a good example of how Yoshiyuki tends toward an absolute of sexual relation in the unique space of a bedroom. A famous writer, Nakata, meets Natsue, who has dark sides and other lovers. He himself has several relations at the same time, and yet ends up having relations with Natsue alone, in search of absolute sexuality in the dark room. As a result of that quest, a rose blossom replaces the female sexual organ, and the two lovers are linked by an invisible golden thread.

The style of Yoshiyuki is nearly clinical, and in all his works, he alternates realistic description of Japanese characters and places with very unusual and magical details, such as the meaningful blossom of flowers, or external phenomena. It is altogether the expression of a singular experience, a quest for pure pleasure and a profound analysis of prostitution, homosexuality, and marriage.

### Biography

Born in Okayama, but raised in Tokyo, Yoshiyuki was exempted from military service because of ill health and was plagued most of his life by respiratory problems. He studied English literature at Tokyo University for a time but, unable to finance his studies, opted for a career in journalism. His father, Yoshiyuki Eisuke, was one of the main writers of the modernist school influenced by Dadaism at the beginning of the Showa era. Yoshiyuki Junnosuke received the Akutagawa award in 1954 for *Shûu*. The author

has won awards and recognition for such works as *Hoshi to tsuki wa ten no ana* [*The Moon and Stars Are Holes in the Sky*], (1966), *Anshitsu* (Tanizaki Prize, 1969), and *Yûgure made* (Noma Award, 1978). He belongs to a line of sensual writers, from Ihara Saikaku to Nagai Kafû and Tanizaki, and was often compared to the French writer André Pieyre de Mandiargues.

MARC KOBER

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## KALYANA MALLA

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Indian author of *Ananga Ranga*, medieval marital sex manual

The *Ananga Ranga* by Kalyana Malla is one of the three major Indian erotic texts, the other two being *Kamasutra* by Vatsyayana and *Ratirahasya* by Kokkaka. Liberally translated, *Ananga Ranga* means the art of love. In fact, the first English translation of the work by Sir Richard F. Burton and F.F. Arbuthnot published in 1885 was appropriately titled *The Hindu Art of Love*. It is written in Sanskrit, the classical language of India. The work is available in translation in many Indian languages. It was also translated into Arabic, Persian, and Turkish under the title ‘*Lizzat-al-Nissa*’ [*The Pleasure of Women*] before it was translated into English, which points to its popularity not only in the Indian subcontinent but also in other Eastern countries. It has also been translated into Japanese and French.

The period of the author and the date of the text are not known. The author Kalyana Malla describes himself in the text as a poet of repute. By reference to *Kavi-charika*, a biography of famous Indian poets, Kalyana Malla is identified

by some as the Brahmin poets from Kalinga (present Indian state of Orissa on the east coast of India) and a contemporary of the Oriya king Anangabhima. Going by the date of one of Anangabhima’s inscriptions, the date of Kalyana Malla and *Ananga Ranga* would be around 1172 CE. However, all manuscripts of *Ananga Ranga* examined by Burton and Arbuthnot contained a verse indicating that it was written for the amusement of Lad Khan, son of Ahmed Khan, who was a viceroy of the Lodhi dynasty (1450–1526) in Gujarat, a state in western India. By this reckoning, the date of Kalyana Malla and *Ananga Ranga* has to be placed somewhere between the late 15th and early 16th centuries. Kalyana Malla refers to *Kamasutra* and *Ratirahasya* in *Ananga Ranga*, which indicates that it was certainly the latest among these three well-known erotic texts.

In concluding the book, Kalyana Malla states that he wrote the *Ananga Ranga* because no one till then had written a book to prevent separation of married couples or to show them how they could live through their lives happily together. He notes that if husband and wife can live together as one soul, they will be happy in



this world and in that to come. He further notes that the main reason for separation of husband and wife and their each seeking other partners and committing adultery is monotony and lack of variation in married life. He claims that after fully understanding the way quarrels take place, he has shown in the book that by varying the enjoyment of the wife, the husband may live with her as if living with 32 different women and how the wife may also become pleasing to the husband by learning what is taught in the book. *Ananga Ranga* is a unique erotic text that aims at enhancing pleasure within marriage, ensuring lifelong married bliss and preventing promiscuity and conjugal infidelity. Kalyana Malla's work is no doubt based on the pre-existing literature on the subject, but he has introduced many innovations in his prescription for erotic enjoyment which are not found in the earlier texts. He emphasizes ethics and spirituality, and envisages a happy couple with their passion cooling with advancing age devoting themselves to the study of divine knowledge.

*Ananga Ranga* is well structured, comprising an introductory chapter, ten textual chapters dealing with separate topics, and two appendices. The topics include characteristics, qualities, and temperaments of women of different kinds as well as of different regions. Kalyana Malla notes that desires of women are slower to rouse and that unlike men, they are not easily satisfied by a single act of congress. They require prolonged embraces, and if denied, women feel aggrieved. There are chapters dealing with various centers of passion in women, the days and periods of their excitement, classification of men and women into four classes, and the matings from among these classes in marriages that are ideal. Part of the text and the appendices deal with the use of recipes for potions for erotic purposes and with astrology in securing greater pleasure between husband and wife. The text contains elaborate prescriptions of herbal and other medicines for conditions like premature ejaculation and menstrual disorder, as well as preparations for uses as perfumes, bathing pre-

parations, mouth fresheners, and beauty aids. One chapter deals with charms and mantras, through the use of which a man can win over the love and affection of his wife. The last two chapters deal with external and internal enjoyments, with advice of a practical nature. The first of these emphasizes the role of foreplay and deals with it in some detail. The last chapter deals with various ways of sexual congress, including *Purushayita*, where the woman plays an active role in pleasing the man. The following provides a flavor of Kalyana Malla's writing:

At all times of enjoying *Purushayita*, the wife shall remember that without a special effort of will on her part, the husband's pleasure will not be perfect. To this end, she must ever strive to close and constrict her *yonis* until it holds her husband's *linga*, as with a finger, opening and shutting at her will and finally acting as the hand of the cowherd girl who milks the cow. This can be learned only by long practice, and especially by throwing the will into the part to be affected, even as men endeavor to sharpen their hearing and their sense of touch. While so doing, she will mentally repeat the name of the Lord of Love in order that a blessing may rest upon the undertaking. And she will be pleased to hear that the art, once learned, is never lost. Her husband will then value her above all women, nor would he exchange her for the most beautiful queen in the three worlds. So lovely and pleasant to man is she who constricts. (The translation follows Burton and Arbuthnot.)

CHITTARANJAN SATAPATHY

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# KĀMASŪTRA

Classical Indian erotic text

The Kāmasūtra of Vātsyāyana was composed sometime around the third to fourth centuries CE and is the earliest extant work of erotic science from South Asia. Written in Sanskrit prose and verse, the text is attributed to a scholar named Vātsyāyana, whose name is connected to no other texts and about whom we know nothing other than what we can extrapolate from the Kāmasūtra. Vātsyāyana relies upon the now lost work of earlier specialists in the field of erotic science, whom he cites by name, sometimes agreeing and sometimes disagreeing with their theories. In turn, later works of erotic science, such as the *Ratirahasya/Kokaśāstra*, the *Nāgarasarvasva*, the *Pañcasāyaka*, the *Anaṅgarāṅga*, and the *Kandarpacūḍāmaṇi*, defer to the authority of the Kāmasūtra, explicitly modeling themselves upon it or citing it often in their treatments of the subject.

Accordingly, the Kāmasūtra is the most well known and authoritative text in a genre known as *kāmasāstra*, the “discipline” (*śāstra*) of pleasure (*kāma*). Śāstric texts are academic and theoretical, rather than artistic and literary. They tend to be extremely dense and allusive in nature, apparently written for a scholarly audience able to comprehend their jargon-laden statements and their style of argumentation. While there are śāstric texts devoted to a whole range of techno-practical sciences (e.g., medicine, architecture, animal husbandry, astrology, physiognomy), a distinct body of śāstric inquiry developed around a conceptual trio known as the trivarga, a “group of three” with apparent claims to humanistic comprehensiveness. This group is comprised of *kāma*, *dharma* (duty, moral order) and *artha* (acquisition, profit); study of these three subjects taken together comprises a sort of “life science,” enabling the educated person to cultivate a fruitful existence.

Each member of the trivarga has theoretical texts devoted to it, as well as an extensive commentarial tradition. Only one Sanskrit commentary on the Kāmasūtra has been edited and

published to date, the *Jayamaṅgalā* of Yaśodhara, most likely composed in the thirteenth century CE, almost a thousand years after the probable composition of the Kāmasūtra. Yaśodhara’s commentary is extremely erudite, standing as both an invaluable verse-by-verse interpretation of the frequently obscure Kāmasūtra and an original reflection on the subject of erotic pleasure. Yaśodhara, as a commentator, always defers to the authority of the Kāmasūtra, but his lengthy exposition necessarily exceeds the spartan language of the original. In the face of compact statements like “From [their] connection with that,” Yaśodhara elaborates philosophical concepts deployed by the Kāmasūtra, provides details of stories alluded to by it, refers to medical evidence, and expands upon the text’s many typologies. His explanations may range far from the meaning of the original text, but they are always worth taking seriously.

A second Sanskrit commentary, the *Praudhāpriyā* of Bhāskara Narasiṃha, was composed in eighteenth-century Benares, India; it has been neither edited nor published, let alone translated. Written at even greater historical remove from the Kāmasūtra, the *Praudhāpriyā* is highly philosophical in its orientation, and cites numerous works of scholarship and literature in its explanation of the text. Interestingly, the *Praudhāpriyā* seems ignorant of Yaśodhara’s *Jayamaṅgalā* or any other Kāmasūtra commentary, and so represents a distinctly eighteenth-century perspective on the field of erotic science. A number of commentaries in Indian vernacular languages were written and published in the twentieth century, including an unnamed commentary by Devadatta Śāstrī, Paṇḍit Mādhavācāryya’s *Puruṣārthaprabhā*, Rāmānand Sharmā’s *Jayā*, and Pārasanāth Dvivedī’s *Manoramā*, all in Hindi, as well as commentaries in Bengali, Kannada, Marathi, Oriya, Tamil, and Telugu.

The text was first published in a European language in 1883, as an English translation by Sir Richard F. Burton and F.F. Arbuthnot (with the unacknowledged assistance of Indian

## KĀMASŪTRA

scholars Bhagavanlal Indrajit and Shivaram Parashuram Bhide). In the preface to this translation, Burton presents the Kāmasūtra as providing valuable scientific knowledge capable of remedying woeful and injurious British ignorance of sexual matters, thus initiating the tendency to consider the Kāmasūtra as representative of putative Indian sexual license, in opposition to European sexual repression. Burton's translation is frequently inaccurate, and often incorporates without acknowledgement segments of the *Jayamaṅgalā* into the text of the Kāmasūtra, an unfortunate trend followed by many subsequent translators of the text. Nevertheless, Burton's translation was the most widely available for over one hundred years, until the publication in 2002 of an excellent translation by Wendy Doniger and Sudhir Kakar, who carefully separate the Kāmasūtra from the *Jayamaṅgalā*, passages of which they include as footnotes, in addition to selections from Devadatta Śāstrī's Hindi commentary. To date, the only complete translation of both the Kāmasūtra and the *Jayamaṅgalā* is the German translation by Richard Schmidt, first published in 1897 (subsequently revised on several occasions). The Burton translation has been retranslated into numerous European languages. An original but highly inaccurate French translation by Alain Daniélou appeared in 1992; this translation was translated into English in 1994.

### The Kāmasūtra

The Kāmasūtra is cosmopolitan in outlook; it takes for granted its applicability to any civilized social context. Because the pursuit of social and sexual pleasure necessarily involves other people, the text advises its audience in the means of negotiating a highly sophisticated social world. In this world, male–female social interaction is normative, with courtesans playing an important role in the pursuit of pleasure. At the same time, the text assumes the sequestered status of married women, though it provides justifications and means for overcoming this obstacle. While the text attends to a whole host of constraints that might prevent the accomplishment of one's erotic goals (those of class, caste, and family, for example), it takes as its ideal social actor one who is educated, wealthy, and good-looking, with plenty of leisure time in which to pursue

a rich and rewarding life. It is also highly significant that the text makes no mention of the relationship between sex and reproduction, as if pregnancy were not a possible outcome of the sex acts described.

The Kāmasūtra is probably most famous for its systematization of the varieties of sex acts. While the Kāmasūtra takes sex between a man and a woman to be normative, it should be noted that the text does recognize the existence of a “third sex,” a man who takes on the appearance and behavior of a woman and who performs fellatio on other men. It also describes sex acts between women, a behavior said to take place when male sexual partners are unavailable. The text mentions group sex (with multiple men and with multiple women), as well as anal intercourse, though this last is said to be a regional variant. Scratching, biting, and striking are considered to be key elements in sexual play, because they incite passion both during lovemaking and afterward, when the marks they leave prompt memories of sexual encounters. As Doniger and Kakar translate:

There are no keener means  
of increasing passion  
than acts inflicted  
with tooth and nail. (Kāmasūtra 2.4.31)

Vātsyāyana is careful to caution his audience against excessive use of these acts, noting instances when they resulted in mutilation or even death. Nevertheless, hitting, biting, and otherwise marking the body of one's lover are taken to be key elements in sexual union.

But the Kāmasūtra's descriptions of sex acts are merely one small portion of its investigation of the subject of pleasure. The Kāmasūtra organizes its subjects into seven chapters, each further subdivided by topic. The first chapter of the Kāmasūtra opens with a theoretical discussion of pleasure in relation to the other primary objectives of human existence: duty and acquisition. The text defends the importance of pleasure, as well as the need for scholarly texts devoted to the subject. It then enumerates 64 fine arts that mark the cultivated man or woman, ranging from singing, dancing, and poetry to metallurgy, woodworking, and architecture. It also describes the lifestyle of the cosmopolitan man and his friends, including details of his toilette, the furnishing of his house, garden,

and bedroom; his daily schedule, with particular attention to his leisure activities; and his conduct at public festivals. These descriptions have been highly influential in the history of Indian literature, encapsulating the ideal behavior of heroes, heroines, and their sidekicks for the duration of Sanskrit literary history.

The second chapter contains, among other things, the detailed lists and descriptions of sexual positions for which the Kāmasūtra is most famous. It classifies men and women according to the dimensions of their genitalia, the degree of their passion, and the time taken to reach sexual climax. This last division contains a notable debate regarding the existence and nature of female orgasm. This chapter also enumerates, labels, and describes sexual postures (17 varieties), sexual strokes (ten for the man and three for the woman when she is on top), and ways of kissing (16 varieties), embracing (12 varieties), scratching (eight varieties), biting (eight varieties), slapping (eight varieties), and screaming and moaning (eight varieties), as well as regional variations and sexual preferences, unusual sex acts (including group sex and anal sex), sex with the woman playing the part of the man, oral sex (with a detailed description of same-sex fellatio), protocols for before and after sex, and typical behaviors during lovers' quarrels.

The third chapter gives recommendations for courtship and seduction of potential marriage partners; it is addressed primarily to men seeking brides but also advises women in the seduction of potential husbands. It outlines the signs and signals by which one comes to know the mindset of one's intended, and by which a man or woman makes his or her intentions clear to a desired partner. It describes in great detail the ways in which one can captivate the potential partner. It also suggests means of tricking, and indeed, forcing young women into the marriage bed.

The fourth chapter is devoted to the behavior of wives, especially those in a polygamous household. Here the emphasis is upon specialization, with co-wives advised to assume distinct roles, each designed to maintain the attention of the husband, while the husband is advised to treat each individually. The "senior wife," the "junior wife," the kept woman, and the "wife unlucky in love" are all advised how best to behave with respect to one another and to their husband.

This is the chapter that will seem most conservative to the modern reader, as the freedom of women is tightly circumscribed. Nevertheless, the behavior of wives in Sanskrit literature strongly conforms to the descriptions found in this brief chapter.

The fifth chapter is concerned with the seduction of married women. It includes criteria for determining the likelihood of success, and a sympathetic inventory of the many reasons a woman might reject a would-be lover. It describes the types of men likely to succeed with women and provides a psychologically rich catalogue of women who are easily seduced. It provides strategies for producing intimacy with the woman, the various signals employed to convey intent, and the means of testing her feelings. It also describes in great detail the all-important role of the messenger in bringing about a love affair; this role is of central importance in South Asian erotic literature. The fifth chapter also contains several sections devoted to the sex life of men in power, such as kings and ministers of state, and of the women living in the harems of such powerful men.

The sixth chapter of the Kāmasūtra is addressed to courtesans, and details the criteria for selecting or rejecting a lover, as well as how to acquire, keep, extract money from, cast off, and reunite with him. It also offers the means to calculate advantage and disadvantage in any union. Within the Kāmasūtra's social world, courtesans are expert both in generating pleasure and in using it for profit.

The final chapter is devoted to various pharmacological, mechanical, and magical aids to sex and love, including aphrodisiacs, philters for making oneself sexually desirable or for bringing another under one's sexual sway, and aids to virility (including means of increasing the size and endurance of the penis, as well as dildos and piercing). There are also recipes to eliminate passion for a particular person, to make the vagina expand or contract, and to alter one's appearance.

### The Kāmasūtra and Erotic Literature

Since its first European translation in 1883, the Kāmasūtra has occupied an important place in the erotic imaginary of the modern West, representing sexual license and titillation, a means of

arousal disguised as sexuality or Indology. However, it is doubtful that the Kāmasūtra was composed as erotic literature, if by that term we mean literature designed to arouse erotic feelings. The text does advise a man to talk about the Kāmasūtra in the presence of a woman he would like to seduce, but, contrary to its depiction (and use?) in the modern West, there is no historical evidence that the text itself was used to stimulate an erotic response.

Nevertheless, its descriptions and prescriptions are designed to facilitate an eroticized lifestyle, in which one's private and public activities can be oriented toward the maximization of pleasure. Such pleasure is created not through indulging some otherwise-thwarted sexual instinct, after the model of liberation from sexual repression. Rather, the Kāmasūtra suggests that with proper application, the reader of the text can achieve an existence in which pleasure has a prominent place. It also implies that real pleasure is achieved with full knowledge of the range of erotic possibilities, so that the actor can identify the situation at hand and determine the appropriate course of action. For the Kāmasūtra, as for other Sanskrit textbooks, textualized knowledge has absolute authority; real-life success is that which approximates what is contained in the text. The Kāmasūtra does not deny the possibility that people can find erotic pleasure without knowledge of the text, but understands such achievement to be purely fortuitous, based upon knowledge that has "trickled down" from those educated in erotic science.

While the Kāmasūtra itself may not be erotic literature, it has exercised a profound influence upon the literatures of the Indian subcontinent, particularly upon Sanskrit literature, in which the erotic is arguably the dominant aesthetic mode. The typologies of sexual actors, situations, and modes of intercourse systematized in the Kāmasūtra have been deployed in a vast array of dramatic, poetic, sculptural, and two-dimensional artworks. According to Sanskrit poetic theory, true aesthetic enjoyment can be produced only by representation of situations

that conform to established norms; for erotic poetry, to a great extent, this means conforming to the norms depicted in the Kāmasūtra.

While the rule-bound nature of the śāstric universe should not be underemphasized, the Kāmasūtra nevertheless envisions circumstances in which an erotic situation might exceed the strictures of the text:

To the extent that men are of weak passion, there is scope for textbooks.

But when the wheel of erotic delight is in motion, there is no textbook and no logical order. (Kāmasūtra 2.2.31)

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*See also* **Kalyana Mala; Koka Pandit; Sex Manuals**

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# KAMENSKII, ANATOLII

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1876–1941

Russian novelist and playwright

## ***Zhenshchina* [The Woman]**

Anatolii Kamenskii's short story *The Woman* is indicative of the writer's interest in the inevitability of human enslavement to the call of the flesh, although it is much lighter in tone than some of his other writings.

This story, written in the 1910s and published in a collection of stories about love entitled *Moi garem* (Berlin, 1923), tells of a young man, Nezhdanov, who comes to St. Petersburg from a provincial town on a business trip, lodges at his sister's apartment, and gets swept up by the excitement of a big city. One day, as he sits in the empty apartment, he looks at himself in the mirror and thinks that he is a handsome, albeit slightly feminine-looking, man. For fun, he puts on some makeup he finds in his sister's bedroom and tries out some of her clothes on top of his suit. He enjoys seeing himself in feminine attire and decides to get dressed completely as a woman and go out into the city. He buys himself a wig of beautiful blonde hair and puts on his sister's underwear, stockings, and dress. He finds his new clothes to be very comfortable. Nezhdanov is both captivated by his prank and fascinated by his own body in its feminine guise, and gets an erotic thrill from seeing himself in the mirror. He is in love with his body. As he leaves the building, he finds himself enjoying the comedy of deception and self-deception that he is now playing.

As he walks down the street, he notices the attention he is getting from several men, some of whom follow him and make remarks to him, thinking that he is a beautiful woman. One man continues following him after Nezhdanov catches a carriage for the train station. As he rides in the carriage, pursued by the stranger, Nezhdanov conjures for himself different life stories, alternatively those of a cocotte, or sporting lady; an adventuress; a mistress on her way

to a rendezvous; an innocent girl; and an abandoned wife. He is astonished to what extent he is mentally taken over by each of these imagined personae.

In the train compartment, riding toward a popular concert park, Nezhdanov attracts the attention of all the men, and particularly of his pursuer. The young man follows him to the concert hall and strikes up a conversation. After a while, Nezhdanov responds, first in a coquettish way, and then more seriously. They converse for a long time, and Nezhdanov surprises his interlocutor, a young lawyer, with his literary tastes and knowledge. The lawyer assumes that Nezhdanov is a progressive woman and invites him to his place, saying that the inevitable would happen sooner or later and that the two of them are too modern to play silly games of pursuit. While Nezhdanov tries to decline the invitation, which would reveal him as a man, he instinctively realizes that the lawyer seriously takes him for an extraordinary and modern woman, just the kind of a woman who would attract Nezhdanov himself. Inwardly Nezhdanov sympathizes with the lawyer, seeing in him a kindred spirit to his own male self. He declines the lawyer's offer of a rendezvous, telling him that they would never meet again. The lawyer struggles to comprehend this "woman's" secret before letting "her" disappear forever. Amazed at the depth of feelings that he has evoked in the young lawyer and in himself, Nezhdanov rhapsodically imagines that he is a manifestation of spiritual and sexual longing, of a missed chance, and in this state mounts the train platform to go back to the city, leaving the lawyer behind.

The question of homosexuality is alluded to rather elusively in *The Woman*. Underpinning this story is Otto Weininger's theory of sexuality as described in his *Eros und Psyche*, a widely read text at that time. According to Weininger, normal men's character is composed of 75 percent virility. Fifty percent virility in a man points toward homosexual tendencies. While Nezhdanov doesn't surpass this percentage, and remains a

man, he enjoys his role as a woman. Nezhdanov's sympathy for the young lawyer is ambiguous—is it because he understands him, or is it because the lawyer appeals to him sexually? Kamenskii left this question unresolved, and at least one late-20th-century critic found this story to be a light and absurdist comedy on gender roles.

Kamenskii was a popular writer in the early part of the 20th century, although he was seen by critics as not quite on the literary level of Leonid Andreev, Valerii Bryusov, Mikhail Kuzmin, and other writers of the Silver Age who wrote about sexuality. Some critics recognized the strength of his evocation of city life: *The Woman* provides an exuberant description of the excitement of St. Petersburg, with its smells, crowds, fast-paced transportation, and chance encounters, and of the deterioration of bourgeois gender norms. Nevertheless, Kamenskii often got satirized and demonized in the high-brow literary press. This is particularly true of his novel *Leda* and of his story *Chetyre* [*The Four*], which alternatively dealt with transcending and succumbing to sexual needs. Maksim Gor'kii wrote that Kamenskii's plots were inappropriate in a period following the failed 1905 Revolution. Kamenskii, however, felt that an artist needed to be above the madness of politics. Many critics dismissed Kamenskii as pathologically weak and perverse in character, who basely took advantage of controversial topics in his writings. To this day Kamenskii is considered to have stopped developing in a literary sense around 1908, despite the fact that he wrote and published quite a bit after this date. Novopolin, in his 1909 book on the pornographic elements in Russian literature, dismissed Kamenskii for cynically and self-servingly propagating the idea of the supremacy of the sexual instinct over other human endeavors. Kamenskii was all but

forgotten after his death, and very little has been written about him afterward.

### Biography

Anatolii Pavlovich Kamenskii was born in Novocherkassk. He came from minor nobility and worked as a civil servant. Kamenskii started publishing in Russian literary periodicals in 1896 and wrote scripts for Russian silent films in the early 1910s. After staging the play *Reigen* [*The Round Dance*] by Arthur Schnitzler, which was considered pornographic, Kamenskii faced censure and lived in Berlin from 1920 to 1924. He returned to Soviet Russia in 1924, was arrested in 1937, and died in a prison camp in Komi.

RUTH WALLACH

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# KESSEL, JOSEPH

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1898–1979

French novelist and journalist

## *Belle de jour*

Kessel intended this psychological novel (1928) as a representation of “the terrible divorce between the heart and the flesh, between a true, immense, and tender love and the implacable demands of the senses” (translations throughout are by the author of this article from the French original of *Belle de jour*). In a preface, he expresses his belief that this antagonism belongs to all people in varying degrees and that—echoing a premise of nascent psychoanalysis—“an exceptional situation” is required in order to uncover it fully: “just as one studies the sick in order to know the healthy, the mentally ill in order to penetrate the workings of intelligence.” The situation he has found is that of Séverine, a young society woman who deeply loves her husband but is inexorably drawn to a secret life of prostitution. In order to conceal her activities, she works in a discreet brothel and limits her presence there from two to five o’clock in the afternoon, hence the sobriquet “Belle de jour” (daytime girl).

Both by direct appeal in the preface and by the third-person, internally focused narration, *Belle de jour* continually calls upon the reader to feel compassion for a protagonist who falls victim to her own deep and uncontrollable desires. A prologue dramatizes an incident from Séverine’s childhood that is clearly intended to account for the conflict between love and desire that will devastate her as an adult: As an eight-year-old, she is molested in her home by a plumber. When her governess finds her on the floor, it is thought that she slipped—and she too believes this explanation. This incident is central to the novel’s principal innovation. Venturing well beyond conventional story lines that relate the hidden lives of upright women, *Belle de jour* depicts its heroine as suffering from a

psychosexual pathology with origins in repressed childhood trauma.

When the main action begins, Séverine has been married to Pierre, a young surgeon, for two years, but her physical attitude toward him seems maternal, and she feels only rebellion and lassitude when she detects his desire. He has concluded that carnal passions are inaccessible to her, and she no doubt shares this view until an acquaintance, Husson, kisses her insolently—filling her with disgust, but also with brief, intense pleasure. This kiss is the first sign that Séverine, who still thinks she exerts perfect control over herself, is instead subject to “essential, dormant forces” from within. The subsequent revelation that a woman from her own circle secretly works as a prostitute fires her imagination. Soon thereafter, as she repeatedly fantasizes about a strange man who pursues her lustfully along dark alleys, she is terrified and overcome with desire.

Until only recently, Séverine was repulsed by anything that strayed from social norms. Now, as she moves from one erotically charged fantasy or encounter to another, eventually making her way to the brothel operated by Madame Anaïs, she feels “prohibited desires” which affirm her resemblance to all other human beings according to the narrator. From Pierre she receives tenderness and trust; what he cannot give her, and what she finds in coarse, even vulgar, men, is “that exquisite animal pleasure.” As *Belle de jour*, she takes pleasure in forced obedience and verbal and physical domination. Initially, the need to play her new role consumes her, but soon a kind of intoxication sets in and habit displaces desire. When she realizes that her behavior has become servile—not only as *Belle de jour* but in general—she uses her afternoons to forget her troubles. In a dramatic denouement, her two lives intersect when Husson makes an unexpected appearance in Madame Anaïs’s establishment. Lest her hidden identity be revealed to her husband and others, she turns to an



underworld client for help, and the narrative accelerates toward its tragic end.

*Belle de jour* attempts to represent both an extraordinary experience—childhood molestation, prostitution for pleasure—and a universal tension between “true love” and the “demands of the senses.” It describes Séverine’s desires as common to all human beings while also offering her up as a pathological case that can shed light on normal function. Just how all of this works is not immediately apparent. Occasional clues, however, suggest that the novel conforms to a single, overall conception of love and desire. It may be inferred that as a result of Séverine’s traumatic experience, her “two essential poles” of the heart and flesh have become strictly non-overlapping realms; whereas for people who have not endured a similar trauma, they may be united within a single love relation. It is true that Séverine resumes a sexual relationship with her husband after becoming a prostitute, but it never becomes satisfying in the manner of her other encounters. The long-term effect of her repressed memory is to dissociate feelings of love from those of desire and to make desire possible only as a reenactment of the traumatic event.

Luis Buñuel’s brilliant film adaptation (*Belle de jour*, 1967) is greatly indebted to Kessel’s novel and also makes several notable departures. The basic story line remains (with a modified ending), along with virtually all the characters and the childhood incident. The filmmaker eschews direct access to Séverine’s feelings, however, in favor of a rigorously external perspective. He also creates a complex fantasy life for her which he dramatizes in alternation with real-life scenes. The effect is to open a window to Séverine’s psyche at once more tenuous and more profound than the perspective provided by the novel. In the film, moreover, her life as a prostitute ultimately serves a therapeutic function, allowing her to work through her condition and to remove the impediments to a fulfilling relation with Pierre. As a result, her uncontrollable fantasies, which serve as indicators of her pathology, have all but ceased as the ending draws near. This evolution—which is more coherent and more convincing than the treatment by Kessel—is particularly compelling in the light of certain tendencies in psychoanalysis, in particular Sigmund Freud’s repetition compulsion (*Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, 1920), Melanie

Klein’s psychoanalytic theory (*Love, Hate and Reparation*, 1937), and Jessica Benjamin’s notion of identificatory love (*The Bonds of Love*, 1988).

### Biography

Born in Clara, Argentina, to Russian–Jewish emigrés, and died in Avernès, France. Childhood spent in France and Russia. Studied literature in Russia, at the lycée of Nice and at Paris’s Lycée Louis-le-Grand, 1914. Served as editor of the *Journal des débats* and reporter for *Le Matin*, later for *France-Soir*. Earned a degree in literature from the Sorbonne, 1915. Studied acting and became an actor at the Odéon.

Like Ernest Hemingway and André Malraux, Kessel was a writer and man of action. His 80 novels and numerous *reportages* are inspired by personal experiences in World War I aviation, the Spanish Civil War, the French Resistance during World War II, the birth of the state of Israel, and by extensive travels throughout five continents. In 1925 he was awarded the Grand prix du roman de l’Académie française for *Les rois aveugles* [*Blinded Kings*]. Following the immense success of *Le Lion* [*The Lion*] (1958), he received the Prince Rainier of Monaco Prize. He was elected to the French Academy in 1962.

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## KHARJAS

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This poetic composition is known as *jarcha* in Spanish, and refers to the last lines that close an Arabic *muwashshaha*, a strophic poem flourishing—broadly speaking—from the 10th to the 12th century, elaborated in Al-Andalus (Muslim territory of medieval Spain, present-day Andalucía). While the main body of the poem had classical and refined attributes, the *jarcha* would be composed in a more popular register either in colloquial Arabic, in Romance, or in a mixture of the two languages. In 1948, the scholar Samuel Stern came upon 20 *jarchas* written in Romance, figuring as the last strophes of classical Arabic or Hebrew poems. Subsequent discoveries confirmed the *jarcha* as an expression of a hybrid and more personal lyric poetry in early Spanish literature. These hybrid Romance *jarchas* are the focus of the following entry. It must, however, be noted that to look at *jarchas* as Romance lyric is to offer a limited perspective. For a thorough discussion of the Arabic *kharjas* and the history of criticism on these, especially in relation to their Romance counterparts, the reader should start by consulting Rosen (“The muwashshah”). The debate on the relationship between the two is complex and rather technical but of great interest to anyone with some training either in medieval Spanish or in classical Arabic.

The Spanish *jarchas* are composed in Mozarabic, the dialect spoken by Christians living in Muslim Spain as well as the Jewish population and any bilingual residents of Al-Andalus. Brief and highly evocative, these compositions often center upon a girl’s fleeting musings on

requited or unrequited love, longing, and absence; this feminine voice is quite characteristic of the Romance *jarcha*. The addressee is often the mother, who, biological or not, represents a number of differing postures: confidante, guard, silent listener, accomplice. The compositions also address the lover at times as well.

In the Romance *jarchas*, the tone of the female speaker is frank, filled with sensuality, and clearly centered upon physical feeling. The strength of musical and folkloric tradition is apparent in the rhythm, imagery, and focus of the brief songs. As love songs identified with the feminine voice, these Spanish *jarchas* recall the other medieval lyric traditions of women’s love songs found in German and English, for example. In the Spanish *jarchas*, the mother–daughter relationship is also touched upon, either as a vehicle for the expression of the daughter’s longing or rebellion or as the mother’s advice on amorous matters. As a genre embracing folklore, Romance languages, Arabic, and classical elements, the sensuality of these brief compositions is direct and often very evocative.

LEYLA ROUHI

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# KIRKUP, JAMES

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1918–  
British poet, translator, autobiographer, short story and travel writer, dramatist, novelist, and essayist

James Kirkup's autobiography, *I of All People: An Autobiography of Youth* (1988) pictures the extremely conservative academic and literary world in the United Kingdom of the 1940s and 1950s. The themes that Kirkup chose for his poems as well as the many sexual and scatological allusions they contain guaranteed that they would be received with some hostility. Nevertheless, his friendship with J.R. Ackerly, the editor of *The Listener*, enabled Kirkup to print some of his more daring poems in that magazine. These included "The Drain," which contains both voyeuristic and homoerotic images as the narrator watches young workmen wield their "well-oiled tools" while repairing the drain in the road outside his room, and "The Convenience," about a urinal, describing how men seek "passionate relief" with "voluptuous ferocity," which was, however, considered too much by *The Listener's* typists, who refused to prepare the copy for print. Kirkup's poems treat a wide range of erotic scenarios, including the heterosexual ("An Indoor Pastoral"), the homosexual ("Gay Boys"), and the autoerotic ("Ode to Masturbation"). Kirkup was later to argue in his autobiographies that his treatment of such topics showed the Continental influence on his poetry (he translated a number of French and German poets), and he fiercely condemned the stuffiness of both English poetry and the English literary scene. He claimed that his outsider status made him persona non grata with the British Council, which did all it could to

block his employment opportunities both at home and abroad.

By today's standards, the sexual references in Kirkup's poetry seem unremarkable. However, the poem that has continued to create controversy is "The Love That Dares to Speak Its Name," the publication of which in issue 96 of *Gay News* resulted in the newspaper's editor, Denis Lemon, being successfully prosecuted for blasphemy. It remains illegal to either publish or circulate the poem in the UK, and as late as 1997, a lesbian and gay Christian group was investigated by the police for providing a hypertext link to the poem on their website. The title refers to the poem "Two Loves" by Lord Alfred Douglas, onetime companion of Oscar Wilde, in which homosexuality is referred to as "the love that dare not speak its name." In Kirkup's poem, the love that dares to speak its name is Christ's love "for all men," which is described in explicitly sexual terms. Kirkup was later to disown the poem (on artistic, not moral grounds) and it has never been serialized in any of his collections.

Kirkup's prose works, too, feature scenes of erotic intensity. His description of his attraction to, and eventual seduction by, an American student in Spain in *A Poet Could Not But Be Gay* (1991) is particularly effective. His short story "The Teacher of American Business English" provides a witty description of a sexual encounter between a foreign teacher and one of his Japanese students. However, the novel *Gaijin on the Ginza*, which is full of graphically described and somewhat perverse sexual acts, seems written to offend several barely disguised members of the British Council in Japan whom Kirkup

believed had sullied his name with the Japanese administration.

Kirkup will be remembered as much for the flamboyant life described in his autobiographies as for the daring nature of his poetry, which will no doubt live on in volumes of lesbian and gay verse.

### Biography

James Kirkup was born in South Shields, England, on April 23, 1918. He graduated with a degree in modern languages from Durham University in 1941, after which, as a conscientious objector during the Second World War, he worked as an agricultural laborer. It was at this time that he published his first poems. He published many poems in the BBC's arts magazine *The Listener* from 1949 to 1965 and became a good friend of its editor, J.R. Ackerly. Kirkup's early poetry collections included *The Drowned Sailor and Other Poems* (1947), *The Submerged Village and Other Poems* (1951), *A Correct Compassion and Other Poems* (1952), *A Spring Poem and Other Poems* (1954), and *The Descent into the Cave and Other Poems* (1957). During this time he held several positions as writer in residence, including Leeds University (1950–52). However, the sexual, homoerotic, and scatological overtones in many of his poems made him a controversial and unpopular figure in the conservative literary and academic world of the 1950s. In the late 1950s he left England to teach abroad, including a spell in Sweden and Spain before settling in Japan, where he taught

at universities in Sendai, Tokyo, Nagoya, and Kyoto. His exposure to Japanese literature had a profound effect on his own poetic output, and his collections from this time show the influence of Japanese poetic forms, including haiku. In the 1970s, he was on the move again, this time teaching in the United States, Morocco, and Ireland. In 1977 his poem "The Love That Dares to Speak Its Name," which imagines a Roman guard in a sex act with the dead Christ, resulted in the first blasphemy trial in the UK since 1922. In the late 1970s, he settled in the Principality of Andorra in the Pyrenees, where he has continued to produce poetry, travel diaries, essays, and, in the 1990s, a series of autobiographies.

### Selected Works

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## KLOSSOWSKI, PIERRE

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1905–2002

French novelist, literary critic, and philosopher

In *Roberte ce soir* [*Roberta Tonight*] and *La révocation de l'édit de Nantes* [*The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes*], the author's interpretation

of the rules of hospitality may at first seem confusing. Octave, an elderly professor of scholastics, presses the sexual favors of his wife, Roberte, onto their guests, in order that he may see into her mystery. She is an inspector of censorship, whose own fantasies include seducing her young nephew, Antoine.

Clearly we are not in Kansas. We are about to enter a labyrinth of mirrors, led by a lean, priestly figure in black. We scramble to keep up. He turns occasionally to give us a thin smile of amused encouragement. He winks.

This saturnine guide is Pierre Klossowski, the older brother of the painter Balthus, son of a minor Polish nobleman and an artist whose friendship with Rilke was such that she asked the poet to introduce young Pierre, just come to Paris, to André Gide. Gide generously took the twenty-year-old under his wing, finding him an apartment and paying his college tuition. Klossowski studied scholastic philosophy with the Dominicans, and attended the Collège de Sociologie, which was directed by his friend Georges Bataille. His novels, translations of the classics, and literary essays—particularly his study of de Sade—influenced the French postmodernists. Klossowski's own literary antecedents include the classic Greek, Roman, and French authors; he has affinities with Lautremont, Gide, Andre Breton, Celine, Queneau, and of course Bataille. The dark figure of de Sade looms over all.

Klossowski published *Roberte ce soir* and *La révocation de l'édit de Nantes*—two strange and singularly fascinating novels—in the 1950s. Existentialism reigned on the Left Bank, and his formal inventiveness and unsettling metaphysical comedy must have made him seem an odd duck indeed: an avant-gardist from the seventeenth century.

The time to enter Klossowski's mirrored labyrinth is now; he was wise to exploit the popular genre of erotic writing to make the approach to it as broadly appealing as possible. (Similarly, according to Robert Darnton, erotic novels were also employed as vehicles for political expression in eighteenth-century Paris.)

But pity the poor masturbator who comes to these pages for a peep and a wink—and finds Klossowski winking back at him! It is no use asserting that these novels are fully accessible to all. They are destined to delight most those readers who think it possible that perversity may be one of the paths to transcendence. Klossowski is an erotic writer in the sense that Italo Calvino talks about in *The Uses Of Literature*: “In the explicitly erotic writer we may . . . recognize one who uses the symbols of sex to give voice to something else, and this something else, of a series of definitions that tend to take

shape in philosophical and religious terms, may in the last instance be redefined as another and ultimate Eros, fundamental, mythical, and unattainable.”

The ideal reader of Klossowski's subversive masterpiece will possess a capacious literary intelligence that includes a more than passing acquaintance with French history, philosophy, and art; medieval theology; familiarity with erotic literature, along with an ungrudging interest in the ideas of the Marquis de Sade; a sense of humor equal to Klossowski's sly, ironic wit; and—this is essential—an awareness of “the connection between metaphysics and the flesh,” in Yukio Mishima's phrase.

Fortunately for the less-than-ideal reader, Klossowski is a master of literary seduction. He is hospitable. He employs—and explodes—the conventions of the erotic and suspense genres as he draws us deeper into his labyrinth, utilizing a variety of narrative techniques, from eighteenth-century philosophical dialogues to Surrealist dream strategies. (Mishima has written perceptively about our seducer's methods: “The writers I pay most attention to in modern Western literature are Georges Bataille, Pierre Klossowski, and Witold Gombrowicz. . . [Their] works reveal an anti-psychological delineation, anti-realism, erotic intellectualism, straightforward symbolism, and a perception of the universe hidden behind all these.”)

In precise and elegant language, Klossowski leads us, through theological and philosophical arguments, political debates and aesthetic ruminations, elaborate jokes, nightmares, tableaux vivants, and diary entries, into sacrilege, war crimes, and murder. His tone is always mocking, often mysterious, and sometimes, especially in his seriocomic erotic scenes, grimly hilarious. He is the writer playing God whose characters seek God; his subject, in the largest sense, is creation.

He offers pleasures for his readers in surprising contexts. One of the greatest surprises he provides is typical of his jokes: the book we are reading has been officially banned by *Roberte*, the inspector of censorship; her hospitable husband, Octave, is none other than the book's author, Pierre Klossowski.

*Roberte ce soir* opens with Antoine's view of his uncle and aunt in “the house where I spent such a trying adolescence.” Small wonder: his uncle Octave “suffered from his conjugal

happiness as though from an illness, firm in the belief he would be cured of it once he made it contagious,” and his aunt Roberte’s “beauty was of that somber sort which so often conceals pronounced tendencies to frivolity.” Frivolity?

Winning Antoine—adopted by them at age thirteen—is the first objective in the couple’s struggle for dominance. “My aunt treated me like a brother, and the professor had turned me into his favorite disciple; I served as the pretext for the practice of that hospitality which was practiced at my aunt’s expense.”

Octave has hung in his guest room, framed under glass, “The Rule of Hospitality,” a parody of medieval theology which is both funny (well, it’s a churchy wit) and an introduction to some of Klossowski’s ideas. In making love to Roberte, a proper guest grants actuality to her—brings her from potentiality to essence—and illuminates her mystery for Octave. Eros becomes a direct route to hypostasis; the metasexual leads to the metaphysical.

While their main contention is religious, Roberte and Octave also debate philosophical, political, and artistic issues. Each has an agenda. Roberte is a left-wing humanist, and Octave is a Catholic, an aesthete, a sensualist. The couple argues a lot about ideas which are of the utmost importance to their creator. In fact, Roberte and Octave come to life in our minds to the extent that we are willing to engage with the ideas that drive them. Then they step off the page. They act for themselves.

Klossowski, in the character of Octave, believes that he is creating Roberte, a creature made of her own elements, “which first took draft form in my mind.” But Roberte, in a diary entry, denies that “he is at the origin of my temperament.” She is capable of devilishness unaided by her husband’s machinations. And he can never know her, for one of Klossowski’s themes is the unknowability of others.

But it is possible, sometimes, to glimpse the spirit through the flesh. The temptations of Eros are the temptations of love that reveal the soul. Thought wears the garments of skin and bone.

In one dialogue (“The Denunciation,” Klossowski’s homage to Corneille), uncle and nephew debate Thomist ideas about the soul while illustrating them with humor and sex. One minute we are following an intricate argument made by Octave about the mystery of hypostatic union, and the next he is showing Antoine a film

in which Roberte’s skirt catches fire and her rescuer molests her. (Antoine exclaims, “My stars, there in her panties is the outline of her bottom.”) Klossowski’s use of erotic elements is the more powerful for being deft, spare, and ironic—a glimpse of a bare thigh, a momentary encounter—often with dream figures made manifest by Roberte’s rambunctious libido.

Roberte the censor is ravished by spirits she refuses to give voice to. Either speak the unspeakable, as de Sade warned, or suffer the demons. In his essay on de Sade, Klossowski writes of the natural order of things, “Only motion is real; creatures are nothing but nature’s changing phases.” The temptations of Eros allow the transcendence of this natural order. And for the novelist, as Milan Kundera says, “I have the feeling that a scene of physical love generates an extremely sharp light that suddenly reveals the essence of characters. . . . [C]ertain erotic passages of Georges Bataille have made a lasting impression on me. Perhaps it is because they are not lyrical but philosophical.”

It has been suggested by symbolists that some labyrinths should be interpreted as diagrams of heaven. Perhaps that is how Klossowski would like us to see this splendidly intricate maze. When we come to the end of it, and bid him farewell, we emerge blinking into unfamiliar light, looking up at the heavens.

## Biography

Born in Paris, August 9. Attended the Collège de Genève, the Lycée Janson de Sailly (Paris), then the École des sciences politiques, the Facultés catholiques (Lyon), and the Institut catholique (Paris). Wrote novels, philosophy, and literary criticism. His novel *Le Baphomet* won the Prix des Critiques.

MICHAEL PERKINS

## Editions

*La Révocation de l'Edit de Nantes* [1959]. Les Editions de Minuit. Translated by Austryn Wainhouse. New York: Grove Press, 1969; Dalkey Archive Press, 2002. *Roberte ce soir*. Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1953.

## Selected Works

*La vocation suspendue*.  
*La bain de Diane*.  
*Un si funeste désir*.  
*Le Baphomet*.  
*Sade mon prochain*.

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# KOKA PANDIT

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Ninth-century Indian poet

## *Koka Shastra*

The *Koka Shastra*, the “Scripture of the Koka,” also widely known as *Rati Rahasya*, “The Secrets of Rati” (spouse of the love god, Manmadha, in Hindu mythology), was composed in the 9th century by the poet Kokkoka to whet King Vainyadatta’s curiosity concerning the art of love. *Kama Sutra*, compiled by Vatsyayana, reigned as the classic treatise on love and sex for several years in India, but Koka Pandit saw the need to address the theme again, as India’s moral values had changed significantly since the composition of *Kama Sutra*. The *Ananga Ranga* of Kalyana Malla, composed in the 15th century, is another subtle and detailed treatise that followed the tradition set by Vatsyayana and Koka Pandit, and served as a guide on love and sexual behavior for men and women of subsequent generations. While acknowledging that ultimate wisdom on this topic has been achieved by Vatsyayana in *Kama Sutra*, Koka Pandit justifies the significance of his work by addressing the systems of Nandikesvara and Gonikaputra, who had made significant contributions to identifying the basic categories of women and their anatomical features, sexual preferences, and personality traits, determined by four individual physical types (*Padmini*, a “lotus woman”; *Sankhini*, a “conch shell woman”; *hasthini*, an “elephant woman”; and *citrini*, a “varied and fancy woman”).

*Koka Shastra* is a manual that equips a man with the knowledge and skill to master the arts and technique of love and empowers him with the essential knowledge about the various habits, preferences, customs, and manners of women hailing from various regions within India, the different bodily types, gestures, positions, and techniques appropriate to specific occasions and types of women, and the suitable times for coition. Besides invoking the work of Nandikesvara and Gonikaputra, Koka Pandit’s treatise widens

the scope of the subject to include later traditions, the astrological systems of physical types and lunar calendars for courtships and the influence of Tantrism reflected in spells, *japas* (chants), and far-fetched recipes like those which require both wings of a bee which has rested on a petal blown from a funeral wreath. While *Kama Sutra* established the code of conduct for lovers of both sexes, *Koka Shastra* is written more for the husband, thus establishing the transition from a permissive, “free” approach to sex in ancient India to a rigid code of conduct and sex being circumscribed within marriage. The book begins with an invocation to the muse, establishes the treatise in the context of existing works of erotic literature, and defines the significance of the work in light of the changing moral customs and beliefs. Chapter 2, “Chandrakala” (about the lunar calendar), identifies the specific body parts of the woman that are touched by the arrows of the love god (Manmadha) during the light and dark halves of the month and how the suitor must gradually proceed with the woman in the art of lovemaking. In chapter 3, Koka Pandit delineates the physical types of men and women determined by their anatomical characteristics, which in turn determine ways by which the women can be satisfied. A woman may be characterized as a gazelle (*mrgi*), a mare (*vadava*), or an elephant (*hasthini*) and a man as a hare (*sasa*), a bullock (*vrsa*), or a stallion (*asva*). Chapter 4 discusses women by their ages, temperaments, and dispositions. Chapter 5 deals with specific social customs and practices of women relating to love and sex based on their locales, and the appropriate ways to solicit their attention. Chapter 6 describes the various methods of foreplay, or the “outer” modes of lovemaking (beginning with embraces), and chapter 7 discusses the preparation, positions, conduct, and methods of sexual intercourse. Chapter 9 deals with coition and various coital postures, chapter 10 with love cries and blows, and chapter 11 with the wooing of a bride, delineating the principles of choosing a bride and the successful

ways to court her and win her love and affection completely. While chapter 12 outlines the duties of a wife, chapter 13 deals with relations concerning women other than one's wife.

### Biography

It is believed that Koka Pandit hailed from a Kashmiri Brahmin family and was the protégé of King Vainyadatta, who lived from 830 to 960 CE.

KOKILA RAVI

### Edition

Kokkoka. *The Koka Shastra; being the Ratirahasya of Kokkoka and other Medieval Indian Writings on Love*. Translated and with an introduction by Alex Comfort. Preface by W.G. Archer. New York: Stein and Day, 1965.

### Further Reading

The four known untranslated commentaries on *Rati Rahasya* are by Kancinatha, Avantya Ramacandra, Kavi Prabhu, and Srngarasabandha Pradhipika.

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## KUPRIN, ALEXANDER

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1870–1938

Russian novelist and short story writer

Alexander Ivanovich Kuprin's *Iama* [*The Pit*] is the longest and most notorious of prerevolutionary Russia's literary works devoted to the problem of prostitution. It is a virtual catalogue of all the motifs and clichés associated with the topic in the previous half-century, but it also goes many steps further than its predecessors. If prostitutes had previously been either supporting characters in a larger story devoted to other issues and themes (Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Notes from Underground* [1864], Nikolai Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done?* [1863]), the subjects of shorter works (Vsevolod Garshin's "An Occurrence" [1875], "Nadezhda Nikolaevna" [1885]), or the embodiment of the male protagonist's own moral dilemma (Lev Tolstoy's *Resurrection* [1899]), *The Pit* allows the prostitutes themselves to share center stage with the men: in at least a few of the large, extended chunks that compose the novel, these women are the heroines of their own stories.

Part of the novel's immense popular appeal was that it purported to give an unvarnished account of daily life in a brothel. Most of Part 1 of the novel verges more on documentary than on fiction, with the male and female characters serving largely as vehicles for the author's almost journalistic descriptions of the prostitute's

world. As in Chekhov's 1888 short story, "A Nervous Breakdown," the reader follows a group of young men on an expedition to the brothels in a notorious red-light district. Like Chekhov's young men, the protagonists of *The Pit* represent a carefully selected cross section of Russian professional and intellectual life: Yarchenko the classicist, Ramzes the lawyer, Sobashnikov and Likhonin the students, and Platonov the reporter. As they talk each other into visiting the brothel, they, with no small amount of irony, discuss their project as if it were a scientific expedition: prostitution is a crucial social problem that must be investigated by members of the intelligentsia. And indeed, their discussions of prostitution go into a greater detail and greater depth than any previous representations of sex-for-hire trades in Russian fiction: from the relationship between the prostitutes and the madam to the relationships among the prostitutes themselves, even making a reference to the frequency with which these women's disgust for their male clients pushes them toward lesbianism. Yet this scientific veneer can easily be seen as an exercise in self-justification, not only for the characters, but by extension for the author and even the readers: the journey to the brothel is not the result of anything so vulgar as mere sexual desire, while the literary depiction of the topic is therefore scientific rather than pornographic.



These men are clearly far more informed than any of their literary predecessors. But it is precisely their level of knowledge that only increases the irony of their encounter with the prostitutes and calls into question the value of their discussions. Not only does Kuprin have the benefit of his familiarity with the earlier Russian literature on the question, but so do his male characters: their visit to the brothel is inevitably colored by the fact that they have read the same books on the subject as Kuprin's readers. Thus they tend to approach the subject as an abstract, philosophic, and even aesthetic phenomenon. One of the men even points out that to date, Russian literature's engagement with the problem has been woefully inadequate, since the best it could produce was Sonya Marmeladova, the saintly prostitute who saves the hero's soul in Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment* (1866). As the same man argues, the prostitute has heretofore remained unknown and unknowable to the Russian intellectual, along with that other eternally mysterious figure, the Russian peasant (also the frequent subject of semidocumentary exposés throughout the nineteenth century). And even as they go to the brothel, they lament the impossibility of ever actually discovering the "truth" about the prostitutes: the women are used to being asked how they got to their sorry state and are used to providing standard-issue lies as a response. Moreover, there is even an acknowledgment on one of the men's parts that they have no right to expect any more: why should the women be expected to tell the men anything?

Once the men become involved with the prostitutes, their self-consciousness does them little good, and despite themselves they begin to behave according to the standard literary script. Inevitably, one of the men tries to "rescue" a young woman from the brothel, and soon the rest join in what becomes a veritable orgy of liberal interventionism. No cliché is left untouched: there is even talk of buying poor Lyubka a sewing machine, which was the standard instrument for the prostitute's by-her-bootstraps redemption since Chernyshevsky's *What Is to Be Done?*

Instead, the uniqueness of *The Pit* lies in the careful attention paid to the women themselves, to the world of the brothel. In scenes reminiscent of Defoe's *Moll Flanders*, Kuprin almost overwhelms the reader with a wealth of detail about

the women's expenses, income, and rules of conduct. More gripping are his plots that center on the women themselves. Kuprin tells the story of Zhenka, a prostitute who, when she realizes she has syphilis, decides to take revenge on the entire male sex by infecting as many clients as she can before dying. Here as elsewhere, Kuprin walks a fine line between the standard sentimentalization of the prostitute as victim and the male fantasy of the vengeful, demonic female. Ultimately, Zhenka resolves her situation in a way far more typical of Russian heroines: she kills herself, and her death is mourned publicly by all the prostitutes, as, in a rare demonstration of solidarity, her body is accompanied to the cemetery by women from all the brothels in the district. But nothing changes for the better in the women's lives: the entire district is closed as a result of a virtual pogrom against prostitutes on the part of a group of angry sailors who complain that they were overcharged, forcing the prostitutes to live and work on the streets.

The novel's rather abrupt ending can be attributed to the vagaries of serial publication: six years passed between the publication of the first and last parts, and Kuprin may well have finished the book hastily after another author published his own conclusion to the story. Yet despite the novel's unevenness, it has had a lasting appeal among Russian readers. Still in print during Soviet times because of Kuprin's status as a canonical author, it was one of the few "erotic" texts readily available in the USSR.

### Biography

Born August 26 in Narovchat, Penza oblast. Studied at the Second Moscow Military High School (Cadet Corps) from 1880 to 1888, followed by the Alexander Military Academy from 1888 to 1890. Served in the army from 1890 through 1894, whereupon he began to write for various newspapers in Kiev. In the 1890s he made a name for himself as an author who focused on Russia's social problems, most notably in *Poedinok* [*The Duel*] (1905) and *Iama* (1908–1915). After the 1917 Revolution, he emigrated to France, where he continued to write, although with far less critical and commercial success. He returned to the Soviet Union in 1937 and died of cancer the following year.

ELIOT BORENSTEIN

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## KUZMIN, MIKHAIL

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1872–1936

Russian poet, prose writer, playwright, and critic

**Primary Work: *Wings***

A musician turned poet and prose writer, Mikhail Alekseevich Kuzmin created a sensation with the publication of *Kryl'ia* [*Wings*], a novella that dealt openly with the subject of same-sex desire and that helped earn Kuzmin the epithet “the Russian Oscar Wilde.” *Wings* first appeared in the journal *Vesy* [*Scales*] in 1906 and was published in book form in 1907. It went through several editions, including a post-revolutionary one published in Berlin in 1923. Its frank treatment of homosexuality made a Soviet edition unthinkable, and it was not republished in Russia in book form until 1994. Initial reception of *Wings* was varied. It was criticized by a number of critics and writers as pornographic but was praised by others, although positive reviews tended to ignore or play down the central theme of homosexuality.

The novella is divided into three parts, and its structure combines elements of the *Bildungsroman*, or novel of self-education, and the philosophical novel in the tradition of Voltaire’s *Candide* (Bogomolov, 21). Against the backdrop of Vania Smurov’s coming of age, Kuzmin offers philosophical discussions on the nature of love and the relationship of the body and

the spirit. The novella opens with Vania, a recently orphaned adolescent, being sent to live with the Kazanskii family in St. Petersburg. There he meets the elegant and charismatic Larion Dmitrievich Stroop, who is part Russian and part English, suggesting a vague association with Oscar Wilde and aestheticism. It soon becomes clear that Stroop is homosexual. *Wings* traces Vania’s gradual acceptance of Stroop as his male “guide”—a recurring theme in Kuzmin’s work—and of his own homosexual desires.

Vania’s journey of self-discovery is predicted early in the novella by Stroop when he tells the adolescent that he has it in him “to become a completely transformed being” (Granoien and Green, 14). His personal transformation mirrors that of Russian society in the tumultuous first years of the twentieth century, when, in the words of Mr. Kazanskii, “everything is awakening” (6). The loosening of censorship restrictions made possible relatively frank representations of sexuality and eroticism, creating the impression that Russia—like Vania—was experiencing a sexual awakening.

While Vania is initially fascinated by Stroop, he is horrified—and perhaps jealous—when he discovers that Stroop is having an affair with Fedor, a bathhouse attendant who has been hired by Stroop as his servant. This relationship, founded on Stroop’s physical lust and Fedor’s desire for money, is associated with death and

decay. In fact, Vania first encounters Fedor after reading a saint's life about a hermit who was shown a vision of rotting corpses to cure him of his lustful thoughts. Later, Ida Holberg, a young woman infatuated with Stroop, discovers the relationship between Stroop and his manservant and kills herself in Stroop's home.

Punctuating this rather sordid melodrama are discussions of same-sex desire among the ancient Greeks and Romans. A key figure in Vania's development is his instructor of Greek, Daniil Ivanovich, who is homosexual and serves as a confidante and adviser to Vania. Both Stroop and Daniil Ivanovich are lovers of Greek culture, and for them homosexuality in the ancient world—symbolized by the love between Antinous and the Roman emperor Hadrian—represents an ideal. For Stroop, ancient Greece was a time “when men saw that beauty and love in all their forms are of the gods, and they became free and brave, and they grew wings” (22). Later, in the company of his closest friends, Stroop explains to Vania: “We are Hellenes” (32).

In part 2, Kuzmin introduces another philosophical perspective on sexual desire when Vania goes on vacation with his friend Sasha. Sasha's family are Old Believers, members of a religious sect that broke from the Russian Orthodox Church in the seventeenth century over proposed revisions to Church books and practices. Like the ancient Greeks—and the authors of the gnostic gospels, who so influenced Kuzmin—the Old Believers in *Wings* refuse a simplistic morality based on the dichotomy of natural/unnatural. “Sin,” one Old Believer explains, “doesn't lie in the act itself, but in its relation to other things,” a paraphrase of a verse from St. Paul's Letter to the Romans (14:14). Sasha will later tell Vania that “a man ought to be like a river or a mirror—whatever is reflected in him he should make part of himself.”

While, in part 1, Kuzmin associates death with lust (“possessing without loving”), in part 2 he associates death with asceticism (“loving without possessing”). On vacation, Vania witnesses the recovery of the body of a boy his own age—sixteen—who lost his life while crossing the Volga River. He had run away from home to join a monastery (an idea that had attracted Kuzmin himself for many years). Vania reacts with horror to the slimy corpse.

Acknowledging both his own physical beauty and its perishability, he asks, “Who will save me?”. He then makes clear that the person to save him is not a woman, when he cruelly rejects the advances of Sasha's widowed aunt.

In part 3, Vania finds himself in Italy with Daniil Ivanovich. There, he is introduced to a third important philosophical influence: Italian Catholic culture, which, for Kuzmin, also represents the integration of the sensual and the spiritual. “Asceticism is,” according to Ugo, an Italian acquaintance, “a highly unnatural phenomenon.” Crossing paths with Stroop in Italy, Vania believes that he offers him the possibility of a fuller life and decides to accompany him on his travels, continuing the theme of life as a journey. When Vania accepts Stroop's invitation, he throws open his apartment window onto a street that is bathed in sunlight.

In contrast to typical descriptions of homosexuals as decadent and unnatural—characterized by Vasilii Rozanov as “People of the Moonlight” (1911)—Kuzmin repeatedly associates his homosexual characters with sunlight and the natural world. “Somewhere,” Stroop declares to his homosexual friends, “lies our ancient kingdom, full of sunlight and freedom, of beautiful and courageous people.” *Wings* is the story of one orphan's journey to that symbolic home.

### Biography

Born in Saratov, Russia, Kuzmin spent most of his life in St. Petersburg, where he studied music composition with Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov. His first publications appeared in 1905 in *Zelenyi sbornik* [*Green Miscellany*], but Kuzmin established his literary reputation in 1906 with the publication of a cycle of poems, *Aleksandriiskie pesni* [*Alexandrian Songs*], and a novella, *Kryl'ia* [*Wings*], in the journal *Vesy* [*Scales*]. Both works invoke the theme of homosexual love.

Kuzmin published poems, prose works, plays, and criticism. He also worked as a translator and a musician, setting many of his own lyric poems to music. Kuzmin remained in the Soviet Union after the Bolshevik Revolution but found it increasingly difficult to publish his works. He died of a chronic illness.

BRIAN JAMES BAER

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*Pervaia kniga rasskazov*. 1910; selected stories as "Aunt Sonya's Sofa," "From the Letters of the Maiden Clara Valmont to Rosalie Tutelmaier," "The Shade of Phyllis," and "Florus the Bandit" in Green, 1980.  
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*Tret'ia kniga rasskazov*. 1910, selected story as "The Story of Xanthos" in Green, 1980.  
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*Paraboly. Stikhotvoreniia 1921–22*. 1923.  
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## L. ERECTUS MENTULUS (LUPTON ALLEMONG WILKINSON)

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c. 1900–1993  
British-American poet, journalist, and publicist

### The Identity of L. Erectus Mentulus

In 1935, Lupton Allemong Wilkinson began writing erotica on commission for Roy Mellisandre Johnson, a jaded Ardmore, Oklahoma oil millionaire, by creating “L[ongus]. Erectus Mentulus, Ph.D.” (Long Erect Member), the narrator and protagonist of the stories collectively known as the “Oxford Professor” series, in which a lascivious academic dispenses outrageous sexual advice. Gershon Legman says that Wilkinson also wrote poems and parodies using the pseudonyms J. Sumner Radclyffe and Seeley Wilcox (“Erotic Songs,” pp. 500–501), but no one has corroborated those claims. In 1938, Wilkinson gathered his Mentulus stories, ran off mimeographed copies, solicited erotic photographs from friends, bound photos and pages into a volume he called *An Oxford Thesis on Love*, and persuaded a match factory to

manufacture slip cases for an edition of about a hundred (Scheiner, II, 140–141). These copies circulated until Grove Press published the manuscript in 1971.

### *An Oxford Thesis on Love*

Wilkinson’s *An Oxford Thesis on Love*, set in a booth in Dave’s Soft-Drink Emporium in an unidentified small American town, opens abruptly. Mentulus (here informally called “Lee”) holds forth to a barber, a salesman, and a druggist, a naive trio who have gathered to hear ribald adventures that celebrate but also mock sexual diversity. On the one hand, Mentulus insists that every woman reacts differently to sexual stimulation; that is the book’s “thesis,” illustrated by eight yarns named after the professor’s conquests around the world. Even so, he says, universal “scientific” principles govern all forms of intercourse, and in revealing these *An Oxford Thesis on Love* panders to male fantasy that seduction is a rational enterprise. On the other hand, the book’s appeal is clearly

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anti-intellectual. The professor decries outlandish sexual myths only to replace them with academic pretense; the humor derives from the credulity with which his absurd “research” is accepted. In this regard the stories parody the ponderous quasi-anthropological studies that constituted a species of erotica in the early twentieth century. Sometimes known as “the *National Geographic* syndrome” after the double standard manifest in that staid’s magazine’s fondness for photographing bare-breasted tribeswomen, the approach justified prurience in the guise of ethnographic scholarship on the sexual habits of “primitive” peoples.

Mentulus cites silly theories such as “Professor Vollmer’s,” for example, to the effect that “the diameter of the distended vagina is a quadratic function of the length of the mouth and the cube root of the volume of one buttock” (1971, p. 42). Mentulus claims to have invented a “tumescencegraph” to calibrate an erection (a send up of the real penile plethysmograph invented by Karl Freund); classifies women according to four breast types; and pontificates on the alleged causes of fetishes. The stories unfold as responses to questions from the three listeners, each of whom has met resistance from a woman. To the druggist, thwarted by a shopgirl who permits only fondling, Mentulus observes that the shape of her breasts indicates a tendency toward the nymphomania that she fears. He advises tearing a hole in her clothing rather than trying to remove it, which allows her too much time to think. For the professor, guile is key: since all women secretly desire intercourse, the seducer must analyze his prey, find her secret stimulus, and encourage the illusion that she is in control. When deception fails, however, force may be necessary, though here the professor’s listeners balk (as may modern readers), when he suggests that violence can unleash a lesbian’s latent heterosexuality. “‘You advise me to beat and rape the girl?’ asked the salesman dubiously. ‘If she is the type you have described,’ said the professor” (1971, p. 96), observing preposterously in “Liza the Lesbian” that some kinds of lesbianism result from a schoolteacher’s compelling a left-handed girl to use her right hand.

Most of the episodes graphically describe intercourse once inhibitions have disappeared, when the “natural” inclinations of the female make her more aggressive than the male.

“Mobile Miriam” smoothly adjusts her motion to her lover’s, so that they reach orgasms symphonically, while the screaming gyrations of “Jane of the Bouncing Bottom” trigger geysers of sperm. Hints of a serious gender divide linger, however. The virtuoso muscular control of “Bella of the Clutching Clitoris” reinforces male fears of dominant women, and “Rachel of the Spiralling Venus” sports a sinister vagina dentata borrowed from classic folklore. The gymnastics of “The Tumbling Twins,” a pair of acrobats performing in Vienna, are less interesting than the telepathic bond between them, which enables Lorine to feel the professor’s penis as it penetrates Lorette. The sisters also figure in “The Better Hole,” in which the professor finds that he enjoys anal intercourse with Lorette but not with Lorine, an anomaly he claims has been documented by the fictitious Professor Carr-Saunders. But eventually the professor’s assurance gives way to a bewilderment that humor can not mask. Having roughly bedded a reluctant woman, an event he has depicted in Hemingwayesque terms (“Flora the Fridge”), he is astonished when she complains. “The world had been cleft in two and put together again, and this unbelievable wench, lying there with my juice still wet on her cunt hair, looked at me and said, ‘It hurt’” (1971, p. 120).

### *A Further Oxford Thesis on Love and A Later Oxford Thesis on Love*

According to Legman, Wilkinson quickly tired of the Oxford stories and asked Legman and others in the “Organization,” the network of writers furnishing erotica for Johnson, to take over (“Introduction,” *Private Case*, pp. 52ff). The “Organization” included Robert Sewall, Caresse Crosby, Robert Bragg, Anaïs Nin, Clement Wood, Robert De Niro, Sr., Gene Fowler, Virginia Admiral, Robert Duncan, and Jack Hanley, among others. By now, the authors-for-hire had learned to keep copies of the stories they sold to Johnson. Individual stories (e.g., “Pussy Bumping”), bound as pamphlets under variant titles, could be sold or rented from drugstores and bookstores to Depression audiences eager for them (Gertzman, pp. 93–101). Legman apparently assembled the mimeographed volumes called *A Further Oxford Thesis on Love* (1938) and *A Later Oxford Thesis on Love* (1939) from stories anonymously

written by himself and members of the Organization. (Copies of each of these volumes are now in the Kinsey Institute.) The individual stories follow Wilkinson's format and "thesis"; in each the professor recalls an interlude in which a woman of singular prowess demonstrates a new position or practice.

### *The Passionate Pedant*

Legman himself wrote the four tales of *The Passionate Pedant* (1939). A genuine scholar of sexual customs, Legman here somewhat wearily parodies his own knowledge of cultural variations. The stories also occasionally serve as platforms for Legman to criticize Western imperialism, which leads "Dave," the owner of the Soft-Drink Emporium, who by now resembles a bootlegger, to caution the Professor against "communist talk." Legman's flagging interest is evident in the carelessness with which he renames the protagonist "Professor Martin," and the impatience with which he concludes the tales. Asked if Japanese vaginas are slanted, Martin corrects the falsehood by citing a fabricated *The Alleged Obliquity of the Sino-Japanese Cunt*, then by recounting in "Ochre Osukina" his affair with a geisha whose labia are quite conventional. Borrowing from *Madame Butterfly*, the professor seems perversely proud that Osukina becomes so dependent on his erotic skill that she commits suicide when he leaves Japan. The narrator also kills off the heroine of "Coffee-Colored Cobouti." Cobouti is a Malaysian princess reserved for a high priest, whose annual sacred intercourse with her ensures the land's fertility. Visiting Sumatra to study Australasian languages, Martin clandestinely meets her in the ruins of a temple deep in the jungle, where Cobouti introduces him to toe-sucking as foreplay to their intercourse. The Dutch later execute her for leading a revolution. In "Murky Mwamba," set in Mozambique, Martin decries racism even as he endorses the myth of large black penises. He also argues for the superiority of oral sex, which does not preclude his engaging in rough anal sex with his "dusky" lover. In the final story, "Multimethodical Marise," the Professor enjoys a Hungarian on the Vienna-Bucharest Express. Marise encourages him to ejaculate between her breasts, in the crook of her elbow, and in her armpits, and finally treats him to anilingus. His imagination

seemingly depleted, the professor then pleads an engagement with a young lady to avoid telling more tales.

### *The Oxford Professor*

Legman attributed the fourth volume in the series, called *The Oxford Professor*, entirely to Robert Sewall (*Horn Book*, p. 36), but may have written part of it himself (see Scheiner, *Compendium*, item 1322). The mimeographed volume appeared around 1948, but the stories were probably written earlier. Stylistically superior to earlier installments, the six stories here are "The Choir Loft," "Alpine Annie," "Tenacious Theresa," "Dipsomaniacal Daisy," "Jacinthe," and "Leslie." Dave now serves wine in the soft-drink parlor, while the druggist, salesman, and barber have been given individual names. The jumble of comic folklore and spurious "authorities," however, remains central. Typical is "Jacinthe," told to rebut the druggist's observation that intercourse underwater is impossible. The story takes place in Paris, where Mentulus has been studying the theories of "Yatumani Norashashu Hirosata," whose lecture before the "Catalonian Society for the Classification, Glorification and Continuation of Cunt" asserted that masculine ears, properly trained, can detect from the timbre of a woman's voice the exact degree of her readiness for sex. By the time Mentulus meets Jacinthe, a Javanese living near the Sorbonne, he can decipher her signals of passion, although her eagerness, as he describes it, would be hard to miss. Jacinthe's expertise includes special ointments that seal orifices tightly enough for sex in a pool, an experience the professor calls unique. Thus edified, the listeners trot out another canard, so that the professor can begin another story: "'You know, Joe [the barber],' the salesman said seriously, 'the Eskimo women have their cunts under their left armpits'" (1968, p. 199).

### *Torrid Tales*

The series guttered out with *Torrid Tales* (c. 1950), two inferior tales written by an unknown writer aiming at a literary style. In the first, "South of the Border," "Professor Martin" relays a memoir by Jan Sumner, a correspondent for *The New York Evening Times* expelled from Mexico for articles critical of President Cardenas.



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Speaking in first person, Jan recalls a Mexico City menage a trois involving herself, a prostitute called Juana, and an American prize-fighter named Johnny Blair. When their sexual excess threatens to ruin Johnny Blair as a boxer, Jan resolves to send Juana and Johnny away, but finds to her chagrin, that they have decamped before she can make her grand gesture. The second story, "The Court of Kings," is curiously romantic, and, measured against the graphic standards of the series, sexually reticent. Here the barber dreams of traveling with the professor to exotic places as he listens to the tale of yet another princess, an Indian named Ahdali, who couples with Martin in yet another ruined temple. The tale ends on a note that makes explicit the appeal of the *Oxford Professor* series: "'Gosh,' said the barber, 'I can't get over it. A real princess!'" (*Oxford Professor Returns*, p. 182).

### Biography

Lupton Wilkinson was probably born in England about 1902. In the United States, after publishing two volumes of poetry (*Interludes*, 1925, and *Blood and Silver*, 1928), he wrote articles, poems, and short stories for the *North American Review* and the *Saturday Evening Post*, and sensational fiction (e.g., "Blonde Alibi," 1931) for pulp magazines such as *Thrilling Detective* and *Detective Story Magazine*. During the early 1930s, he worked as a publicist for the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors Association, often acting as an emissary of Will Hays; Wilkinson's association with the Hays Office lent substance to the legend that censors themselves secretly produce erotica. During the 1940s Wilkinson promoted the careers of Clark Gable, Katherine Hepburn, and Alfred Hitchcock for Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios. He died in St. Louis on June 4, 1993.

JOSEPH SLADE III

### Selected Works

*A Further Oxford Thesis on Love. Wherein Longus Erectus Mentulus, Ph.D., late fellow of Oxford College, proposes numerous incidents in his experience tending to demonstrate the proposition that in time of stress the unregenerate soul seeks not its own salvation but rather its propagation, the whole cast in the form of amusing but instructive reminiscences and appended by factual sidelights and critical observations on various*

*subjects but more especially on the dominant factor of their [sic] eternal cunt. Done by the hand of the author into a manuscript at Onancock, Virginia [sic] [New York] 1939; rpt. *The Further Adventures of the Oxford Professor: A Continuation of the Famed Professor's Exploits on Beds Around the World*, by L. Erectus Mentulus. Atlanta: Pendulum Books, 1968. [By Gershon Legman? et al.].*

*A Later Oxford Thesis on Love. Wherein the author, L. Erectus Mentulus, proves that the waging of the pubic war is a distinct and separate art form in which the participants, through the manner whereby they conduct themselves on its battlefields, may express themselves with more exactness than in any other; this theorem established, examined and restated in the form of narrative and the whole being an inspirational document on the sexual forms as well as a study. Done by the hand of the author into a manuscript at Sotchoppy, Florida, [New York] 1938. [By Gershon Legman et al.].*

*The Oxford Professor. In which L. Erectus Mentulus, Ph.D., late of Oxford College, is taken further in the narration of his adventures and misadventures, erotic, alcoholic, and otherwise; not to mention a choice accompaniment of drolleries, notes and excursions of one sort or another, metaphysical & also miscellaneously edifying and entertaining. Done by the Hand of the Author Into a Manuscript at Natchitoches, Louisiana [New York, Shomer, c1948]; *The Oxford Professor*, by L. Erectus Mentulus, Ph.D., Atlanta: Pendulum Books, 1968; *The Professor's Tale*, Industry, CA: Collectors Publications, 1968. [By Robert Sewall and (possibly) Gershon Legman.].*

*An Oxford Thesis on Love. In which L. Erectus Mentulus, Ph.D., late fellow of Oxford College, draws from his various experiences for the instruction, entertainment and greater zest of his colleagues, friends and admirers. One Hundred [mimeographed] Copies Done Into A Book By The Hand Of The Author, Taos New Mexico [New York], May 1938; *An Oxford Thesis on Love, In which L. Erectus Mentulus, Ph. D., late fellow of Oxford College, draws from his various experiences for the instruction, entertainment and greater zest of his colleagues, friends and admirers.* New York: Grove Press, 1971. [By Lupton A. Wilkinson.].*

*The Passionate Pedant: Being A New Oxford Thesis on Love, wherein L. Erectus Mentulus, late of Oxford, establishes incontrovertibly that the sexual enjoyment of women of divers races is evocative of distinctly different types and degrees of pleasure, through narratives of his own experience, with particular emphasis upon psychophysiological adumbrations et cetera, for the entertainment as well as the enlightenment of his friends. In *Cumms diversis-voluptates diversae. Done By The Hand of The Author Into A Manuscript At Oshkosh, Wisconsin* [New York] September 1939. [By Gershon Legman.] Rpt. with *Torrid Tales* as *The Oxford Professor Returns*, New York: Grove Press/Venus Library, 1971.*

*Pussy Bumping*, by L. Erectus Mentulus, n. p.: Privately printed, c. 1940. [Attributed to Robert Sewall (Kinsey Institute).].

*Torrid Tales, or, South of the Border*, [New York]: Varoni Publications [Miller Brothers?], 1950? (two

mimeographed versions). [Author unknown.] Rpt. with *The Passionate Pedant* in *The Oxford Professor Returns*. New York: Grove Press/Venus Library, 1971.

#### Attributed to Wilkinson

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## LA FONTAINE, JEAN DE

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1621–1695  
French poet

#### *Contes et nouvelles*

As something like the Woody Allen of the seventeenth century, La Fontaine rarely wrote anything that was not clearly and visibly an adaptation of an earlier source. His ribald *Contes* are based mainly on such Renaissance writers as Ariosto, the *Cent nouvelles*, the *Heptaméron*, and, most especially, Boccaccio.

Adapting such conventional rowdy stories posed special problems in the classicist 1660s–1670s, when *bienséance* was an essential rule of the classicist aesthetic. In a preface La Fontaine reacts defensively to possible suggestions that his stories were licentious or that they were hard on women. He denies any intention of attacking good morals, and he argues that true *bienséance* just means saying things in a way that fits the

subject. Anyone who might want to make Boccaccio as modest as Virgil would surely do nothing worthwhile. It is neither the true nor the *vraisemblable* that make the beauty of such stories, he says. It is simply “la manière de les conter.”

Perhaps the most striking example of such tightrope walking is La Fontaine’s very first tale, *Joconde*, adapted from Ariosto.

At the court of Lombardy, its especially handsome prince is fatigued by all the attention he receives from court women (La Fontaine never says just what is so fatiguing). He decides he needs an assistant, as handsome or handsomer than is he. One of the courtiers sends for his brother, Joconde. Joconde’s wife pleads with him not to go. She will die if he goes to court. But he rides off anyway. Having forgotten something, however, he retraces his steps—and finds his wife asleep in the arms of a gross valet. Joconde doesn’t wake them, since in such a case he would be obliged to kill them both:

## LA FONTAINE, JEAN DE

. . . il n'en fit rien;  
Et mon avis est qu'il fit bien.  
Le moins de bruit que l'on peut faire  
En telle affaire  
.Est le plus sûr de la moitié  
[ . . . he did nothing.  
And my opinion is that he did well.  
The less noise you make  
In such a business  
Is the safest by at least half.]

Joconde's good looks fade. He is somewhat consoled, however, when he discovers the prince's wife has taken a dwarf as her lover. After many preambles ("Il ne faut à la cour ni trop voir ni trop dire") he tells the prince. The prince is devastated:

Mais bientôt il le prit en homme de courage,  
En galant homme, et, pour le faire court,  
En véritable homme de cour.  
[But soon he took it as a man of courage,  
As a worldly man, and, to be brief,  
As a true courtier.]

The two of them, thoroughly disillusioned, decide to travel all over Italy seducing other people's wives. After a while, though, they think about settling down. They find a servant girl. To ensure her fidelity she will sleep between them. One night, however, the girl's boyfriend won't take no for an answer. He climbs on top of her, between the two princes, has his way with her, and as each prince wakes up he finds she is busy with someone else (presumably the other prince). The next morning each prince accuses the other of monopolizing her favors. When the girl confesses, they are disillusioned once again. They decide to go home and forget the whole thing. As is typical in classicist narrative, after some aberration, everything becomes normal again. Everything is just as it was before:

Ainsi que bons bourgeois achevons notre vie,  
Chacun pres de sa femme, et demeurons-en là  
[Just like good bourgeois let's finish our lives  
Each one close to his wife, and let's leave it at that.]

The prince and Joconde start out as handsome, superior beings. They end up being just like everybody else. The eroticism of this story consists in the racy situations—but also in La Fontaine's sly, ironic, cynical, elbow-in-the-ribs commentary:

Vous autres, bonnes gens, eussiez cru que la dame  
Une heure après eût rendu l'âme.

Moi qui sais ce que c'est que l'esprit d'une femme  
Je m'en serais à bon droit douté.  
[You other naïve people would have thought that the  
lady  
Would have given up the ghost within an hour.  
I, who know the heart of a woman, with good reason  
Would have doubted.]

Other La Fontaine tales treat *L'Oraison de Saint Julien*, in which a traveler is attacked by robbers and more or less left to die. He finds his way, however, to the house of a merry widow, who rescues and entertains him. In the *Fiancée du roi de Garbe* a princess sets out to become the bride of the king of a far off country. On the way, though, she is kidnapped, seduced, and has eight different adventures (or misadventures), before being delivered as a virgin to the king. La Fontaine writes, "Je me suis écarté de mon original . . ."

Possibly the most striking piece, typically printed with the *Contes*, is La Fontaine's *Clymène*. In this closet comedy the god Apollo complains to the nine muses that there are no more good poems about love:

Le siècle, disait-il, a gâté cette affaire:  
Lui nous parler d'amour! Il ne le sait pas faire.  
Ce qu'on n'a pas au coeur l'a-t-on dans ses écrits?  
[Worldly things have spoiled all that:  
Talk to us about love! They don't know how to do it.  
What they don't have in their hearts, how can they  
write about it?]

Apollo expresses sympathy for a certain Acante, very much in love with Clymène. The various muses try out different well known poetic styles—the eclogue, the pathetic, the comical. They pastiche the style of Clement Marot, they do the ode, they do *dizains*, all without melting the heart of Clymène.

Finally the god of love, grateful for so much poetry in his honor, decides to intervene. He whispers to Acante: "Baisez-la hardiment;/ Je lui tiendrai les mains, vous n'aurez point d'obstacle" ["Take her; don't hesitate; I'll hold her hands; you won't have any obstacle"] The rest, says Acante, is a miracle.

### Biography

La Fontaine was born in 1621 in the east-of-Paris provincial town of Château-Thierry. He is best known as the author of *Fables* (1668 and after), said to be the bestselling book of

the seventeenth century, and four books of *Contes* (1664 and after), which readers clamored for, but for which he occasionally had to apologize, and which held up his entrance into the French Academy.

HERBERT DE LEY

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## LA METTRIE, JULIEN OFFRAY DE

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1709–1751

French doctor, essayist, and philosopher

As an author of erotic texts, Julien Offray de la Mettrie is perhaps best known for his influence on the Marquis de Sade, who famously misquotes his *Discourse on Happiness*. “La Mettrie was right,” Sade writes, “when he said that it was necessary to wallow in filth like pigs; and that we should find pleasure, as the latter do, in the highest degree of corruption.” La Mettrie’s writing on erotic love was indeed scandalous, in the eyes of his eighteenth-century readers, for its participation in a form of libertine materialism influenced by a heterodox (and often hedonist) Epicurean tradition of atheist critique. With his commitment to a scepticism inherited in part from Montaigne and the seventeenth-century French libertines, La Mettrie aimed to strip both religious and philosophical orthodoxies of their pretensions to an absolute and incontrovertible truth. In their place, he set a voluptuous image of philosophical inquiry as sensual pleasure. For La Mettrie, “learning has its ecstasies, just as love does.”

In his most famous essay, *Machine Man*, La Mettrie argues in favor of an understanding of bodily processes (rather than spiritual or intellectual ones) as determining factors in human

behavior. In La Mettrie’s words, “The human body is a machine which winds itself up, a living picture of perpetual motion,” and sexual desire is a crucial part of this naturally occurring mechanism. Yet La Mettrie does not share Sade’s attachment to violence as a mode of sensual and philosophical purification. Nor does his thorough-going materialism depend on a conception of human existence as that of a coldly mechanical community of cyborgs lacking in imaginative ability. Instead, La Mettrie’s emphasis, in both his scientific works and his excursions on the joys of erotic experience, remains firmly on the extraordinary delight to be taken in the development of an innately human capacity for sensuousness (or “volupté”).

In fact, La Mettrie sees this capacity for erotic experience both as a kind of sensation—the ability to feel erotic pleasure—and as a mode of imaginative perception that he ultimately defines as the mainspring of thought itself. Not only does La Mettrie portray the quest of the philosopher for knowledge as fundamentally sensuous—a kind of intercourse with the natural world—but, in his writings on erotic pleasure (*Sensuousness* and *The Art of Pleasure*), he sees the potential for sensuousness as making access to genuine philosophical knowledge possible: “all nature is in the heart of he who feels

sensuousness.” Intellectual and sexual delight are intimately conjoined in La Mettrie’s work, since erotic feeling can function as a means of linking poetry to science, literary writing to medical discourse. All are expressions of a creative, sensual impulse which produces a commingling of human subjects and the world that surrounds them.

La Mettrie’s most widely read work is unquestionably his treatise *Machine Man*, published while he was in exile in Holland. To a certain extent, the implicit mechanical determinism of the title of this essay has overshadowed its author’s consistent interest in the connections between erotic delight and imaginative philosophical reflection. His first writing focused on this topic, the short essay initially published under the title *Sensuousness* (and later under *The School of Sensuousness*), predates *Machine Man* by about two years.

*Sensuousness* begins with a series of literary portraits in which La Mettrie distinguishes carefully between writers who are “obscene and dissolute” and those who are the “masters of the purest sensuousness.” While this categorization resembles the modern distinction between pornography and erotica, La Mettrie makes use of his taxonomy, not to extol the virtues of a more muted erotic sensibility, but to demonstrate the multifarious perceptiveness characteristic of the sensuous nature. For La Mettrie, “obscene” writers, who subscribe to a kind of fantasy of objectivity in their almost scientific portrayals of bodies, evince a limited view of human experience. “They wish to see everything and to imagine nothing,” he writes. La Mettrie’s Epicurean voluptuary, on the contrary, cultivates a state of permanently heightened sensation that renders the very act of reflection a highly pleasurable one; as a result, “to be happy, he has only to wish to be so.” The faculty most privileged by this voluptuary is thus not reason, which strips objects of the pleasure to be taken in them, but imagination, which multiplies the possibilities for delight.

These themes—as well as an emphasis on the crucial role played by the imagination—reappear in *Machine Man*, in the dedication to which La Mettrie claims that “nature is the nourishment of sensuousness, and the imagination its triumph.” However, in the *Discourse on Happiness*, published a year later, he seems to retreat somewhat from the avid sensualism of his

earlier works. “I do not pretend to make happiness consist only in sensuousness,” he writes. Nonetheless, he affirms, towards the end of the essay, “It is in any case still plaisir, sensuousness, or any other agreeable sensation which is the necessary cause of our actions.”

Despite the hesitations visible in *Discourse on Happiness*, La Mettrie reaffirmed his youthful attachment to an erotic, libidinous philosophy of pleasure before his premature death. Towards the end of his life, he reworked his *School of Sensuousness* as *The Art of Pleasure* and embraced anew (in both *The Art of Pleasure* and *The Systeme of Epicurus*) a vision of materialist philosophy as an *ars erotica*—in which, in the words of Michel Foucault, “sex serves as the basis for an initiation into knowledge”—rather than as a *scientia sexualis* aiming to dissect and discipline human sexual desire under the light of reason.

While La Mettrie’s erotic philosophy has been seen as a stepping stone on the way to the more intensely transgressive Sadean *oeuvre*, La Mettrie’s work represents in its own right an important contribution to theories of pleasure as a motive force in human existence. His understanding of sensuousness as ideally a kind of “sixth sense” at work in intellection—from memory to scientific reasoning—as well as in bodily experience stands as a significant contribution to materialist philosophy as a source, not of a gloomy determinism, but of hope and transformative possibility for humankind.

## Biography

Born in Saint-Malo, 23 November 1709. Attended colleges of Coutance and Caen before enrolling at the Collège du Plessis, Paris; began studies in natural science and philosophy at the Collège d’Harcourt, 1725. Student of medicine at the Faculty of Paris, 1727–1731; received medical degree from University of Reims, 1733. Continued medical studies in Leiden, 1733–1734. Returned to Saint-Malo to begin medical practice, 1734. Married in 1739; one daughter and one son, who dies in 1748. Left Brittany to return to Paris, falling in with libertine and free-thinking circles, 1742. Served as physician to the Duke de Grammont and to a regiment of the French Guards during a series of military campaigns, 1742–1745; placed in charge of military hospitals in Flanders, 1745. Fled to Holland after his

*Natural History of the Soul* was condemned and burned by the Parliament of Paris, 1746. Obligated to leave Holland for Potsdam after 1747 publication of *Machine Man*, 1748. Served as “lecteur” and doctor, as well as a member of the Berlin Academy of Sciences, in the court of Frederick II, 1748–1751. Died, of “indigestion,” at Frederick’s court, 11 November 1751.

NATANIA MEEKER

### Selected Works

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## LA MORLIÈRE, JACQUES ROCHETTE DE

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1719–1785

French Novelist

La Morlière’s libertine novel *Angola, histoire indienne* (1746) uses the device of the oriental fairytale to provide both a portrait of French court society at the middle of the eighteenth century and a fascinating glimpse at how people actually read and responded to erotic novels. The novel opens with the story of how, at Angola’s birth, all the fairies of the earth were

invited by his father, King Erzeb-can, to give him gifts. As it happened, the supremely ugly Mutine, offended by the father’s indelicate gift to her of a mirror, bestows on the baby the dubious gift of patience, a patience to be exercised when he comes to see his eventual beloved pass first through the arms of a rival. Appalled at what Mutine has done, the queen of the fairies, Lumineuse, a female version of Louis XV, proposes to unravel the curse by having Angola come to her court at puberty. There,

the reigning spirit of *libertinage* and its serial conquests forestalling any enslavement to love will surely provide an effective remedy to the fate that threatens.

When the young Angola arrives at this thinly disguised version of Versailles, the fairytale motif is dropped and the novel becomes a witty satire of Queen Lumineuse's utopia of *libertinage*. She makes clear to the young man that his goal is not to avoid passion, but to remain its master. More than any other, it is the passion of love that must be carefully modulated. Guided by his friend Almaïr and his thoroughly non-possessive relation with his mistress, Aménis, Angola must learn never to confuse the joy of seduction with any one of the changing configurations of partners that occur as its results. To confuse coupling with one particular couple is to set oneself against the forces of change and movement that preside over the human condition. When the timid Angola finds himself infatuated with Zobéide, a close friend of Aménis and someone Almaïr also desires, the perfect occasion has arisen for Angola to learn the libertine's version of patience, a patience that will undo Mutine's curse by insulating him from jealousy and suffering. Recognizing that moving apart is just as integral a stage within the process of coupling as coming together, Almaïr explains that he feels no jealousy toward Zobéide's obvious preference for the recently arrived Angola.

The fact that tomorrow will be unlike today, that he and Zobéide may one day be just as probable a couple as Angola and Aménis, endows all involved in such displacements, the women no less than the men, with a lucidity beyond possessiveness and suffering. Serial seductions are the best prophylaxis to the self-inflicted suffering of passionate love. *Angola* does not, however, become either a guidebook for masculine seduction (Crébillon's abiding temptation) or an illustration of feminine resistance and control (Marivaux's abiding temptation).

La Morlière subsumes both these options within a larger and more fundamental dynamic proper to the couple as a mutually defining duality. *Angola* is a story of coupling itself, of coupling as a form of conviviality redefining those who enact its rituals and run its risks. La Morlière lays bare a protocol of social and sexual exchange that lies outside the traditional

options represented by the libertine's celebration of deception and the idealist's solipsism of passion.

Angola's story also tells us something otherwise unnoticed about Enlightenment reading practices, about how and why people so voraciously consumed the scenarios of desire making up the libertine novel. The chapters describing Angola's sexual initiation by none other than Lumineuse foreground the reading together of an erotic novel as a practice that allows Angola finally to overcome the timidity that has so far been his lot. Swept up by this reading as a couple, Angola is able to raise his eyes from the page and complete with Lumineuse the transition from the novel's third person to the first and second person of their own coming together. Emphasizing the contagious desire flowing between the novel his characters read and the scene they enact, La Morlière's staccato alternation between excerpts from their reading and descriptions of their actions breaks down the separation between reading and acting in such a way that life becomes the perfect imitation of art. With this open passage between *reading as a couple* and *coupling while reading* as the structural and semantic center of his novel, La Morlière raises to the power of two the "mirror effect" so frequent in libertine novels of a character who enacts a scene that has been read.

The last stage of Angola's story begins when, having given in to the dangerous powers of the imagination, he falls in love with a woman he knows only through the portrait of her he has happened to come upon in a jewel box belonging to Lumineuse. When he actually meets and falls in love with Luzéide, whom Lumineuse has thoughtfully summoned to her court, he becomes a man enslaved to full-blown passion. Discovering that passion and patience are both rooted in the Latin *patior*, to suffer, Angola's proposal of marriage may be accepted by Luzéide, but, returning to the fairytale motif, she is first stolen away from Lumineuse's court by Angola's rival, the evil genie Makis. Angola may, with the help of a magic coach, find her and bring her back to court, but not before he has fallen under the spell of Makis's talisman which has the power to make him fall soundly asleep at the very moment he is about to make love. The novel's darkest scene comes when, as Angola nods off, Makis takes his place in the newlyweds' bed. The next morning, when

Angola awakens, Luzéide is more than a bit perplexed by his lament that he is now certain his only hope of overcoming his syncopated ardor lies in the reputed powers of a magic brew available only from King Moka.

*Angola* may end with a marriage; but it is a marriage parodied even before it is consummated. Substituting Makis for the dozing groom reasserts the trope of coupling as a challenge to the exclusivity of passion. Rather than ending his novel with a pious allegiance to marital monogamy, La Morlière keeps it centered on the polymorphous mobility of couples animated by a contagious mimesis of the erotic inspired by its novelistic representation.

### Biography

Born in Grenoble, France, on 22 April 1719. Studies in Grenoble after which he is placed by his father in apprenticeship for a crown office. A propensity for brawls and indelicate seductions forced his father to send him to Paris in the Musketeer corps from which he was soon discharged for dishonorable conduct. Began writing novels for money, but his only real success in that genre was *Angola, histoire indienne* published in 1746. Briefly expelled from Paris and later imprisoned for various seductions and swindles of young married women. Became a figure of intimidation and braggadocio in the venal underworld of pamphleteers while pimping actresses and working as a police spy. From 1750 to 1761 he headed up the most powerful theatrical claque in Paris, making and breaking playwrights' reputations at the Comédie Française and Théâtre des Italiens with the hired applause and boos he could provide. From 1761 on, his swindles, forgeries, and pandering were punctuated by expulsions from Paris and stays in jail. Lived in progressively

more dire circumstances under a series of assumed names that kept him one step ahead of the police until his death in a rented room in Paris on 9 February 1785.

THOMAS M. KAVANAGH

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## LA PUTTANA ERRANTE

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*La Puttana Errante*, the title of two sixteenth-century Venetian works, one in verse, one in prose, both probably products of sometime secretaries and imitators of Pietro Aretino. The title, attributed to the pen of Aretino without specifying which of the works was meant, became proverbial in Renaissance England as an *exemplum* of erotic/obscene writing characteristic of libertine Italy (Donne, Guilpin, Harvey, and Marston, among others, make this point).

The verse version of *La Puttana Errante* was written by Lorenzo Veniero (1510–1556), a Venetian aristocrat and follower of Aretino. In a poem written after the appearance of his *Puttana* entitled *La Zaffetta*, (a poem which details a trent-uno, or gang-bang of Angela Zaffetta, a noted Venetian courtesan), Veniero claims that he wrote *La Zaffetta* in order to demonstrate that he, and not Aretino, was the author of the verse *Puttana*. Scholars have accepted this claim. The poem is a mock epic in four long cantos of ottava rima, delivering an account of a true wandering and transgressive whore. The whore of the poem is an unnamed figure who is an embodiment of extraordinary female lust. Scholars have claimed that the whore is based on one Elena Ballarina, a Venetian courtesan against whom Veniero is reported to have developed a strong antipathy. Some scholars have seen the poem as a commentary on Italy's political, social, and literary scene as well as noting what seems to be an exceptionally misogynistic tone in the poem. The whore is certainly a parody of the conquering female warrior of Italian epic, in this instance we have a heroine who battles with her cunt and ass, fucking all comers, whether Christian or infidel, king or commoner, pope or animal. All are serviced in this poem.

The poem imitates one characteristic of erotic writing established by Aretino by insisting upon using vulgar language. Indeed, the poem begins by invoking Aretino as the inspiration for the verse. The poem differs from Aretino's dialogues by its very form (cantos, ottava rima) that clearly conjures up the epics of Boiardo, Ariosto, and

Pulci; sometimes the connection is direct (e.g., here is a filthy whore "who did more with her cunt than Orlando/Did with his sword and lance"). The whore makes progress through Italy, conquering with her cunt and ass everyone (and everything) along the way, including the armies of France and Germany (thus providing ammunition for Erasmi's view of the poem as an allegory "amara e irose delle sventure d'Italia"). At one point the whore is awarded a degree in whoredom from the University of Siena and holds forth in a disputation about cocks. The poem concludes with her triumph in Rome (seen as a parody of Petrarch's *Trionfi*), a procession of all of the men she has fucked, among others, and a huge representation of a cock. The procession ends at the Ponte Sisto, the traditional workplace for whores in Rome. The power of the wandering whore is, on the whole, depicted in a negative fashion; the aim of the poem is certainly not the arousal of the reader.

Exactly the opposite claim might be made of the prose version of *La Puttana Errante*. This work cannot be conclusively attributed. Some scholars have argued for Aretino himself as the author; others favor Nicolo Franco (1515–1570). Franco, it should be noted, began as one of Aretino's secretaries but became a notorious enemy, with his most virulent attacks against Aretino appearing in his *Priapea*, an updating of the classical anthology of the same name. Franco was executed by the Inquisition in Rome in 1570. The prose *Puttana Errante* is regarded as one of the most influential models for pornographic works of succeeding centuries. The work comes closest to providing what Steven Marcus has called a pornotopia, especially in two characteristics: the single intention of the author (arousal of the reader) and the extensive use of taboo words. It is also characteristic of much Renaissance pornographic writing in its obsession with sexual positions, a strong anti-clerical bent, and a "how to" section on pleasing men. The work begins in an Aretine mode as a dialogue between Maddalena and Giulia in which Maddalena recounts her life's story to

the younger woman. There is some attempt at a plot line, but it is the barest kind of business, concocted merely to allow one copulation scene after another. What is remarkable about the work is the author's attempt at what might be seen as psychological realism as he describes events from Maddalena's point of view at the time she experiences each event, especially in her early years as she gets initiated successively into progressive modes of sexuality: masturbation, same-sex sex, and heterosexual sex.

There is increasingly less dialogue, much extended first-person narration, extensive use of voyeurism, many details of living arrangements—all in the service of providing one scene of sexual activity after another. And so we get scenes of Maddalena copulating with her first boyfriend, Roberto, in a number of positions, most of them of the standing or sitting variety, because of the living arrangements. Such details might cause us to think “realism,” but in fact these details are all in the service of the Renaissance obsession with positions; what the author would convince us of is that at any place, at any time, under any conditions, people will engage in sex. Metaphors for sexual organs and acts are used occasionally, but this is a work primarily about cocks, cunts, and fucking. Maddalena's progress moves to her profession as a courtesan, with negative views of her interactions with the clergy, and it concludes with a recapping and

naming by Giulia of the thirty-five positions for sexual intercourse that Maddalena has described (up to fifty-two in the Galderisi version).

DAVID O. FRANTZ

### Selected Works

All editions of these two works are problematic in terms of attribution and availability. Most easily accessible for the general reader are, for the verse version:

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## LA SOURICIÈRE; OR THE MOUSE-TRAP

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*La Souricière; or The Mouse-Trap* was first published in London under the pseudonym of ‘Timothy Touchit, Esq.’ The subtitle declares it, ‘A facetious and sentimental excursion through part of Austrian Flanders and France being a divertissement [sic] for both sexes,’ an oblique reference to Laurence Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey though France and Italy*. The story is about a gentleman and his observations of his

fellow passengers while traveling from Dover to Bruges. The book is in two volumes, and is in keeping with a genre of erotic skits on popular travel writing of the day.

The preface lays out the tone of the book offering hints as to the nature of its sexual and jocular content; ‘The following extraordinary Performance, was written by a gentleman well known in the *Republic of Letters*: and it displays

LA SOURICIÈRE; OR THE MOUSE-TRAP

much wit, good-sense, and fertility of invention, particularly in ludicrous parts, where his allusions and illustrations are peculiar to himself, and have a singular title to originality.' These comments pertain to the type of analogies he employs when making reference to sex.

The main principal of the narrator's work is to provide the reader with a survey of his fellow travelers. The author's intentions are explained in the Advertisement: 'the governing principle throughout this performance is, to exhibit the imperfections and indiscretions of mankind, not for *imitation* but *admonition*: to display the perverseness and frailty of human nature, in the commission of errors repugnant to repeated conviction; and to enforce this great moral principle, that repenting for past offences, and a change of life, are indispensable duties to secure terrestrial happiness.'

The traits and sexual activities of the principal characters are described through *double-entendres*, all italicised to ensure readers do not miss the joke or are left unaware of its true meaning. The first section opens with the narrator's declaration of his plan to travel the Continent in search of novelty. He plans, with his 'Mouse-Trap' to '*catch the manners as they rise*.' The dialogue is steeped in metaphors about the penis as a tree of life, a mouse-trap, and a barometer. The term 'mouse' was traditionally used as a term of endearment for the vagina, the mouse-trap evolving from this usage.

The narrator attacks the state of the prostitutes, "—\*\*\*\*\*, a plague take all *stars*;—aye, and *garters* too. They are become cheap trash of late days. The venerable Oak is slow of growth; but Mushrooms are of quicker vegetation. Pluck them from the bed of Honour. Return them to their native soil. To the dunghill, away,—away—Foh! how they stink.' He blames the condition of the prostitutes for his sluggish sexual response and attributes to them the causes of fungal growth. The implication is that whores are responsible for the spread of venereal disease. He recalls an earlier experience when 'passing along the *Strand* one evening, I was accosted by a fair lady, who, though I was a perfect stranger, professed great affection, in the most endearing manner, invited me to her place of abode. I was shocked at her familiarity, and wishing to get rid of her, declared myself a married man. It did not abate her importunities;—she continued to solicit my intimacy.

*I have no money, child*, said I.—'Go to the devil,' said she, and departed—How dreadful! that inclination, or necessity, should *blur the grace and blush of modesty*," The author uses displays of disingenuous shock to satirize the moral standards of the day.

The narrator takes off in his post-chaise but chastises the post-boy who is driving it for his cruelty in flogging the horse too vehemently. A keen eye for detail allows for colorful vignettes of the characters he meets. On board ship from Dover to Ostend, he meets a fat woman with her young daughter and young gentleman, Mr. Lustring, en route to Bruges. Although the gentleman is elegant, he is foppishly dressed, yet has a 'certain *Je-ne-sçai-quoi*. Because of his effeminate dress, he supposes him to be a dancing master but, during a *tête-à-tête* between the young lady and the fop, he discovers that 'the *distinguishing characteristics* was not in his heels\_\_," an allusion to his sexual prowess.

The narrator derides his own 'mouse-trap' (a euphemism for the penis) since it does not respond to the charms of the older woman, "I wish'd the *Mouse-Trap* at the devil, not *having all the good gifts of nature* then at my command.' He describes the state, not only of his own sexual ardour, but that of the younger woman, whose '*empyrosis* was ardent in the extreme.' Within the work, the author manages to satirize the experiments of the Royal Society, in keeping with some of the other erotic writings of the eighteenth century: 'Had that learned body of philosophers, the *Royal Society*, been present, it might have given rise to a tedious debate, to have investigated, whether *something* more simple in its construction than a *fire-engine*, would not have distinguished the young lady's conflagration.'

The older woman's search for pleasure is mocked by her daughter who declares, 'How can you talk as you do? It is time for one of your years to give pleasures up and to think of more serious matters.' Her mother retorts that old folks have a right to some enjoyment. Her daughter, Miss Polly, is escorted by a waiter of nineteen or twenty years old called Jemmy, the 'abundance of his endowments' being his 'particular qualifications.' The narrator recognizes that both the older and younger woman are sexually adventurous and there is an implication that lasciviousness is an inherited quality: 'What is bred in the bone will never be out of the flesh.'

The daughter displays her mother's carnal appetites and is caught in bed with Jemmy who agrees to marry her but only on condition that her mother settles £10,000 on him as a dowry. He declares he must provide for the Fille de Chambre since he has already seduced her. Polly and Jemmy marry. The women meet up with their female cousin. At this stage our narrator leaves the boat and goes on to Bruges.

Continuing his journey, he boards another ship en route to Bruges. He continues with his descriptions of the passengers, this time making use of pelagic analogies. Again, this was a common eighteenth-century technique to describe sex in couched terminology: "On a cursory view round the Cabbin, I was convinced many of the passengers could display *Latitude* as well as *Longitude*; and that the various methods of sailing, and arts of navigation, were perfectly known to them; for some were come booming, having crowded all the sail they could, by making the most of their *canvas*. Some had a reef or two in their *fore-sail*, and some were furl'd. Some were ready to traverse, and others prepared to go right before the wind. Some were booms; some cross-jacks; some were defective in their bolt-spirits and some disabled in their rudders."

On a passenger boat to Ghent, he meets a mendicant friar who advises him to take up with a pretty Fille de Chambre at a certain hotel, at which he later shares dinner with four gentleman. After becoming inebriated, the young men attack one of the waiters for which the narrator berates

them for displaying behavior unbecoming of a gentleman. He ensures they make amends to the waiter and pay damages to the host. Meanwhile, the protagonist enjoys himself with the Fille de Chambre who creeps into his room. He describes his erection as a barometer at full level: "On this she prepared what I wanted, and by collision effected a deliquation which produced a happy crisis; and after repeating the application three or four times, *pro re mata*, as physicians say, the elevation of the Barometer fell down to changeable, and I became relieved and composed."

In the following section, 'The Jaunt to Brussels,' he engages a male guide, Francis, who is unemployed. The guide is a modest fellow who plays sweet music on his mandolin. Leaving Brussels they come across two female fellow passengers of eighteen and twenty-five years old. Once more, his barometer grows, upon which he compares his mouse-trap to Francis's Mandelin [sic]. Although one of the young ladies is attracted to Francis, she ends up in bed with our narrator, such is the 'magnitude of the Maypole of love.' The story ends in Paris, where the narrator finds a willing female companion who understands 'the necessary arts of bringing the point-principal to its proper bearing.'

JULIE PEAKMAN

### Edition

Anon. *La Souricière; or The Mouse-trap*. (Printed in London for J. Parsons of Pasternoster-Row, 1794).

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## LABÉ, LOUISE

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1520/24–1564  
French poet

How did Louise Labé, the daughter of a rope maker, become so famous, or perhaps more accurately, infamous by the 1550s? So famous, indeed, that John Calvin would refer to her as a "common whore" while the poet Jean Antoine de Baïf nicknamed her "belle rebelle" [beautiful

rebel]. The answer to these questions relies on understanding of both the poetic traditions of the era and of Labé's environment. In sixteenth century France, the silk industry made Lyons a wealthy city. Trade, proximity to Italy, and major publishing houses, established Lyons as a clear rival to Paris as a site of literature and culture. Poets flourished and literary salons began to form. It is in this atmosphere that

## LABÉ, LOUISE

Louise Labé, a bourgeois, was exposed to the world of letters. Yet the role of women in that society curtailed: they were the subject of poetry, not its creator. The beloved stood on a pedestal, an object of longing, yet unattainable. The poetic dialectics were built on the repeated rejection of an erotic relationship and unsatisfied desire.

It might be more accurate to say that there are three Louise Labés: the woman who lived in Lyon and about whom we have only sketchy verifiable biographical information; the myth of Louise Labé, a literary creation, existing in the poetry and the reflections of her contemporaries and of countless later writers; and finally the ground-breaking poet. The real Labé appears to have led a life that pushed the limits of the norm for a sixteenth-century woman of the middle-class. Speculations and rumors about her private life—Did she have lovers? How many? Who?—fed the legends that followed Labé through the centuries. The fictionalized Labé tells us much about how women, and more particularly, a woman who broke with traditions, was viewed by her contemporaries and has continued to occupy the literary imagination of both men and women. Both of these figures depend for their fame on the writer. Labé's consciousness of her role as a writer and her creation of a female poetic voice that rejected the Petrarchan/Neo-platonic ideal of love in favor a reciprocal emotional and physical relationship make her one of the most original writers of the French Renaissance.

### ***Œuvres [Works], 1555***

Labé's complete works, *Œuvres*, first published in 1555, consisted of a dedicatory epistle, a debate between Love and Folly, three elegies, twenty-four sonnets, and twenty-four poems written about her, presented anonymously. The collection itself was innovative, combining genres and positioning Labé both as subject and as object. Labé dedicated her edition to Clémence de Bourges, a young noblewoman. The letter reads as a proto-feminist manifesto and also reveals Labé's sense of irony. Labé calls for women to become writers and views writing as an access to pleasure and a way of displaying their talents. Nonetheless, she knows that women should not "show themselves alone in public" so Labé invokes Clémence as her guide.

That love dominates the collection is evident in *Le débat d'amour et de folie* [*The Debate of Love and Folly*]. This prose text, written in a style that blends the medieval debate genre, with a theatrical presentation, explores the conceit "Love is blind." When the debate begins, Love (Cupid) has been blinded by Folly, as a result of arguments between them over which one is greater. Although Venus calls for Folly's summary punishment, Jupiter orders a trial. Apollo serves as the advocate for Cupid, while Mercury is spokesman for Folly. Apollo argues that Cupid must have his sight returned and stresses that disasters in Love have always been the fault of Folly, not Cupid. Mercury takes the more cynical position, saying that Folly's blinding of Cupid was justified and, in fact, will do him little harm. Folly has always been the source of Love's greatness. While both speakers present long defenses, Mercury's description of a woman in love, rejected by her lover, announces the main theme of the *Elegies* and the *Sonnets*. In the end, the decision on the dispute is postponed, and Folly is ordered to serve as Cupid's guide until the question is resolved.

The *Débat* is followed by three *Elégies* that introduce the poet and her coming to writing. The tripartite structure of the elegies forms its own narrative. Central to "Elegy I," addressed to women readers, is the notion of the poet as "everywoman" who has been betrayed by her love. Love plays a dual role: it/he functions as both the source of her earlier happiness and now, of her lament. Apollo has filled her heart with "poetic fury," allowing her to write of her joys and miseries. "Elegy II," which speaks to her absent lover, foregrounds the themes of separation and abandonment, exploring the poet's refusal to believe that she has been deserted. She affirms that none could love as she does but beyond that, she emphasizes her worth and how many others desire her. Thus, although speaking from an apparent position of weakness, the poet never truly betrays herself. The elegy ends ironically with an epitaph for the poet, her body consumed by the fires of her love, yet the spark of love lives on in her ashes, and can only be quenched by the tears of her beloved. "Elegy III," turns to the women of Lyons, asking that they not condemn her "foolishness." The poet describes her character, showing that despite her efforts she was conquered by love and that love has endured.

She ends with a request that Love inspire a passion as strong, or even stronger, in her beloved so that together they could better bear its burdens. Thus, the cycle both reprises some of the themes of the *Debate* and leads to the *Sonnets*.

The *Sonnets*, by far Labé's most famous works, develop the love scenario sketched in the *Elegies*. Although the poems do not follow a strict chronological order, the main elements of the poet's love affair all appear. What makes this series stand out from the typical Renaissance love sonnets is the overt sensuality and emphasis on physical love. As a signal of her rejection of the Petrarchan tradition, "Non hauria Ulysse ne qualqun'altro mai [Never would Ulysses nor anyone else]," the first sonnet in the cycle, is written in Italian, a language she abandons for the following twenty-three. Fire and water appears again and provide the central metaphors of the sonnets. Love is associated with burning, with flames, with the sun, while the poet's tears provide the counterpoint. In an echo of Elegy II, her love does not grow cold despite her tears, nor are they sufficient to remedy the pain. The poet's corporality, "I am the body," plays with the convention of woman as body and man as soul/spirit. Sonnet 18 makes clear the poet rejects the model of the cold woman, epitomized by the goddess Diana, rather she is like a nymph who has succumbed a man she meets along the road. Sonnet 13, "Oh si j'estois en ce beau sein ravie" ["Oh if I were held to that handsome breast and ravished"] and Sonnet 17, "Baise m'encor, rebaise et baise" ["Kiss me again, kiss again, kiss"] suggest that the end to the poet's suffering is to be found through a sexual relationship. The erotic desire expressed is predicated reciprocity: "Give me one of your most loving [kisses]/I'll give back four more, hotter than coals." Nonetheless, these episodes are the fantasies of the poet who rebukes her short-lived love and hope that he now suffers as much as she. The closing sonnet, "Ne reprenez Dames si j'ay ayez" ["Ladies, do not blame me if I have loved"] ends the cycle with the theme of everywoman, and a cautionary note against suffering much for love as Labé has.

When read together, Labé's *Oeuvres* (Works) form a coherent whole, expressing views on

theories of love, on women's role in society, and revealing one woman's transformation of the poetic conventions of her era.

### Biography

Born in Lyon, probably between 1520 and 1524, daughter of Pierre Charly, a rope maker, and Etiennette Roybet. Received a private education including reading and writing Latin, Italian, possibly Spanish, horsebackriding, possibly fencing, and later music. Meets poet Clément Marot, 1536. In 1542 (according to a contemporary source), may have fallen in love with a soldier. In 1542 or 1543, married to Ennemond Perrin, also a rope maker, some twenty-five years her elder. In 1545, holds her own literary salon frequented by Lyons' leading poets, humanists, wealthy French and Italians, and others. 1548, first public criticism of Labé, followed by other attacks over a ten-year period. Possible liaison with the poet Olivier de Magny, 1553. Publication of Works in 1555, followed by three more editions in 1556. Husband dies sometime between 1555 and 1557. Died in Parcieux, at her country home outside Lyon, in 1564.

EDITH J. BENKOV

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## LACLOS, PIERRE CHODERLOS DE

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1741–1803

French novelist

### *Les liaisons dangereuses*

One of the most famous and superbly crafted of all eighteenth-century novels, *Les liaisons dangereuses*, is constructed with all the rigor of a piece of military engineering. The two principal characters, the Vicomte de Valmont and the Marquise de Merteuil, vaunt to each other, in a long series of letters that furnish the novel its backbone, complex amorous exploits they could not confide to anyone else.

Basically, there are two interlocking plots. The first, initiated by Merteuil, is the corruption of innocent Cécile de Volanges by way of a personal vengeance against Gercourt, whom Cécile is to marry, in which she enlists Valmont's help. The second is the seduction of the virtuous and angelic Mme de Tourvel by Valmont. Valmont and Merteuil make a sort of contract by which, after each succeeds separately, they will renew their own earlier liaison. In the unfolding of these separate and combined processes they demonstrate their ability to manipulate numerous simultaneous affairs without the marquise compromising her reputation for wisdom and virtue, and without Valmont losing his for glamour and desirability. A number of different axes of correspondence offer multiple perspectives on the unfolding events, but always, until near the end, their own dominates and steers the reader, who thus shares in their kind of godlike knowledge of everything that is going on. The virtuosity of the two protagonists as shrewd and witty letter-writers has always been recognized; another notable aspect of Laclos's originality is the differentiated styles lent to the numerous correspondents of the 175 letters that make up the novel.

Valmont and Merteuil have a system which they share, and which must remain their own secret: "I am tempted to believe that you and I are the only people in society who are really worth something" [*je suis tenté croire qu'il n'y*

que vous et moi dans le monde qui valions quelque chose'] (letter 100). It is crucial to their game that one never fall in love, and thereby perhaps (it is a matter of interpretation) comes their downfall.

All the dangerous liaisons in this book are sexual ones, even though they have broader implications for a society where predators find easy victims, and all the more so that its rules harbor and protect them. Valmont's reputation is known to all, yet civility requires he be treated with the same politeness as anyone else of his rank; and even Madame de Tourvel, alerted early to her peril, is unable to undo the effects of his consummate acting when he claims to have reformed.

Critics have virtually all agreed that Merteuil is the stronger, and more intriguing, character of the two: not necessarily better drawn from a novelistic perspective, but endowed with the greater force. This fact she herself asserts and explains in terms of the social structure in her long, autobiographical letter 81: "born to avenge my sex and to master yours, I was able to create means previously unknown." This imbalance is the necessary result of their unequal social positions; the conventions of womanhood are in themselves formidable obstacles for her to overcome. Precisely because a man can be a rake openly whereas a woman's reputation would be undone by the same conduct, she has had to erect a superior level of understanding and dissimulation into a system in order to indulge herself the way Valmont can with much less effort. Their methodical strategic and psychological machine grinds inexorably forward, the conclusions being pretty much the logical working out of the original ingredients, which is indeed how these two characters imagine things—except that at some point their own complicity degenerates suddenly into war.

The ultimate breakdown of their relations admits of more than one explanation. One is that Valmont—despite himself—falls in love with Tourvel; this unavowed and, on his part,

perhaps unrecognized passion undermines all his former principles, and because of this he cannot prevent his own destruction at the hands of Merteuil, before whom he cannot bear to lose face. Another is that he is fundamentally in love with Merteuil and always has been, and when finally spurned by her cannot resist, out of ire and frustration, defying her to the perilous limit. A third is that from the outset their own emulation coupled with rivalry, and finally antagonism, ultimately makes any truce between them, let alone a loving and constant relationship, totally impossible. Or one can hypothesize some combination of these factors, which are not mutually exclusive.

It is another aspect of the elegance and brilliant language of Merteuil and Valmont that for all their erotic preoccupations, nothing vulgar ever escapes their pens. Except for one letter of Valmont's written in the presence of a prostitute (letter 48), which is an explicit parody based on the conflation of sexual and amorous terminology, the designation of sexual acts is always more allusive than direct. Despite Valmont's allusion to the "technical terms" he teaches Cécile, no instruction in the mechanics of sex can be obtained from reading *Les liaisons dangereuses*, outside of the fact that it is often performed in bed and often at night; one cannot read this text to learn how to do it, as one can with many novels of sexual initiation such as *L'École des filles* or *Histoire de Dom Bougre*. Cécile and her beau Danceny are in a sense initiated along the way, but this is not a novel of sexual initiation: the main protagonists are not neophytes but veterans. The work has been subjected to a number of quite different interpretations, but Laclos's intentions, which are sufficiently indicated by both its title and epigraph (taken from Rousseau's *Julie*: "I have seen the morals of my time, and I have published these letters") are not in doubt. Perhaps not a moral novel, and certainly not a moralistic one, *Les liaisons dangereuses* depicts a society in serious crisis, morally rudderless and endlessly repeating its own errors, unable to regenerate itself. The fact that the reader shares the privileged perspective of the most morally deplorable characters, however, imposes a certain sympathetic empathy with them and thereby a degree of investment in their successes. Its posture thus has appeared to many ultimately ambiguous, as has its overall meaning.

## Biography

Born in Amiens into a recently ennobled family of moderate means, Pierre François Ambroise Choderlos de Laclos was a career military officer, stationed notably in Grenoble, where he spent six years, and later in La Rochelle. Amidst several other writings and theatrical attempts, only his novel, which created a great and lasting sensation, has been broadly remembered, and he never had a full-fledged literary career. He entered the service of the Duke d'Orléans in 1788 and, though he became an active Jacobin and returned to the army as brigadier artillery general in 1791, narrowly escaped being guillotined with the duke (now Philippe Égalité) in 1793. He ended his career a general, commander of artillery in Naples under Napoleon, and died during military operations in that region.

PHILIP STEWART

## Editions

The perduring *Liaisons dangereuses* has rarely been out of print, and since there are few textual problems almost any of the many available editions in French can be considered reliable. The reference standard is Laurent Versini's edition of Laclos's *Œuvres complètes* (Paris: Pléiade, 1979), which superseded that of Maurice Allem (1932) in the same series.

It has been translated many times, the first in 1784, anonymously, under the title *Dangerous Connections*. Ernest Dowson's translation of 1898 was entitled *Les Liaisons dangereuses* but became *Dangerous Acquaintances* in a 1940 reprint (London: Nonesuch). The title *Dangerous Acquaintances* was the one used by Richard Aldington in 1924, a version re-issued by numerous publishers over time under both that title and those of *Dangerous Liaisons* (Signet) and *Les Liaisons dangereuses* (Pocket Books, Bantam, Knopf, and others). P.W.K. Stone's version was published as *Les Liaisons dangereuses* by Penguin in 1961 and reproduced in 1997 in *The Libertine Reader* (New York: Zone). Other translations are by Lowell Bair (1962), Christopher Hampton (1985), Howard Davies (1986) and Douglas Parmée (1995).

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## LAFERRIÈRE, DANY

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1953–

Haitian and Canadian journalist and novelist

With the release in 1985 of *Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer*, translated and published in English two years later with an abridged and slightly modified title, *How to Make Love to a Negro*—which suggests a passivity of the black man absent of the original title—Dany Laferrière makes his entrance in literature. At the same time, he gets literary recognition and the reputation of an erotic provocative writer enhanced by his second book *Eroshima* (1987), which, beyond the echo to Duras' title, refers more to the bomb as metaphor of party or explosive woman than death. Moreover, this collection of short narratives is a version of "Paradis du dragueur noir" [Black Cruiser's Paradise] by the anonymous narrator-novelist of *How to Make Love*, nicknamed Vieux [Man] by his roommate, Boubou. Indeed, cut off from the original manuscript on request of the publisher, this fictional novel of *How to Make Love*, never quoted or summarized, becomes a real book, in which the main character-narrator is once again anonymous, but this

time nicknamed Tosei by his mistress of Japanese descent, Hoki and becomes initiated to the erotic and literary Japanese world. Hence, unlike *How to Make Love*, in which Man mostly went around with young white Anglophone girls, in *Eroshima*, the narrator was more often with Asian women. He also shifted from a student world to the North American professional artistic milieu—photographs, mannequins, musicians, and so on—from Montreal to some of the world's capitals. Even though *Eroshima* seems more erotic than *How to Make Love*—the main character having first an erotico-exotic function, the lover or ex-lover of Hoki—each book describes less than ten short erotic scenes, of which some are rather fantasized as those of Man's neighbor Belzebuth, or the lesbians at Puerto Rico's International Airport in *Eroshima*. Like in life, one is talking more about sex than enjoying it.

These two books of the same mood and period—which belong to the so called North American part of Laferrière's works that critics like Dennis F. Essar or Jacques Pelletier contrast to the Haitian universe of novels as *L'Odeur du café* or *Le goût des jeunes filles*, even though

this last narrative takes place in both spaces, and in *Eroshima*, some stories are framed in European or Caribbean capitals (Berlin, Port-au-Prince, San Juan, and so on)—are not truly erotic novels at first glance. Sex is rather a pretext, the “open sesame” to the gates of creativity, even fame. The first one, novel of a novel, concerns more the literary discourse or universe than eroticism. The second one, novel of celebration or vanity (as in vanity book), presents a series of real or virtual celebrity: Jean-Michel Basquiat, Denise Bombardier, Norman Mailer, V.S. Naipul, and so on. Moreover, in *How to Make Love* as in *Eroshima*, the status of the women depends on their links to the literary or artistic milieu, for the key women figures are mainly Miz Literature, the Quebec star, Carole Laure of which Man is always carrying a picture, the writer and journalist, Denise Bombardier, or Hoki, the photograph, friend of Leonard Cohen and John Lennon. Hence, to parody Sherry Simon’s title article on *How to Make Love*, in those stories the *geopolitics of sex is sign of the narrator’s culture*, at least sign of a quest of culture as *jouissance*.

Not until Laferrière’s fourth novel, *Le goût des jeunes filles* (1992)—of which the English title, *Dining with the Dictator*, erases its erotic feature and its Proustian reference—, and especially *La chair du maître* (1997), his eighth book, does one read his true erotic stories, those where sexual initiation, pleasure, and perversion are the main purpose. To some extent, politics is omnipresent in *Dining*, but it is rather the framework of the erotic performance. Indeed, the assumed fear, which push the young male protagonist to stay weekend long in the house of his neighbor, Miki, a den of “sharks,” which apparently are looking for him, is pretext to satisfy a very old curiosity—the desire to get into this (erotic) world of girls which fascinates him. Indeed, since the opening of fictional film framed in the novel, the voice over, which is that of the boy named Dany, stated clearly: “Miki’s house is on the other side of the street [...] I dream the day when, I, too, will go to heaven, across the street” (*Dining* 36).

The politics is also present in *La Chair*, even in the more erotic stories as “Nice girls do it also,” in which a white American girl forces her black lover to have sex with her, while her surprised mother is watching the couple without

their knowing. In fact, the politics appears under the mask of sexual confrontation as one can see in the short story entitled, “l’Ange exterminateur,” when Tina (a poor misfit girl) assaults Anabelle (a very rich beauty), rapes her with rage, forces her to yap like a dog, and takes her pleasure from the suffering and degradation of her victim. Hence in *La chair*, the *bed* becomes a *field* for race or class struggle. This collection is no doubt Laferrière’s book which expresses more intensely what could be considered as his erotic poetics, which is quite different from the *happy eroticism* of his senior compatriot René Depestre, or Alix Renaud, probably the first Haitian to publish an erotic novel, *À corps joie* (1985). Inspired in part by Chester Himes—of which the Remington should be used to write *Paradis du dragueur noir* in *Comment*—Laferrière’s eroticism makes each partner a well defined socio-historical type, representative of a group fighting another one, using another for his own aims—which are never simply erotic. Indeed, it is less a matter of orgasm than control to enslave the other, to use him for showing or confirming power (of pleasure or over the pleasure), to gain access to a social status.

Laferrière said it so many times, his books form a whole, an “American autobiography.” However his collections of erotic stories (*Comment*, *Eroshima*, *Le goût*, *La chair*), even though they are part of this whole, get off to constitute an even more coherent set. A surprising erotic quartet, in which each piece borrows some features, characters, or even pages from the previous one, we move from literature as obsession (*Comment*) to the frontier of pornography (*La chair*).

### Biography

Dany Laferrière, baptized Windsor Kléber Laferrière fils, was born in Port-au-Prince, on April 13, 1953. He attended the Christian Brother Elementary School of Petit-Goâve (1958–1964), a small town in the southeast of Haiti, where he was living after 1957 with his maternal grandmother, Da (Amélie Jean-Marie), which is a key figure in his life and in his novels, *L’Odeur du café* (1991, Prix Carbet de la Caraïbe), and *Le charme des après-midi sans fin* (1997). He went to secondary school until his graduation at the Canado-Haitian Academy (Collège Canado-Haïtien) of Port-au-Prince (1964–1972), a private Catholic

School, but did not attend university. Instead, he jumped in to journalism mainly in two important media, which are central in the struggle for democracy in Haiti in the seventies: the cultural and political weekly magazine, *Le Petit Samedi Soir* (PSS), founded and directed by the well known Haitian writer and publisher Dieudonné Fardin, and Radio Haïti-Inter directed by the late famous Haitian journalist, Jean Dominique. As a reporter, he worked for the PSS in 1972–1976, then, from Montreal, as a foreign correspondent from 1976 until November 1980, when the Duvalier regime expelled almost all the independent journalists of Haiti; and he commented on cultural events on Radio Haïti until 1976, when he was forced to leave for Montreal after the assassination of his friend and colleague, Gasner Raymond, which is evoked in his novel, *Le cri des oiseaux fous* (2000). After returning to Haiti for six months in 1978, he decided to stay definitively in Montreal, even though he must often stay in New York where his wife, Margaret Andrée Berrouët (Maggie), was leaving until 1982, and where he wrote in part his first published novel, *Comment faire l'amour avec un nègre sans se fatiguer* (1985). The unprecedented success of this book in part allowed him to be hired as a presenter at the new Quebec TV station, Four Seasons (Les Quatre Saisons) in 1986, then in 1989 as a member of the Band of Six (la Bande des Six), a weekly challenging cultural TV show at Radio Canada. The same year, a film version of *How to Make Love to a Negro*, directed by Jacques W. Benoit on a script co-written by Laferrière and Richard Sadler, was released. It is probably his long involvement, even his mastering of the media world, one of the keys of his popular success, which push him to announce the end of his “American autobiography” with *Je suis fatigué* (2000), which is a farewell and a gift to his readers. Indeed, following a tradition of Haitian writers to freely give their books, this work was not sold. Since, after twelve years in Miami where he moved in 1990 with his family to have time and space to complete his “American autobiography,” Laferrière is back to Montreal (September 2002), as a columnist for the Montreal base newspaper *La Presse*, and had published a revised and enlarged edition of *Cette grenade dans la main du jeune nègre est-elle une arme ou un fruit?*, in Paris (Serpent à plume) and in Montreal (Vlb éditeur). In 2003, he shot his first film as director and screenwriter, *Comment*

*conquérir l'Amérique en une nuit*, released in fall 2004.

JEAN JONASSAINT

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## LATIN: PROSE FICTION

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The Romans used several terms to describe works of prose fiction since there was no generic term for such writing in Classical Antiquity: *fabula* indicated quite generally a fictitious report or entertaining story (the term is recorded in the writings of the orator Cicero, 106–43 BCE); *fictio*, pretence or supposition, is first mentioned as a legal term (Quintilian, *The Institutes of Oratory*, 1st century CE); *historia*, originally from the Greek word meaning a question or enquiry, developed over time to include historical composition, a story or anecdote (factual, legendary, astonishing, or exemplary) and, in a general sense, information (there are examples in Cicero and in the works of the ancient rhetoricians); the designation *historiae eroticae* (from *Erōs*, the Greek god of love) was applied to love stories, but without the modern connotations of obscenity and lewdness; *narratio* was a story and the setting out of facts in a law speech (Terence, in his play *Andria*, 2nd century BCE); *satura* (or *satira*) meant a miscellany of prose and verse, a type of composition known from the *Menippean Satires* of Varro (116–27 BCE), a vehicle to correct the vices of his age. We meet the word specifically in the title of Petronius's *Satyrice* (less correctly *Satyricon*), a punning play on the use of this medley of styles, combined with an allusion to satyrs, the mythical creatures with unrestrained desires for sex and drink. It seems that our examples of extended Roman prose

fiction most probably derive from the Greek romances which became increasingly popular in Latin translation from the 1st century BCE, though there could also have been a tradition of scurrilous native literature from which they may have derived several elements. It should be remembered that their educated readership would have been equally at home in either language. Two major examples survive from Roman times: Petronius's *Satyrice* (1st century CE), of which we possess some substantial fragments being only part of an extensive whole; and Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* (*The Metamorphoses, or The Golden Ass*, mid-2nd century CE), which has come down to us complete. Both seem to depend to a great extent on the traditional model of the Greek novel, only at several points to adapt and subvert it. Both are characterized in their different ways by literary sophistication (allusion, burlesque and parody, irony and rhetorical tropes). Both include material from low life, licentious humor (with an emphasis on voyeuristic scenes), and reference to death, the supernatural, and witchcraft. Both are first person narratives with inserted stories: in the surviving parts of Petronius we can read the tales of 'The Boy from Pergamum' (a homoerotic tale of a boy who increases the stakes when being seduced) and 'The Widow of Ephesus' (on the sexual weakness of women). In Apuleius there are a number of tales which are told by various

characters, mainly about witches, murder, jealous husbands, and lustful wives, but the longest and most significant is an allegorical one about the love of Cupid and Psyche: Psyche, despite being forbidden to look on her anonymous lover, yields to feminine curiosity and the advice of ill-disposed women. Her trials and final apotheosis are paralleled in the main narrative by the tribulations and ultimate salvation of Lucius the Ass. But there are significant differences. Petronius, in addition to probably drawing inspiration from popular obscene Roman *Mimes*, which commonly featured whores, catamites, adulterers, and other lowlife subjects, may have had in mind something like the pederastic Greek *Iolaus* novel, of which a few scraps have survived. His work seems to have been built on the mock-heroic depiction of unworthy subjects and it satirises, most probably, the excesses of rhetoric and poetry in the age of the emperor Nero. There are examples of literary parody where scabrous elements are used to subvert the models of Homeric epic: the hero has incurred the wrath of Priapus, rather than of Poseidon; Circe, who is an enchantress in Homer's *Odyssey*, is here overfond of slaves and gladiators. Its characters are unashamedly disreputable: Encolpius and his boyfriend Giton are traveling around southern Italy (Campania) in the company of Ascyltus, a well-hung ex-slave, and Eumolpus, a lecherous poet. There are various erotic imbroglios among the four. Encolpius, Ascyltus, and Giton become involved with the brothel keeper Quartilla; they attend a pretentious banquet given by the vulgar nouveau-riche ex-catamite Trimalchio; Lichas and Tryphaena, who both seem to have enjoyed Giton's and Encolpius's favors in an earlier, now lost, episode discover our heroes as they seek refuge in Lichas's ship and become bent on revenge and sex; Encolpius seeks a cure for impotence from the worn-out priestess Oenothea. The fragments come to an end when the protagonists are in Crotona where legacy hunting is rife and a story is told of the women during the siege of Capua who became cannibals and ate their own children. The plot of Apuleius's *Metamorphoses* centers on the story of Lucius, a young man who meddles with witchcraft and is turned into an ass. The nucleus of the narrative can be found in the Greek *Lucius* attributed to the rhetor and satirical writer Lucian (2nd century CE), which, together

with Apuleius's own tale, probably depends on an earlier Greek version. Furthermore, it is thought that some connection may exist with Lollianus's *Phoinikika* (extant in brief fragments), where an episode of fornication and human sacrifice is reminiscent of the description of the robbers' lair in the *Metamorphoses*. After many adventures, in the course of which he is the object of brutality, lust, wonderment, and contempt, Lucius regains his human form and dignity by celebrating the mystic rites of Isis and Osiris. Some of the female characters in the *Metamorphoses* are as full of lust and deceit as those in Petronius, but Apuleius also creates types of virtue and faithfulness, nearer to the ideal featured in the Greek Novel: Psyche, though inquisitive, is not vicious; Charite is an idealistic counterpart to the Widow of Ephesus.

Historians and compilers of historical anecdotes sometimes fleshed out their narrative with sensational details. Such is the case, for example, in the legendary part of the *Roman History* of Livy (59 BCE–17 CE) where the rape of Lucretia is described by telling how Tarquin, the last king of Rome, forced her with his drawn sword to yield as he threatened to slit her slave's throat and place him beside her as a decoy for suspicious relatives. In the first century CE, Valerius Maximus put together his *Memorable Doings and Sayings* [*Facta ac dicta memorabilia*]. Among a mass of material on virtues and vices, often with moralistic comment, there are stories on conjugal love (IV.6: husbands commit suicide on the death of their wives), on incest (V.7: King Seleucus with his stepmother Stratonice), on luxury and lust (IX.1: a certain Ptolemy marries his elder sister and rapes her daughter whom he then marries instead), on continence (IV.3: Drusus keeps his sexual activity confined to his wife—this is obviously seen as exceptional), on chastity (VI.1: the rape of Lucretia—again; a Tribune is accused of having tried to seduce his own son; a Triumvir is sentenced to death for having had sexual intercourse with a freeborn youth, who, he alleges, was in fact a prostitute), and on the fidelity of wives (VI.7). Another case in point is the *Historia Augusta*, a collection of biographies of Roman emperors from 117 to 284 CE (Hadrian to Numerian) probably composed at the end of the 4th century CE but whose authorship and purpose are much disputed. It is a work of fictionalized history which draws on some facts and a great

array of false documentation and invented stories. Scholars do not agree as to the extent to which its narrative merits the modern label 'History,' but among several descriptions of excessive behavior it notably includes details of the sexual debauchery of Commodus (Emperor 180–192 CE), 'who defiled every part of his body in his dealings with persons of either sex,' and an exuberant account of the orgiastic feasts and sexual extravagances of the youthful emperor Elagabalus (Heliogabalus, who lived from *circa* 203 to 222 CE). Marius Maximus (3rd century CE) is referred to as an authority in the *Historia Augusta* and elsewhere, but his reputedly inventive and scurrilous series of imperial biographies is unfortunately now reduced to only a few fragments. Parthenius of Nicaea (1st century BCE), who lived in Rome and frequented literary circles there among whom his writings circulated, composed in Greek a collection of prose summaries of thirty-six rather startling love stories (*Erōtika Pathēmata*): there is incest and adultery, girls are forsaken by their young men, and lovers commit suicide or fall victim to murder or accidental death. Another perspective is offered by the Latin mythographers whose collections feature a large number of stories drawn from traditional sources. Among them the name of Hyginus (1st century CE), the supposed author of *Fabulae* and *De Astronomia*, is noteworthy. The first of these is a compilation which survives as an epitome of a larger handbook, designed, in all probability, to elucidate references to mythological subjects in the works of poets and playwrights. The stories recount a number of tales of the Olympian gods and goddesses together with their often strange lusts when they decided to pursue attractive nymphs or couple with human beings. Hyginus provides, for example, a list of the most beautiful men and youths, and gives the names of fathers and daughters who slept with each other unlawfully. He narrates the legend of Europa, who was changed into a cow when she was lustfully pursued by Jupiter, and tells the story of Semele who was consumed by fire when she asked Jupiter to reveal himself to her in all his glory as he came to her to make love. He recounts the rape of Philomela by Tereus who was already married to her sister Procne on account of which sexual violation the latter killed their son Itys and fed the corpse to his father. An incestuous version of this theme is

narrated in the story of Harpalyce, daughter of Clymenus, who served up her offspring at a feast. The *De Astronomia* is keyed to the constellations and presents the myths which are connected with them. The section on Cygnus tells how Jupiter tricked Nemesis by changing himself into a swan and then nestled in her bosom, coupling with her while she slept. The chapter on Auriga describes how Vulcan fell in love with the chaste goddess Minerva, but when he tried to rape her she resisted and his sperm fell on the ground instead, engendering a son, Erichthonius. Many ancient scholars included such exemplary tales in the margins of the texts on which they were commenting: these exist as *scholia* and a number can also be found in later general compilations such as those ascribed to the three so-called Latin Vatican Mythographers (probably 9th century CE and later). Rather like the prose *Narrationes* which accompany the text of the Latin poet Ovid's (43 BCE–17 CE) *Metamorphoses*, these post-classical collections are not independent compositions. They do, however, provide us with incidental details of several erotic myths from earlier sources as, for example, the story of the virgin Caenis to whom Neptune, after they had made love, gave the ability to change her sex at will. In these chapters we can also read a retelling of the love story of Leander who swam the Hellespont each night to be with his beloved Hero, only finally to drown and cause her death by grief; a version of the bestial love of Pasiphae for the Cretan bull who mounted her; the legend of the Lemnian women who, all but one, murdered their husbands after being rejected by them because of the repulsive smell inflicted on all the wives by Venus; the story of Nyctimene, who had sexual intercourse with her father as a consequence of which she was transformed into a screech owl.

Of the antecedents to the Latin 'Novel,' however, perhaps the most significant are the so-called *Milesian Tales* [*Milesiaca*] which Apuleius in fact openly refers to and inserts in his work. These were short stories of an obscene nature and constituted a genre which probably originated with the collection of lubricious love stories (no longer extant) written in Greek by Aristides, probably in the late 2nd century BCE and apparently translated into Latin by the historian Lucius Cornelius Sisenna (1st century BCE). The Greek biographer and essayist Plutarch (2nd century CE) reports in his *Life* of the

Roman general Crassus (died 53 BCE) that the Parthians attributed the effeminacy of the Romans whom they defeated at Carrhae to these *Tales* when they found copies of them in the looted baggage. But Latin fiction also owes a great deal to the tradition of rhetoric which was widely practiced in the ancient world. In Rome itself the *Debates (Controversiae)* of the Elder Seneca (philosopher and rhetorician, 1st century BCE) and the *Set Speeches (Declamationes)* of the rhetorician Quintilian both contain examples of shorter prose narratives which reflect the way in which such pieces could be worked up into longer stories. The Elder Seneca, for example, proposes as one of these rhetorical exercises the case of a woman who, though chaste, has accepted an inheritance from an admirer in her husband's absence: should the husband's plea for adultery succeed? Quintilian's collection presents a variety of situations which correspond well to the stories we find developed in fiction: there are examples of divorce, adultery, dishonor, and so on. They afford a good opportunity for the rhetorician to develop a psychological character study and emotional appeal. They also reflect, no doubt, the nature of contemporary society and the more exotic events familiar to the consumer of romantic tales: in one case a kidnapped virgin is placed in a brothel and is respected by all her clients except for one brutal soldier whom she kills. Is she guilty of murder? Somewhat similar events fill the anonymous Latin prose narrative of the *History of King Apollonius of Tyre (Historia Apollonii Regis Tyri)* (5th–6th century CE) which probably derives ultimately from a Greek model. Later it was to provide material for John Gower's *Confessio Amantis*, Shakespeare's *Pericles* and T.S. Eliot's *Marina*. The story is full of events: Antiochus, King of Antioch, lives incestuously with his daughter and beheads her suitors who fail to solve the riddle he sets. Apollonius, who has worked out the answer, is also vulnerable so he escapes and marries the daughter of the King of Cyrene instead. After several adventures he is separated from his wife, who, though apparently dead and therefore disposed of at sea, in fact survives anonymously in the Temple of Diana. A daughter, Tharsia, has been born to Apollonius, but she is captured by pirates and sold to a brothel keeper. She nevertheless preserves her virginity (the section which describes these events is relatively extensive, § 37–44). The

*Historia* has many twists and climaxes which are familiar from ancient romance: shipwrecks, pirates, virginity in danger, recognition scenes, and so forth. Finally, all the good characters are reunited, the prostitutes are set free, and Apollonius becomes king of Antioch, Tyre, and Cyrene. Another story, the *Acta Pauli et Theclae*, which constitutes part of the apocryphal acts of the Apostles, represents the Christian tradition at work on these basic plot elements. It is extant in Latin, though possibly written originally in Greek, and dates from the 2nd–3rd centuries CE. It has been described as recounting, 'quite in the manner of a novel and probably without any historical foundation' (Altaner), how Thecla was inspired through her love of Saint Paul to devote herself to Christ until she died at the age of 90. The sexual-romantic element here is covert rather than being explicitly revealed. The virgin Thecla has many adventures as she is dedicated to preserving her chastity: she escapes several potential martyrdoms (her pyre is quenched by a thunderstorm, the wild beasts in the arena fawn on her or devour each other, carnivorous seals float up dead to the surface of the water in which she was meant to drown, and so on). The *Res gestae Alexandri Macedonis* (commonly known as the *Alexander Romance*) represents a similar type of popular fictionalized history, full of extraordinary events and fabulous creatures, which circulated widely in antiquity and the middle ages. Julius Valerius (4th century CE) is the author of the extant Latin version of this story which derives from an earlier anonymous Greek version of uncertain date by 'Pseudo-Callisthenes.' There is a complex variety of sources for the narrative, most of which derive in all probability from the Hellenistic period (323–146 BCE). The 'Life' of Alexander the Great is here transformed into a wondrous tale which has only a slim connection with historical reality. Among the many marvels which Alexander witnesses on his travels, for example, is a hairy giant who consumes a naked woman who has been offered to him to test whether he has human feelings or not.

It is probable that the different forms of ancient fiction appealed to different audiences: both the idealized and the lower-life Greek romances were often more accessible than Homer's epics to a mass audience, many of whom could not in fact read; works like those of Petronius and Apuleius appealed to a sophisticated and

probably cynical elite with a literary taste for parody and what we would term pornography, but which they would have regarded with quite legitimate amusement; stories like those of Paul and Thecla suited Christians who adapted existing narrative conventions to their religious needs.

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## LATIN: VERSE

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Poetry came to Rome through Livius Andronicus, a schoolteacher who was taken captive when the Romans conquered Tarentum but was set free in 275 BCE to instruct the children of M. Livius Salinator. He translated Homer's *Odyssey* into Latin verse and is known to have composed dramas as well as a hymn to Juno. Although Cicero thought little of his work (Brut.71), Livius impressed the Romans to the extent that they granted permission to poets and stage artists to gather for religious purposes at the Aventine temple of Minerva. Still, the Romans of the third century BCE were too preoccupied with their national security to appreciate poetry,

let alone erotic verse. Only after the destruction of Carthage in 146 BCE and the conquest of their Macedonian allies in 168 BCE could the Romans engage in their literary interests. The winner of the crucial battle of Pydna, P. Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus, seized with enthusiasm the break from military expeditions 'to satisfy his delight in all things Greek' (Mendell, *Latin Poetry: The New Poets and the Augustans*, 1965: 4). He gathered around him the so-called Scipionic Circle of aristocratic friends who shared his interest in literature and their artistic protégés including Terence and Lucilius. When the historian Polybius and later the Stoic philosopher



Panaetius came from Greece, they joined their company and advanced intellectual activity in Rome. In the following pages an overview of the main Roman poets will focus on their treatment of erotic themes.

### Early Roman Comedy

Popular Roman literary production in the third and second centuries BCE was dominated by the writings of Quintus Ennius (239–169 BCE), an epic poet who also translated Greek dramas and by the work of Titus Maccius Plautus (250–184) who composed comic plays in the manner of Menander (New Comedy). Although Plautus was often inspired by love affairs and in many of his plays the plot evolves around an erotic relationship, the focus of the dramatization is directed on the numerous misunderstandings that surround the relationship and cause the comic effects. The lives and loves of ordinary Romans shine through his work with all the social oppression that forces the females to conspire in order to achieve their goals. Common misogynistic prejudice, financial worries, class compatibility, and romantic youths that persist in their loves are typical themes repeated in Plautus' plays. The sexual jokes, numerous and often rather coarse, are habitually exchanged between the slaves of the households discussed. Plautian comedies often include a 'rape,' which typically takes place during a night festival under the influence of wine; yet the guilty youth appears always to be sincerely in love with his victim and overcomes all obstacles in order to correct his misbehavior by marrying the girl. Terence (Publius Terence Afer) also wrote comic plays in the tradition of Menander and Plautus most of which were produced in the 160s. Terence, who renders the Greek setting and ambiance of his literary models more convincingly than Plautus, used ingeniously his prologues to reply to the accusations of his critics. His work is also distinguished for the sensitivity with which he depicted the female psyche and their social disparity in Roman society (see his *Hecyra*). Both Plautus and Terence exercised great influence on the depiction of women and love affairs in later Latin elegy, particularly in Ovid's work. The misogynistic stereotypes they ridicule in their poetry seem to undermine the contemporary prejudice of traditionalist Romans.

### The Neoterics

The opening of Rome to the material and intellectual wealth of the eastern Mediterranean soon became synonymous with an egotistic infatuation of the Roman elite with Greek literature at the expense of an impoverished proletariat. This soon led to inevitable social unrest which was to overtake the Roman public scene for almost an entire century until Augustus' decisive victory over Antony and Cleopatra at Actium in 31 BC which re-established peace and order amid general exhilaration. During his reign the so-called 'Neoteric poets,' inspired by Callimachus' literary revolution that urged for small, elegant poetic forms and departure from heroic epics, celebrated erotic sentiment most enthusiastically.

The new poets favored from the political pre-occupations that kept the Roman elite away from their literary pastimes, set about to render a more personal and authentic expression to Roman eroticism. Valerius Cato, Calvus, Cassius, Cinna, Tigidas, Caecilius, and Catullus for whom we are better informed, were among the pioneers of this new trend that encouraged the composition of erotic poetry in Latin. Lucretius, a contemporary of Catullus, was also a neoteric poet in his own right, although he was mainly inspired by Epicurean philosophy. The immense impact of the neoterics is obvious even on their critics like Horace, while in their steps Propertius, Tibullus, and Ovidius, developed Latin erotic elegy to its most fortunate moments. Vergil, who did not shy from writing his *Aeneid* in epic hexameters, welcomed their innovations which he evidently applied in his work.

Lucretius (97/94 –55/51 BCE) composed his hexametric poem *De Rerum Natura* under the influence of the Epicurean thought around the middle of the first century BCE. His work, probably published by Cicero posthumously (Eusth.Chrn. apud St. Jerome; Cic.QFr.2.10.9), proclaims that sensation is the basis of all knowledge. At the end of the fourth book of the *De Rerum Natura*. Lucretius sets on a vehement attack on romantic love (DRN4.1037–1287). In these lines, Lucretius, who develops a metaphor between sexual desire and injury, stresses the addictive character of sexual intercourse which can be compared with that of thirst or hunger. Sex, food, and drink are seen as major temptations to the self-control of the individual;

however, the fact that hunger can be satiated unlike sexual desire stresses the less urgent nature of this need. Although Lucretius acknowledges the natural and agreeable side of sexual consummation, he is strongly opposed to falling in love. In a misogynistic mood he argues that all women are similar and dismisses melodramatic claims of lovers that they cannot live without the object of their desire. In Epicurean thought sex is a natural function of the body described in very mechanical terms and stripped from any nuances of emotion. In fact, the Epicurean doctrine teaches that love, sex, and friendship should be kept separate and marriage should be avoided at all costs. The danger of becoming emotionally involved and therefore, irrational threatens the core Epicurean vision of tranquility. The decision about whether one should indulge in one's sexual appetite should be determined by an evaluation of the danger involved. For example, daughters of prominent people, women likely to spread rumors, or unwilling women should be avoided. Although early Christianity did not approve of his rejection of gods and St. Jerome perpetuated a tradition according to which Lucretius wrote his verses in breaks of sanity, maddened by a love-potion his wife had given him, his prestige among the writers of the early empire is beyond doubt (e.g., Verg.G.2.490–2). Although Lucretius composed in the tradition of the philosophical poetry of Empedocles (*Peri Physeōs*) and the Hellenistic didactic poetry of Aratus and Nicander, he employed in his work a wide range of Greek and Latin erotic poetry including among others Sappho fr.31 (DRN3.152–8), Callimachus fr.260.41 (DRN6. 753), and Antipater of Sidon Anth.Pal.7.713 (DRN4.181–2).

Catullus (84–54 BCE) came to Rome in 62 BCE, probably under the pretext of undertaking a career in politics, but he soon met Valerius Cato and possibly studied under him. He fell deeply in love, probably with Clodia, sister of Publius Clodius, a sworn opponent of Cicero (*Pro Caelio*), and she became the Muse of his poetry. Clodia appears to have been an extremely cultured and charming, yet dangerous woman, who had been suspected of murdering her husband. In a series of elegant short poems, Catullus addressed her with the pseudonym Lesbia to recall Sappho of Lesbos whose influence on Catullus is ubiquitous; his verses express all the nuances of his obsession with her from early

passion and tenderness to the hatred and disillusionment that overwhelmed him when he realized she had been unfaithful. Catullus' erotic visions are tormented by his devastating passion, his mistress' infidelities that fill him with anxiety and despair, and his drunken downfalls in local taverns where he meets underground characters like prostitutes and pimps. He does not hesitate to degrade his enemies with bold sexual insults spiced with all his vehement hatred. He lived the life of a real bohemian lover and was unsurprisingly the real life model of all later elegists. Of the 116 poems attributed to him, three (18–20) are almost certainly spurious. Catullus' work which survived thanks to the fortunate discovery of a manuscript in the early 14th century includes, besides the Lesbia poems, poems addressed to his young friend Juventius and epigrams whose tone ranges from pleasant to irreverent to obscene. He also wrote elegies and a few long poems, notably *Attis* and a nuptial poem honoring *Thetis and Peleus* in resonance of Sapphic bridal songs. Catullus was distinguished for his vigorous satire as well as his ability to render his personal emotions in Latin with such perceptiveness and intensity. He was influenced by the Alexandrian poets and drew much on previous Greek poetry regarding forms and meters, but his genius surpassed all models. His lyricism remains beyond compare (Havelock, *The Lyric Genius of Catullus*, 1967), while the influence of epigram in his poems is also sound (Aul. Gell.Noc.Att.19.9.10–14; Cic.De. nat.deor.1.79, 3.194).

Vergil (70–19 BCE) had become acquainted with the Epicurean philosophy early in his career. Most of his poetry is directed towards a philosophical solution to the trauma of the civil war which had left its ugly mark on the Roman psyche. His first collection of poems, the *Eclogues* (39–38 BCE) and even more so, his *Georgics* (30 BCE) employ erotic themes only to suggest a different way of channelling passion in the service of the community which will prosper again under the benevolent reign of Augustus. In the *Eclogues*, composed in the spirit of Theocritus' bucolic poetry, the unfortunate lover Daphnis, celebrated along Orpheus and other pastoral figures that naively sing about their erotic pangs and the powerful spells of love, is posthumously transformed into a divine agent of cosmic energy that benefits the whole countryside (Ec.3 and 5.42f.). The futility of wasted

erotic energy directed towards solitary objects of desire in comparison with cosmic eros that rules all creation is underlined. Daphnis' transformation into a positive and restorative power is similar to that of the recently assassinated Caesar who was believed to have joined the ranks of the Olympians. In his *Georgics* Vergil promoted the image of the farmer as the symbol of a peaceful yet determined agent of the Augustan era in keeping with the agricultural character of traditional Roman societies (Cato Agr.2; Gale, *Virgil on the Nature of Things: the Georgics, Lucretius and the Didactic Tradition*, 2000: 252–9). In the third book of the *Georgics*, Vergil appears occupied with two kinds of love: the fecundity of the carefully disciplined animals and the blind, passionate love which released violent and uncontrolled energies. The tale of *Hero and Leander*, placed at the end of the third book exemplifies the tragic results of maddening love in humans in truly elegiac mood; in fact, Vergil repeatedly treated in his work elegiac themes with which he was obviously very familiar (cf. Ec.10). The influence of Lucretius on the *Georgics* is pervasive and both poets had strong feelings against civil strife. The fourth book of the *Georgics* features the tragic tale of *Orpheus and Eurydice*, in a version which is often accepted as Vergil's own invention (cf. Ov.Met.10.1–10, Anagnostou-Laoutides, *Eros and Ritual: Singing of Atalanta, Daphnis and Orpheus*, 2005: 321ff.). The tale has been arguably interpreted as a chiasmic comparison between pathetic, overemotional poets/lovers represented by Orpheus and Vergil and decisive, resolute leaders like Aristaeus and Augustus in an attempt to illustrate the right course of action for achieving the Roman paligenesis.

For the rest of his life Vergil worked on the *Aeneid*, a national epic in hexameters honoring Rome and foretelling prosperity to come. Vergil made Aeneas the paragon of the most revered Roman virtues such as devotion to family, loyalty to the state, and piety, qualities that Aeneas shares with his distant successor, the emperor Augustus. In twelve books, Vergil tells how Aeneas escaped from Troy and managed after several adventures to establish the beginnings of the Roman state. In book four a storm carries him to the shores of Carthage, where he meets and falls in love with queen Dido. The passion with which the Carthaginian Queen surrenders to Aeneas is narrated in truly elegiac

spirit: trapped in the antagonism of Hera and Venus, Dido has no chance of surviving her maddening love and she commits suicide having betrayed her kingdom and the memory of her dead husband (cf. Ov.Her.7). With his swan-song Vergil became the most important and most influential Roman poet and his aura continued to charm audiences through the Middle Ages.

Horace (65–8 BCE) was also affected by the violent era that followed the assassination of Julius Caesar and in fact, served at Philippi on the side of Brutus. His political preferences changed progressively when he launched a most successful poetic career under the benefaction of Maecenas, Augustus' 'Minister of Arts.' Yet his poetry remained particularly preoccupied with the political reality of his days and historical references became gradually more abundant in his poems. His first attempts at writing, named *Iambi/Epodes* witness the sound influence of the lyric poet Archilochus. Several of these poems are written in a strong satirical mood (Ep.4, 6, 10, 12) while others treat elegiac motifs such as the unbearable torture of love (Ep.11) or even elegiac characters such as the ruthless, unfaithful mistress (Neaira, Ep.15) or the dangerous witch who would go at any length in order to prepare a strong love potion (Canidia, Ep.12). In 35 BCE, Horace published his first book of *Sermones* (also known as *Satirae*), which is also distinguished for its satirical approach in the tradition of Lucilius and of Greek comedy, including references to sexual issues (Serm.1). Although Horace was evidently familiar with the elegiac motifs which he occasionally transmuted into Latin lyric verse, he treated love in a rather superficial and playful tone. His second book of the *Sermones* (32 BCE) containing numerous references to the Stoic dogma which Horace had by then embraced, also marked a departure from erotic themes (Serm.2.3, 7). Horace's next project that attracted his fancy for seven whole years was the composition of his lyric poems, published in four volumes under the title *Carmina*. Here and despite his preoccupation with national issues, Horace did not refrain from the occasional erotic composition such as the sensual ode to Pyrrha or the playful ode to Lydia (Carm.1.5, 8). The other three books of his *Carmina* range from discreet to patent support of the Augustan program (cf. Carm.3.1–6, the so-called Roman

Odes). Among his other major compositions Horace also produced in the last years of his life the famous *Ars Poetica*, offering advice to young, ambitious poets of his age on how to achieve the desired dramatic effect. This work enhances the perception that Horace filtered erotic passion through the rules of poetry and viewed love as an amusing and rather complimentary theme to the major historical issues of his time that dominated his poetry. His poems, distinguished for having uniquely reconciled the Epicurean and Stoic philosophical theories, largely refer to passion (including sexual promiscuity) as a sign of emotional imbalance and wickedness, such as his famous ode to Cleopatra (Carm.1.37).

### Latin Elegiac Poets

Gallus (69–29 BCE) is a very enigmatic figure for whom scanty information survives, although all elegiac poets acknowledge him as their model and a most influential poet in the transmission of Hellenistic poetry from Alexandria to Rome (Ov.Tr.4.10.53). Gallus is known to have composed four books of elegies, probably under the title *Amores*, addressed to Volumnia Cytheris, a mistress of Mark Antony, under the pseudonym Lycoris. Very few verses of his poems have been recovered from a papyrus found in 1978 in Egyptian Nubia, although Vergil's tenth *Eclogue*, in which Vergil tries to console Gallus for his desertion by Lycoris, offers an insight to the content of Gallus' poetry. He also wrote a poem about the Grynean grove of Apollo in the fashion of Eurphorion (Serv.ap.Ecl. 6.72) and was a friend of Parthenius who had composed in hexameters a short collection of erotic tales with the title *Erotica Pathemata* for the use of his friend. His influence on the character of Latin elegiac poetry as developed in the works of Propertius and Tibullus has been vital; based on Catullus' groundwork, Gallus appears to have created the basic script for the unfortunate relation between a cruel mistress and her enslaved victim.

Tibullus (55/48–19 BCE), a rather good-looking young poet of the provincial nobility and relatively wealthy despite his claims of the opposite (Hor.Epist.1.4), wrote three books of elegies, known as *Corpus Tibullianum*. He had won military awards as a soldier and addressed his poetry to M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus, an

eminent Roman statesman. Only the first two books belong to Tibullus himself, while the third was divided into two by Italian scholars of the fifteenth century. Although the dates of publication are uncertain, the poems contain some possible clues. His first book contains ten lengthy elegies dealing with his love for Delia whose name seems to indicate her association with the Apolline light. The structure of the collection has been often debated, yet it is accepted that Horace's *Sermones*, also consisting of ten poems, must have been his model (Littlewood, *The symbolic structure of Tibullus' Book I*, 1970, *Latomus* 29.2: 661–669). Apuleius (Apol.10) verified that Delia actually existed and her real name was Plania, although her erotic persona in Tibullus' poetry appears quite conventional. In fact, it could be argued that despite his technical versatility, Tibullus' representation of love is rather artificial and unconvincing with regards to the depth of his passion. His erotic claims are always permeated by a dose of irony and a playful mood, displayed in his effort to elicit erotic advice from the highly sexed god Priapus (Tib.1.4), and even when the poet imagines himself on the brink of death for the love of his mistress (Tib.1.3). Tibullus remained in reality a lover of the peaceful countryside and he viewed love as the perfect complement to his vision of domestic bliss. His first book began with an abnegation of military career, in favor of an abstemious life in rural felicity (cf. 1.10). This agricultural sense of fulfilment protected by traditional Roman gods, such as the Lares and Pales, is completed when Delia's presence is added (Tib.1.57–8). A gentle dandy dedicated to the tender moments he shared with his mistress, Tibullus justifies the opinion of Quintilian that he was the most refined and elegant of the Roman elegists (Inst.10.1.93). His anger at his mistress' infidelities is but a bitter complaint for his betrayed emotions (Tib.1.5 and 6) and his vengeance takes the form of having an affair with a beautiful boy (Tib.1.8 and 9) or of daydreaming that he dies in a distant land far from her treacherous embrace (Tib.1.3; Campbell, *Tibullus Elegy 1.3*, 1973, *YCS* 23). Tibullus' revels are literary exercises in adapting Alexandrian material (Tib.1.2; cf. Anth. Pal.5.137) and certainly in comparison with Propertius' his verses lack the emotional intensity or the illusion of maddening passion that the latter achieves. His long elegies allowed

him to treat numerous themes in each elegy. He combined various patterns with transitions which often were considered too smooth to convince critics of his poems' unity (Lee, *Tibullus Elegies*, 1990).

Many of the motifs he treats are also found in Propertius' poetry such as the witch (Prop.1.19 / Tib.2.41), the vanity of the women's adornment (Prop.2.1 / Tib.8.9), the friend who is envious of the lover's happiness (Prop.5.1 / Tib.2.87), the rich rival (Prop.8a2/Tib.5.47), the komoi outside the beloved's door (Prop.16.17 / Tib.1.56), the love of young boys (Prop.20.6/Tib.4.3), the worthlessness of riches in love (Prop.14.15/ Tib.2.75), the comparison between the lover and the soldier (Prop.4.19/Tib.1.53), the value of poetry in love (Prop.7.5/Tib.4.15), or the role of the *magister amoris* (Prop.10.19/Tib.4. 9f.). Tibullus prefers metaphors of every day life rather than resorting to Greek mythology for his erotic imagery and seems to be closer to a Hesiodic approach of poetry with regards to the fulfilment he finds in simple country life. In addition, his poems are distinguished for their sense of religiosity which rules nature and everyday activities (Tib.1.11–14). His second book celebrates a different mistress, Nemesis (Tib.2.3, 4, 6) whose name as well as her character alludes to the darkness of night. Nemesis is a courtesan of the higher classes and enjoys the attention of many admirers. She is an urban creature fanatically devoted to the pursuit of wealthy lovers and a far outcry from the simple beauty of Delia or the idyllic country-house of Tibullus' erotic happiness. The third book of Tibullus' poems begins with six elegies by Lygdamus; it contains the *Panegyricus Messallae*, five poems on the love of Sulpicia for Cerinthus (known as the *Garland of Sulpicia*) and six short poems by Sulpicia herself. The poems on Sulpicia could be possibly written by Tibullus. The book concludes with an elegy allegedly written by Tibullus, and an anonymous epigram.

Sulpicia who composed poetry under Domitian was mentioned by Martial (10.38.12–14). Apparently she wrote erotic poems for Calenus, her husband of 15 years. Her poetry was distinguished for its sensual tone (Mart.10.35.38) and although we only have one short fragment of hers, Sulpicia is frequently mentioned in later poetry (Auson.218.10; Sidon.Carm.9.261; Fulgent.Myth.1.4). A poem of the late fourth or

early fifth century AD, written in her name, is traditionally included in the later collection *Epigrammata Bobiensia*. Here Sulpicia appears as castigating the suppression of philosophers, including Calenus, during the reign of Domitian.

Propertius (54 /47–2 BC) came from a noble family of Perugia and settled in Rome around 34 BC. There he met Hostia, a native of Tibur (Apul.Apol.10) who was to monopolize his poetry under the pseudonym Cynthia. Ovid maintains that Propertius was his senior and that he was third in the sequence of elegiac poets, following Gallus and Tibullus. He wrote four books of elegies and he probably published his first book before October 28 BC. Its publication placed him in the first rank of contemporary poets, and procured his admission to the literary circle of Maecenas (cf. Prop.2.1; 3.9). His poems have been often characterized as difficult, obscure, and full of syntactic inconsistency. Occasionally commentators have doubted even his Latinity and it was only the intensity of his passion that deemed his poetry worth reading (Inst.10.1.93; cf. Plin.Ep.9.22). The structure of his first poetic collection, also known as the *Monobiblos*, was the subject of numerous scholarly exercises (Skutch, *The Structure of the Propertian Monobiblos*, 1963, *CPh* 58; Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry*, 1968; Otis, *Propertius' Single Book*, 1965, *HSCPh* 70; Camps, *Propertius Book 1*, 1961). Characteristic of Propertius' love poetry is the claim that he is enslaved to the charms of his mistress as well as that he is a soldier in the name of love (1.6.29f.). Typical too of his love poetry is his abundant and romantic use of mythological figures who serve as reminiscences of a glorious past to which the poet and Cynthia should aspire to. Book two (which some think is an amalgamation of two books by a later hand), is still largely devoted to love poems. Book three has a greater diversity of subject matter than the first two books and in book four Propertius attempted to write aetiological poetry under the influence of Callimachus' *Aetia* (Prop.3.1; 3.3; 4.1.64). Although some of his poems are fragmentary and several corrupted or disarranged, Propertius' genius shines through his elaborate verses. Propertius is thought to have achieved the most systematic use of erotic motifs from the *Garland of Meleager*, a collection of epigrams that had created a literary fashion in Rome and had also influenced Catullus. Since

Meleager came to be admired for his 'double talent of versatility in treatment and felicity in expression,' we might assume that Propertius' style owes much to the Hellenistic epigrams of his master (Gow-Page, *The Greek Anthology*, 1965: vol.2.592). Meleager, also admired for his skilful turn of expression and his passionate descriptions, had first cultivated the image of the elegiac komastis, who unable to resist his amorous addiction spends his nights on the threshold of his relentless mistress (Prop.1.16.13-4 and 31-2 /Mel.Anth.Pal.5.191.5-8; 12.23.3-4), often urged by wine (Prop.1.3.13-6; Mel.Anth.Pal.12.119; 12.85.3-6; 12.117.1-5). The impact of Meleager on Propertius' erotic vision can be distinguished in direct linguistic echoes, in overlapping conceptual complexes in the two authors and in their use of the same topoi. Hence, Meleager's description of the violent attack of Eros who implants his feet on the head of his innocent and inexperienced victims appears in the first verses of Propertius' programmatic elegy of the *Monobiblos* (Mel.Anth.Pal.12.101.3-4; 12.48.1 / Prop.1.1.1-4). Other Meleagrian verses that found their way to Propertius' poetry include the claim that Cynthia was the first woman who touched the poet with her love (Anth.Pal.12.101; 12.23.1-2; cf. Prop.1.12.20; 1.15.32); in fact, she 'captured' Propertius with her erotic eyes (Anth.Pal.12.101.2; 12.109.1-2; cf. Anth.Pal.12.144; 12.110.1-4; 12.83.3-4; 12.113). Propertius employs exquisite epithets to describe Love in correspondence to Eros' characterization in Meleager; therefore *amor improbus* (e.g. Prop.1.1.6) matches the shameless nature of Love in Meleager (Anth.Pal.5.57). Love is presented as a feathered archer (Prop.1.6.23; 1.7.15; 1.9.20-4/ Mel.Anth.Pal.5.177.1-4; 5.178.2-7; 5.179.1-6; Anth.Pal.12.144; 12.76.1-2; 12.48.3; 5.198.6; 12.109.3), who inflicts an erotic wound to his victims like the elegiac mistress (Prop.1.1.9-16/ Mel.Anth.Pal.12.72; 12.80.1-2; 5.163.3-4). Love is like fire burning the poet's soul (Prop.1.5.5; 1.9.17; 1.13.23 /Mel.Anth.Pal.12.80.4; 12.48.3; 12.76.2; 12.82; 12.83.1-2; 5.176.6), an obsession (Prop.1.1.7; 1.5.3; 1.13.20/ Mel.Anth.Pal.12.48.3-4; 5.139.6) that moves him to tears (Prop.1.5.15; 1.6.23-4 /Mel.Anth.Pal.12.80.1) and renders him helpless (Prop.1.15.1-8; 1.8a.13-4/ Mel.Anth.Pal.5.24; 5.178.9-10; 5.179.9-10) to its endless torture (Prop.1.1.33-4; Mel.Anth.Pal.12.158.5-8; AP5.112). Propertius also cultivates the idea that love

abolishes logic, often found in Meleager's epigrams (Anth.Pal.12.117.3-5; cf. Anth.Pal.5.24). Motifs such as the praise of a mistress' beauty (Pr.1.2.1-8 and 27-9/ Mel.Anth.Pal.5.140; 5.139, 195, 195bis, and 196), especially when asleep and surrendered in unfaithful dreams, as often the poet fears (Prop.1.3.27-36 /Mel.Anth.Pal.5.191; cf. Anth.Pal.12.125; 5.151.7-8, 152.5-6, 166, 174), the pattern of warning a friend for love's hardship (Prop.1.5.27-30 /Mel.Anth.Pal.12.72.5-6), of being jealous of rivals (Prop.1.11.5-8; 1.16; 1.9.5-8/Mel.Anth.Pal.5.166.1-7; 5.160.1-2; 5.191.5), of a mistress' ability to lie (Prop.1.15.1-8 and 33-42/Mel.Anth.Pal.5.24; 5.175, 184) and her ultimate infidelity (Prop.1.15.1-8/Mel.Anth.Pal.5.175) are also traced in both poets. Love is difficult to bear (Prop.1.6.23/Mel.Anth.Pal.12.132b.1); it reduces the lover to its prisoner (Prop.1.9.20; 1.5.12; Mel.Anth.Pal.12.158.3-4; 12.119; 12.158) crashing his steadfast spirit (Prop.1.9.1-4; 1.1.28; Mel.Anth.Pal.12.141.5-6; 12.119.3-4; AP12.132.1-5; AP12.132 and 132a). Propertius' ingenious adaptation of his models could only add to the superlative quality of his descriptions. His powerful erotic imagery captures the essence of Latin elegiac poetry.

Ovid (43 BC-17 CE) had studied rhetoric at Rome before choosing poetry over a career in politics (Sen.Controv.2.2.8-12; Tr.1.2.77-8; Pont.2.10.21ff.). His early erotic poems, the *Amores*, published for the first time between 25 and 15 BCE, impressed his contemporaries and he eventually attracted the attention of the emperor Augustus. His love poems, composed in elegiac couplets, include the *Amores*, the *Ars Amatoria*, the *Remedia Amoris*, and the *Medicamina Faciei*. Ovid was a keen adherent of the Alexandrian poets and Callimachus' *Aetia* is accepted as a strong influence on his poetry. Ovid is also distinguished for his constant inversion of conventional elegiac motifs and for his sense of irony, which is reminiscent of Catullus' sarcasm. He made extensive use of comic themes in his elegies and his work has been criticized for reducing Roman elegy to unsophisticated ridicule (Quint. Inst.10.1.88, 98). It has also been argued that his excessive dependence on his literary models is indicative of his lack of original inspiration. His *Amores*, initially published in five books, reappeared in three BCE in just three. The poems mainly praise the charms of Corinna, the poet's mistress, who appears to have been a

fictional character. The poems rework several motifs introduced in the poetry of Propertius and the comic plays of Plautus. Ovid who is very confident about the fame his work will enjoy in posterity (see *Met.* 15.870–9) is using among other techniques hyperbole and theatrical asides addressed to himself or to his audience in order to convince the reader of the sincerity of his experiences. However, by overstating his elegiac persona Ovid is stressing the incredibility of the elegiac lover as treated in the works of Propertius and Tibullus, where he is given a pretentious, melodramatic, and impossibly romantic character. Unlike previous poetry, in Ovid's verses the lover is often successful and willing to devote himself to love in the comforting notion that it is all a game. In the *Ars Amatoria* (*Sen. Controv.* 3.7.2), a didactic poem on how to be successful in love, Ovid employs explicit erotic imagery. His vivid descriptions allow us an almost realistic glimpse of the social life in Augustan Rome where the newly found peace had led to a relaxation of morality. The *Ars Amatoria* was designed as a sequence to the *Amores*, with which it shares several thematic links. However, here Ovid achieves a more complete comparison of art with love. The *Remedia Amoris* (*Rem.* 155–8), written between the first BCE and the second century CE was conceived as a kind of recantation of the *Ars Amatoria*, which concludes Ovid's early work on elegiac motifs. Still in didactic mood, having taught the readers how to secure the affection of their beloved, Ovid now offers advice on how to escape complicated erotic situations. The *Heroides* is an imaginary series of letters written by ancient mythological heroines to their absent lovers. The authorship of *Her.* 15, written allegedly by the poetess Sappho, is often contested. The letters are distinguished for their use of rhetoric device and of the erotic monologue which had briefly appeared in Propertius (*Prop.* 1.18; 4.3), as well as for their adaptation of the Euripidean analysis of female psychology. Sometime before the composition of the third book of the *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid wrote the *Medicamina Faciei*, yet another didactic poem about the cosmetics for the female (*Ars Am.* 3.205–6). Only a hundred verses survive from this work which follows in the tradition of Nicander's *Theriaca* and *Alexipharmaca*.

Ovid also composed the *Metamorphoses* in fifteen books of hexameters. This most influential poem is a collection of myths that relate

miraculous transformations. The narration begins with the creation of the world from chaos and finishes with the posthumous catasterism of Caesar. The rest of the books engage mainly with erotic misconducts of gods and men who are often punished by being transformed into animals or plants. The tales are linked together with a number of thematic associations that render to the work an illusion of cohesion. The idea of collecting metamorphic myths was very popular in the Hellenistic period: Nicander of Colophon, Parthenius and the obscure Boios whose *Ornithogonia* was apparently adapted by Aemilius Macer, a friend and contemporary of Ovid (*Tr.* 4.10.43), had all produced such collections, although none of them survived to this day. His other poems focus on the adversities of living in exile to which Ovid was sent in 8 BC. Through his reworking of elegiac themes from a comical point of view and his bold experimentation with the forms and meters of ancient literary genres, Ovid advanced our appreciation of Latin elegy and its boundaries and firmly set his seal on Latin poetry. His work exercised an overt influence on European literature, more than any other classical author.

Martial (38/41–102/103 CE) settled in Rome around 64 CE, where he allegedly lived a life of poverty and dependence (*Ep.* 10.24; cf. *Ep.* 10.104). He was born a Roman citizen, but he refers to himself as sprung from Celts and Iberians (*Ep.* 10.65.7). Despite the impression that he used to compose poetry at the local tavern, Martial made many influential friends and patrons, and secured the favor both of Titus and Domitian. His poetry, often obscene, reflects the moral decadence of contemporary Rome. Of his works 33 poems survive from his *Liber Spectaculorum*, published around 80 CE to commemorate the opening of the Colosseum. He also published two collections of short mottoes entitled *Xenia* and *Apophoreta* between 84 and 85 CE and 12 books of *Epigrams*, published between 86–102 CE. His final book of epigrams was written three years after his return to Spain and shortly before his death. In his later years Martial appears tired of the intensity of Roman social life and he even sought refuge temporarily in the countryside (*Ep.* 2.38; 12.57; 4.25; 10.96). However, the attraction of Rome was indeed tantalizing and in his prose epistle at the beginning of his last book of epigrams he already confesses he misses the buzz of the cosmopolis.

He was always preoccupied with maintaining his high friends and thus refrained from the aggressive tone of Juvenal's satire. In fact, his verbal dexterity suffers from servile flattery towards the emperor (Ep.12.6).

Juvenal wrote Roman satires between 100 and 128 CE reprimanding the decadence of morality during his time (Sat.2.6). He lived during the reign of Domitian and appears to have been alive when the empire was ruled by Hadrian. He must have come from a wealthy family as he appeared not to be in need of a patron. He wrote 16 Satires varying from 60 to 660 lines in length. His themes included homosexuality (Sat.1.2), and male prostitution (Sat.3.9). His verse established a model for the satire of indignation, and the biting tone of his poetry remains unequalled. In his poetry he powerfully denounces a permissive Roman society that indulges in luxury and sensual pleasures, in brutal exercise of power and the antagonisms of the imperial court. His expression is often enriched with popular mottoes and his style owes much to the rhetorical form. His contribution to poetry was not recognized during his life time and he was not included in Quintilian's history of satire. Servius in the late fourth century drew attention to his talent.

Ausonius' writings (310–394 CE) form a miscellaneous collection divided into *Occasional Works* and *School Exercises and Fragments*. In the *Parentalia*, eulogies to deceased relatives, written in 379 CE, he occasionally expresses personal sentiment. His *Cupido Crucifixibus* is the description of a painting in a dining room at Trier, representing Cupid as tormented in Hell by the women who pursued him on earth. The second group of his writing includes mnemonic verse. In his erotic verse he praises love as a form of tender friendship. He wrote letters to his friends, and poetry, praising his apples and lamenting his verses with light-hearted gentleness. The wife of his youth died after a few years of marriage, but not before leaving him the comfort of children. He had written her a tender lyric in life, and thirty-six years later was still writing of her. Ausonius was a Christian, forever trapped between his religiosity and his keen interest in pagan antiquity.

EVANGELIA ANAGNOSTOU-LAOUTIDES

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## LAURE (COLETTE PEIGNOT)

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1903–1938

French thinker and writer

### “Histoire d’une petite fille”

Georges Bataille and Michel Leiris published “Histoire d’une petite fille” in 1939. The text was included in a limited edition entitled *Écrits de Laure*, which also included Laure’s poems and her unfinished notes on the notion of the sacred. In 1977, her nephew Jérôme Peignot compiled the first public edition of Laure’s work, including the previously published material and her correspondence with Bataille, Michel Leiris, and others. Peignot also added his introduction “Ma mère diagonale” (“My Diagonal Mother”), and Bataille’s article “La vie de Laure” (“The Life of Laure”). Jeanine Herman’s English translation of this edition was published by City Lights Books in 1995.

“Histoire d’une petite fille” is a series of memories from the author’s childhood and adolescence, recorded chronologically in the form of a loosely crafted memoir. Bataille and Leiris chose the title from Laure’s notes, where she had also suggested the titles “Le triste privilège” (“The Sad Privilege”) and “Une vie de conte de fée” (“A Fairy Tale Life”). In “Histoire d’une petite fille,” the narrator seemingly purges herself of her most painful memories. She addresses death and eroticism in a language that is at once brutal and ambiguous. The first memory recounted is of a little girl going to bed in a room full of religious paraphernalia and falling victim to terrifying nightmares. It quickly becomes apparent that the narrator’s waking moments were no less frightening than her dreams, and she calls childhood ‘the stealer of children.’ There is a notable tension throughout “Histoire d’une petite fille,” and throughout Laure’s writing in general, which is self-consciously influenced by the forces of death, eroticism, and religious oppression.

In “Histoire d’une petite fille,” Laure describes events which she would later incorporate

in her theory of the sacred. For Laure, the sacred is defined by two dueling components: the ‘high’ sacred, equated with the exultation she witnesses during religious ritual, and the ‘base,’ which she associates with issues of sexuality. The sacred experience is also founded on a mysticism maintained by concentrating on the infinite. Its roots are particularly evident in a lyrical passage of “Histoire d’une petite fille,” during which the little girl is overcome as she ‘discovers’ the immensity of the sky. The child protagonist is simultaneously fascinated by and frightened of both types of ‘sacred’ phenomena. From a very early age Laure is aware of the affinity between religious euphoria and sexual transgression, and she envies anyone who is unrestricted by bourgeois social structure. Such abhorrence of bourgeois ideals is perhaps the strongest current in “Histoire d’une petite fille,” and each childhood event is described as an expression of the need to break away from social restriction.

Laure’s oppressive life in Paris is all the more striking because juxtaposed with euphoric descriptions of the countryside. Her father teaches her about nature at the family’s country home, and the young child is enraptured. Any happiness is ephemeral however, as the Peignot family is devastated by a series of deaths during the first World War. Laure’s beloved father enlists in the army, and as the family is seeing him off at the train station the child has what she calls her first real sacred experience: she is part of a crowd whose patriotic fervor causes her to see her father as a willing human sacrifice. The experience makes her physically ill. Soon after this epiphany, Laure witnesses a staggering number of deaths. An uncle is first: having returned from the front with tuberculosis, he dies slowly in Laure’s bedroom. During the funeral a sheet of water escapes from the coffin and hits the pallbearers, one of whom swears loudly. Laure is stricken by this throwing together of solemnity and profanity, and is literally overwhelmed. Her father’s death follows, and Laure’s grief is augmented by what she calls

the ‘spectacle of mourning’: her mother grieves most vehemently when guests are present, her aunt pays attention to her make-up while weeping, and there is a general feeling that her father’s death has been romanticized. For a short time Laure becomes attached to the young daughter of a family friend, and this toddler also grows ill and dies. The narrator states that she fully understood death when seeing this child’s tiny white coffin lowered into the ground.

At this time, Laure contracts tuberculosis, and after being nursed back to health she begins to lose religious faith. This is encouraged by the death of her godson, a young soldier who had vexed her mother during a previous visit because he had been unwilling to discuss combat. Laure likens this encounter to the day a friend of her brother’s sobbed uncontrollably in her mother’s presence, annoying her greatly. This boy was also killed.

Laure’s first sexual experiences added to her trauma: following the multiple deaths already described, she discovers that the family priest—known to her as *Monsieur l’abbé*—had been sexually molesting her older sister. The priest soon turns his attentions to Laure, and the situation is aggravated by the fact that he has symbolically taken over her father’s role within the household. When *Monsieur l’abbé* explains human reproduction to Laure, she is torn by the desire to confess her sexual thoughts to a priest and the knowledge that these thoughts were instigated by the relationship between this same priest and her sister. Confused, Laure guards her secret for quite some time.

As Laure rejects her family more fervently, she becomes increasingly withdrawn from social interaction. When she finally tells her brother about the priest’s misconduct, they tell their mother who promptly accuses them of lying. From this point on, Laure is deliberately cold towards her family and begins to express her anger through writing. Returning to school, her behavior is erratic and unpredictable; the only stable force in her life becomes her irreligion. She is briefly attracted to music, but eventually rejects even this as a form of escapism.

“Histoire d’une petite fille” is in no way a sexually explicit text. When read within the context of Laure’s other writings however, and in relation to Bataille’s theory of the sacred, the juxtaposing of the high and base elements of

the sacred already present in Laure’s childhood acquires renewed importance. The author of “Histoire d’une petite fille” has expunged her most traumatic childhood experiences and incorporated them in a structured (if chaotic) épistémè of transgression, eroticism, and death.

### Biography

Laure’s full name was Colette Laure Lucienne Peignot. Born into a Catholic, bourgeois family in Paris on October 8, 1903, she died of tuberculosis on November 8, 1938. Laure was linked to many important intellectual figures and movements during her short life: with the author Jean Bernier she collaborated with the French surrealists, with communist activist Boris Souvarine she contributed articles to *La critique sociale*, and with Georges Bataille she wrote for the political journal *Contre-Attaque* and participated in *Acéphale* (a secret society striving to recreate Dionysian rituals).

PATRICIA BERNEY

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## LAWRENCE, D.H.

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1885—1930

British novelist, poet, essayist

### Works

“I always labor at the same things,” David Herbert Lawrence commented while writing *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, “to make the sex relation valid and precious instead of shameful.” With some qualification, this comment is a fair description of Lawrence’s major work. Generally, the “sex relation” he wrote about is heterosexual and genital—“phallic marriage,” as he called it—but not entirely, and the heterosexual relationships he portrayed explore a variety of erotic experiences.

### Early Work

Before his elopement with Frieda Weekley and up to the completion of *Sons and Lovers* in 1912, his view of heterosexual relationships was that they are tragic, presumably because of the unhappy marriage of his own parents and his own intense Oedipal conflicts. In his first novel, *The White Peacock*, begun in 1905–6 and published in 1911, the strongly masculine farmer George Saxton is flirted with by Lettie because she feels in him the warm manliness she does not feel in Leslie (the better economic match whom she marries); because the desire she arouses in George cannot be satisfied in his subsequent marriage to the less “spiritual,” less educated Meg, he destroys himself with drink. “How much this first novel was written for his mother’s approval,” Richard Aldington remarked, “may be judged from this Band of Hope portrait of George and from the fact that Heinemann had a single advance copy of the book, printed and bound, for Lawrence to give his mother before he died.” The story is told from the point of view of a first-person narrator, Cyril, who feels himself to be a disembodied consciousness, “a pale, erratic fragility.” Cyril is very close to his mother and identifies with her middle-class sensibilities

and refinement—his derelict father is dead and out of the story. Also present in the novel is a gamekeeper who anticipates the famous gamekeeper in *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, but here the representative of male vitality is killed off in an accident in a quarry. The really positive presentation of erotic feeling is in the attraction that Cyril feels towards George, celebrated in what Jeffrey Meyers calls a “Whitmanesque” chapter, entitled “A Poem of Friendship.” Naked, Cyril and George swim together, and afterwards they dry each other:

... [H]e knew how I admired the noble, white fruitfulness of his form. As I watched him, he stood in white relief against the mass of green. He polished his arm, holding it straight and solid; he rubbed his hair into curls, while I watched the deep muscles of his shoulders, and the bands stand out in his neck as he held it firm ... [L]aughing he took hold of me and began to rub me briskly, as if I were a child, or rather, a woman he loved and did not fear. I left myself quite limply in his hands, and, to get a better grip of me, he put his arm around me and pressed me against him, and the sweetness of the touch of our naked bodies one against the other was superb. It satisfied in some measure the vague, indecipherable yearning of my soul; and it was the same with him. When he had rubbed me all warm, he let me go, and we looked at each other with eyes of still laughter, and our love was perfect for a moment, more perfect than any love I have known since, either for man or woman.

The tragic view of homosexual passion continues in his second novel, *The Trespasser*, published in 1912. The story of the illicit love affair between Siegmund and Helen and its consequences, treated with more intensity (complete with allusions to *Tristan und Isolde*) than was the love-tragedy of the first novel, and Siegmund rather inexplicably hangs himself. But the lyrical descriptions of nature shown through the lover’s eyes are an expression of their passion that lets them see the whole world afresh. It is not, however, till *Sons and Lovers* that heterosexual passion is no longer portrayed as somehow inherently tragic but as made unhappy by Oedipal conflicts. It is the middle-class mother, with her

disapproval of the working-class father and his drinking, who exacerbates these conflicts. Frieda, with whom he had eloped to the European continent before finishing this third novel, helped him, with her experience of psychoanalysis, to see the Oedipal outlines of the essentially autobiographical story of Paul Morel's inability to find a satisfying sexual experience with a woman. "A woman of character and refinement goes into the lower class," Lawrence was able to write in 1912 describing his novel to his publisher, and has no satisfaction in her own life. She has had a passion for her husband, so the children are born of passion, and have heaps of vitality. But as her sons grow up, she selects them as lovers ... But when they come to manhood, they can't love, because their mother is the strongest power in their lives, and holds them ... William gives his sex to a fribble, and his mother holds his soul. But the split kills him ... The next son gets a woman who fights for his soul—fights his mother. The son loves the mother—all the sons hate and are jealous of the father ... The son decides to leave his soul in his mother's hands, and, like his elder brother, go for passion. Then the split begins to tell again ... The son casts off his mistress, attends to his mother dying. He is left in the end naked of everything ...

This conception of a "split" in erotic feeling is strikingly parallel to Freud's description of the causes of "psychical impotence" in his 1912 essay "The Most Prevalent Form of Degradation in Erotic Life." Because of the attachment to the mother, the boy cannot feel tenderness and esteem (i.e., cannot give his "soul") to the same woman for whom he feels sensual desire, and *vice versa*. "He was like so many young men of his age," Lawrence's novel tells us. "Sex had become so complicated in him that he would have denied that he ever could want Clara or Miriam or any woman whom he *knew*. Sex desire was a sort of detached thing, that did not belong to a woman." Paul's sexual intercourse with Miriam, who is supposed to be full of spiritual feelings and who gives in to him out of a feeling of obligation and self-sacrifice, is unpleasant to both. But with Clara—a feminist separated from her husband—he can experience a joyous, uninhibited sexual release. Lying with her on a river bank, he

... sunk his mouth on her throat, where he felt her heavy pulse beat under his lips. Everything was

perfectly still. There was nothing in the afternoon but themselves.

When she arose, he, looking on the ground all the time, saw suddenly sprinkled on the black wet beech-roots many scarlet carnation petals, like splashed drops of blood; and red, small splashes fell from her bosom, streaming down her dress to her feet.

"Your flowers are smashed," he said.

But in the relationship that develops, Clara perceives it is not her that he wants but, as she puts it, merely "it."

### *The Rainbow*

In *Look! We Have Come Through!*, most of which was written in 1912, Lawrence has cast off his tragic view of sex. Though it speaks of the difficulties they encounter in their relationship, this poetic sequence celebrates what he has discovered with Frieda. Now he can sing a "Hymn to Priapus," can assert that everything, from the mountains to the dandelion seeds, "starts from us," the sexually-fulfilled couple, can hope to "spend eternity/With my face down buried between her breasts," for it was by touching "the flank of my wife" that he escaped from solipsistic self-entrapment and rises from a kind of death "to a new earth, a new I, a new knowledge, a new world of time." His new view of sexual experience is expressed in the parable that opens his *Study of Thomas Hardy*. In this parable he derides the view that the red color of the flower can be explained as a lure to bees to effect its pollination; thus he exposes the puritanism at the basis of so-called scientific assumptions that suppose the *purpose* of sexual expression, in poppies or in humans, is reproduction. Though in his subsequent work (most notably in *The Plumed Serpent*) he makes harsh remarks about women who insatiably demand frictional stimulation of the clitoris, nevertheless sexual expression in many forms, apparently in "excess" of any reproductive purpose, is, according to his parable of the poppy, natural, and reproduction merely one of the possible consequences.

But it is his novel *The Rainbow*, written while he and Frieda were back in England during the war years, that gives the fullest and most powerful expression to his discovery. Now characters are not destroyed for following their sexual

desires but rather find fulfillment though gratification of these desires. Sex is no longer seen as in some way inherently tragic but only made unhappy through the imposition of modern ideals of education and upward social mobility. When it was published in 1915, reviewers attacked *The Rainbow* with comments like “realistic to the point of brutality,” “a monotonous wilderness of phallicism,” “spoiled by crude sex details,” and these attacks were used to prosecute the publisher, who agreed to the destruction of all copies.

The novel spans three generations and gives us a history of marriage in the Brangwen family under the impact of gradual modernization from the first half of the nineteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century. It opens with a poetic evocation of the life of the Brangwens as a well-to-do, English farming family, where the men had “a kind of surety” that came from their close physical connection with the organic rhythms of farm life, “cattle and earth and vegetation and the sky,” and that gave them a life without either emotional complexity or torment. But the women “were different” and wanted some higher, greater form of life, as they imagine the vicar enjoys, and set out to educate the children so these children can go “beyond” farm life and its animal physicality. Lawrence now sees the mother as the instigator of sexual troubles. The sufferings of young Tom Brangwen in trying to find a mate are the result of this ambition instilled in him by women—exacerbating his Oedipal conflicts—to rise above peasant instincts. “He had one or two sweethearts, starting with them in the hope of speedy development. But when he had a nice girl, he found that he was incapable of pushing the desired development ... He could not think of her like that, he could not think of her *actual* nakedness.” On the other hand, his experience with a woman who is not “nice” in his conventional sense shocks him. “Now when Tom Brangwen, at nineteen, a youth fresh like a plant, rooted in his mother and sister, found that he had lain with a prostitute in a common public house, he was very much startled. For him there was until that time only one kind of woman—that which was like his mother and sister.” Like Paul Morel, Tom suffers from what Freud called “psychical impotence,” for he can have only “nice” feelings towards “nice girls” and “not-nice,” that is to say, sexual, feelings towards “not-nice” girls; in

other words, he cannot *marry* anyone he sexually desires. When he tries to find relief with a prostitute “it was with a paucity he was forced to despise.” So he drinks, trying to burn “the youth from his blood.” A partial exception to his dilemma—how to feel esteem for a woman he experiences sexually—occurs when at an inn he has a sexual encounter with a “light o’ love,” as the novel calls her, who is the mistress of an aristocratic foreigner. “Afterwards he glowed with pleasure,” and, when the man and woman have departed, he “began to imagine an intimacy with fine-textured, subtle-mannered people such as the foreigner ... and amidst this subtle intimacy was always the satisfaction of a voluptuous woman.” He has had a sexual experience with a woman he cannot despise for her sexuality because she comes from a more refined world than his. This experience prefigures his encounter with the aristocratic Lydia, who is the widow of, and has had a daughter by, a Polish patriot. Lydia is the solution to his Oedipal problem, for connection with her would satisfy the drive put in him by his mother to get “beyond” his farm world but without his abandoning his own physicality—indeed, he would go to his “beyond” by means of sexual intercourse. In Lydia’s foreign origins and aristocracy he can finally overcome the sense of inferiority his mother’s expectations gave him, but it takes two years of marriage before he can really overcome his inhibitions and embrace her without clumsiness. Lawrence expresses in rhapsodic terms the struggle and fulfillment they achieve.

With their discovery, the novel passes on to the next generation, to Lydia’s daughter Anna. Anna has suffered through the loss of her father and the subsequent too-close connection with her mother, and the frustrations Tom had felt (and still to some degree feels) create sexual difficulties for her as she matures, especially because he raises her to have lady-like sensibilities. Emotionally entangled with her family as she is, Anna as a young woman can only mate with another Brangwen, and marries Tom’s nephew, Will, who is town-bred and works as a lace-designer. After their marriage they almost immediately begin to fight one another until her fulfillment comes in the gestation and birth of a child, and in her pregnancy she does a naked, big-bellied dance alone before a mirror to “the Lord,” who for her is the ultimate origin of the child, not her husband. This passage was a

special shock to early readers. The novel calls her “Anna Victrix,” because in her triumphant fecundity she creates a “little matriarchy” to which Will submits. He submits because, after an encounter which arouses him but which he does not consummate with a young woman in a theater, Anna accepts and provokes extreme sexual excitement in him:

He would go all day waiting for the night to come, when he could give himself to the enjoyment of some luxurious absolute of beauty in her. The thought of the hidden resources of her, the undiscovered beauties and ecstatic places of delight in her body ... sent him slightly insane ... And she, separate, with a strange, dangerous, glistening look in her eyes received all his activities upon her as if they were expected by her, and provoked him when he was quiet to more, till sometimes he was ready to perish for sheer inability to be satisfied of her ... Their children became mere offspring to them, they lived in the darkness and death of their own sensual activities. Sometimes he felt he was going mad with a sense of Absolute Beauty, perceived by him in her through his senses.

The obscurity a reader may find in such a passage may derive not only from a reticence to name the sexual acts specifically but also from the passage’s evocative intensity. The poetic power of *The Rainbow*, especially in its first half, comes from a method that seeks to express inner feelings rather than to depict characters, in the conventional manner, in scene and dialogue. But apparently the intercourse of Will and Anna depend greatly on sexual variations, especially anal eroticism:

All the shameful things of the body revealed themselves to him with a sort of sinister, tropical beauty. All the shameful, natural and unnatural acts of sensual voluptuousness which he and the woman partook of together, created together, they had their heavy beauty and their delight. Shame, what was it? It was part of extreme delight. It was that part of delight of which man is usually afraid. Why afraid? The secret, shameful things are most terribly beautiful.

With these acts they “accepted shame,” but this shame “was a bud that blossomed into beauty and heavy, fundamental gratification.” But for their children—the novel’s third generation, which has gone another step towards the modern, the urban, and the sophisticated—sexuality will be more conflicted than it was even for Will and Anna. Will has turned towards his daughter Ursula for emotional fulfillment even

more than Tom had towards Anna, and Ursula, a modern young lady who goes to college, can find no satisfaction with the men in the book. Her lover Skrebensky, though attractive, is a soldier willing to submit completely to the purposes of the state and therefore has little feeling at his disposal for a woman. He envies a barge man with three children just because the barge man, in simply looking at Ursula, has an “impudent directness” and is capable of “worship of the woman in Ursula, a worship of body and soul together” of which he is incapable. A modern man, Skrebensky has no “self.” In her “hard and fierce” kiss, “her soul crystallized with triumph, and his soul was dissolved in agony and annihilation,” as if the aroused sex in a woman somehow can only destroy the modern man who is completely caught in the established order of things. Nevertheless she “caressed and made love to him” and pretends to admire him “in open life” so that “they were lovers, in a young, romantic, almost fantastic way”—lovers as the earlier generations, whose erotic experience occurred only in private, never were. As modern people, they live in public. There is no sexual consummation, and Skrebensky goes off to the army and to war, while Ursula goes to college and enters upon a lesbian relationship with Winifred Inger, described as “a rather beautiful woman of twenty-eight, a fearless-seeming, clean-type of modern girl whose very independence betrays her sorrow.” But this relationship dissolves and Ursula becomes a teacher herself, only to be disillusioned with the nature of a system that—in preparing children for the world of modern, industrialized work to which all else must be a “sideshow”—makes any personal relationship with them impossible. She begins to feel she lives in an “inner circle of light ... wherein the trains rushed and the factories ground out their machine-produce and the plants and the animals worked by the light of science and knowledge” that denies “the outer darkness.” She yearns for something to come out of that darkness for her. But it is only Skrebensky, returning from war, who comes to her. In the chapter entitled “The Bitterness of Ecstasy” she has a “superb consummation” with Skrebensky, yet for all its excitement it is unfulfilling to her:

The trouble began at evening. Then a yearning for something unknown came over her, a passion for something she knew not what. She would walk the

foreshore alone after dusk, expecting, expecting something, as if she had gone to a rendezvous. The salt, bitter passion of the sea ... seemed to provoke her to a pitch of madness, tantalizing her with vast suggestions of fulfillment. And then, for personification, would come Skrebensky, whom she knew, whom she was fond of, who was attractive, but whose soul could not contain her in its waves of strength, nor his breast compel her in burning, salty passion.

She kisses him, “pressing in her beaked mouth till she had the heart of him”—the reference to “beaked mouth” anticipating the critique in his later novels of “the beakish will,” that is, the woman’s exertion of friction by the clitoris in sexual intercourse. Skrebensky then, while she lies motionless, serves her with violent motions that “lasted till it was agony to his soul ... till he gave way as if dead.” But in a waiter and a cab driver—two men outside middle-class respectability—she and Skrebensky encounter in London, she glimpses something she yearns for from the “unknown.” After her miscarriage and abandonment by Skrebensky, Ursula has a prophetic vision that “the sordid people who crept hard-scaled and separate on the face of the world’s corruption were living still, that the rainbow was arched in their blood and would quiver to life in their spirit” and that “the old, brittle corruption of houses and factories” would be swept away.

### *Women In Love*

After the banning of *The Rainbow*, Lawrence begins explaining his vision to a world that had rejected it. He took on the role of prophet. Lawrence expresses these tendencies in Rupert Birkin, the main male character of the novel *Women in Love*, published in 1920. He lectures his friends on the horrors of modern civilization and the necessity to escape from its ideals by means of a marriage founded on some other principle than the “love” that is advanced as the highest motive. These harangues are especially for the benefit of Ursula Brangwen, who has the same name as the character in *The Rainbow* (both novels evolved out of an early manuscript called “The Sisters”) but who seems a different person, especially in her higher level of sophistication and in the somewhat elevated social world in which she now has her acquaintance. Her sister, Gudrun, an artist of some

reputation, becomes the lover of Birkin’s friend, the handsome and wealthy Gerald Critch, who owns the local collieries. The two couples are shown in contrast—according to Lawrence’s developing sexual philosophy, Ursula-Birkin on the right path, Gudrun-Gerald on the wrong. Birkin believes that one should act in terms of spontaneous impulses, but Gerald opposes this view because he believes that would mean “everybody cutting everybody else’s throat in five minutes.” And in a scene in bohemian London early in the novel we see Gerald’s aggressive impulses gratified through a sexual experience with Miss Darrington, also called “Pussums” and “Minette” (as in *faire minette* = perform cunnilingus). She looks at Gerald the morning afterwards with the “inchoate look of a violated slave, whose fulfilment lies in her further and further violation,” and this look “made his nerves quiver with acutely desirable sensation.” Because he feels he must preserve his social position, Gerald will not have any lasting relationship with “Pussums,” though she does gratify his spontaneous desires. Instead he enters into a relationship with Gudrun. She, who was attracted to him on first seeing him, initiates their physical intimacy by suddenly (spontaneously) slapping him in the face. Gerald’s habit of exerting power piques her, as in the scene where she and Ursula watch him using his spurs cruelly to force a mare, terrified by a passing train, to stand. Their sexual intercourse begins after the death of his father, when, suffering one night from a terrible sense “of his own nothingness,” he stealthily enters the house of Gudrun’s parents, slips into her room, and tells he must have her:

... She let him hold her in his arms, clasp her close against him. He found in her infinite relief. Into her he poured all his pent-up darkness and corrosive death, and he was whole again. It was wonderful, marvelous, it was a miracle ... And she, subject, received him as a vessel filled with his bitter potion of death. She had no power at this crisis to resist. The terrible frictional violence of death filled her, and she received it in an ecstasy of subjection, in throes of acute, violent sensation.

In gratitude for her allowing him to do this, he “worshipped her, Mother and substance of all life.” He sleeps beside her like a child, but she is left in a state of “violent active superconsciousness” and cannot sleep. She feels “an ache like nausea ... a nausea of him.” Finally,

on a winter excursion to the Alps with him and with the newly-married Birkin and Ursula, she torments Gerald by taking up with a sadistic German sculptor who admits that he had to slap the adolescent girl who was his model so she would remain still, and Gerald reacts to Gudrun's treatment of him by going off into the snow and, by a crucifix half-buried there, allowing himself to freeze to death. But the relationship of Ursula and Birkin, going on simultaneously with the unfolding of this deadly process, is life-affirming. Birkin has pulled himself away from Hermione Roddice, a woman who sees herself as a center of advanced culture. She and Ursula are contrasted later in the novel, after an argument about love, from Hermione's point of view:

... Ursula could not understand, never would understand, could never be more than the usual jealous and unreasonable female, with a good deal of powerful female emotion, female attraction, and a fair amount of female understanding, but no mind ... And Rupert—he had now reacted towards the strongly female, healthy, selfish woman ...

Birkin wants Ursula to commit herself to marriage—which for Birkin means the end of the dominance of woman. In his view, marriage should allow an “equilibrium” between the man and woman such as he sees in the play of two cats. The man and woman would relate to each other not in terms of personalities or conventional roles:

“There is [he tells her] ... a final me which is stark and impersonal and beyond responsibility. So there is a final you. And it is there I would want to meet you—not in the emotional, loving plane—but there beyond, where there is no speech and no terms of agreement. There we are two stark, unknown beings, two utterly strange creatures ... And there could be no obligation, because there is no standard for action there ... It is quite inhuman—so there can be no calling to book, in any form whatsoever—because one is outside the pale of all that is accepted, and nothing known applies. One can only follow the impulse ... only each taking according to the primal desire.”

Birkin's view is the denial of traditional notions of the subordination of sex to love and to other purposes that Christianity has promulgated. In so far as these needs are sexual, they are for more than procreation and even genital intercourse, as is illustrated in Ursula's kneeling,

putting her arms around his loins, touching the back of his thighs and pressing her face against them and finding “release at last.” From “the darkest poles of the body”—his anus—her touch causes “a dark fire of electricity” that “rushed from him to her ... and flooded them both with rich peace, satisfaction.”

During the course of Birkin's relationship with Ursula, he tries to save Gerald from disaster, most notably in the scene where the two men wrestle together naked. After they have wrestled to unconsciousness Birkin accidentally touched the hand of Gerald, and “Gerald's hand closed warm and sudden over Birkin's.” Birkin wants Gerald to acknowledge that the contact they have had is significant and to commit himself to it, but it is finally too unconventional for Gerald. More than anything else, it is this refusal that gives him no escape from the fatal passion for Gudrun. Seeing the frozen corpse in the end of the novel, Birkin says Gerald was a “denier.” The novel ends with Birkin's insistence—in opposition to Ursula's objections—that he wanted a union with a man as “eternal” as the union he has with her: “another kind of love.” Significantly, a “Prologue” not published with the novel tells us at length that “although he was always drawn to women, feeling more at home with a woman than with a man, yet it was for men that he felt the hot, flushing, roused attraction which a man is supposed to feel for the other sex,” and he is deeply ashamed of his powerful homosexual longings.

### Lawrence as Prophet

The two small volumes *Psychoanalysis and the Unconscious* (1921) and *Fantasia of the Unconscious* (1922) are Lawrence's attempts to theorize what, he claims, had so far come more or less unconsciously from his pen. He presents what he calls his “pollyanalytics,” but their serious, essential point is to make a correction of Freud. According to Lawrence, the Oedipus complex and other Freudian “horrors” do not express true human depths but are the result of the ideals of Western civilization, especially the ideal of Love, having been forced by education onto the “pristine unconscious.” Parents force ideas onto the body of the child instead of helping the child respond to life from its physiological “centres,” notably from the “solar plexus.”



This theory is a development of what Birkin was preaching to Ursula in his notion of marriage. "Coition" is not some union of minds or personalities but an act in which

... the two seas of blood in the two individuals, rocking and surging towards contact, as near as possible, clash into a oneness. A great flash of interchange occurs, like an electrical spark when two currents meet like lightning out of the densely surcharged clouds. There is a lightning flash which passes through the blood of both individuals, there is a thunder of sensation which rolls in diminishing crashes down the nerves of each—and then the tension passes.

The two individuals are separate again. But are they as they were before/ Is the air the same after a thunderstorm as before? No. The air is as it were new, fresh, tingling with newness. So is the blood of man and woman after successful coition. After a false coition, like prostitution, there is not newness but a certain disintegration.

Lawrence insists that *this*—and not some ideal purpose—is the "great psychic experience" from the point of view of a man or a woman. And "after all our experience with poetry and novels we know that the procreative purpose of sex is ... just a sideshow."

Nevertheless, in *Aaron's Rod* (1922), *Kangaroo* (1923), and *The Plumed Serpent* (1926)—called his "leadership" novels—sexual experience is relegated to a subsidiary theme and even, in *Aaron's Rod*, treated as something to avoid. This development seems related to unhappiness in these years in his marriage. Frieda had not been faithful to him even from the start, as is revealed in the long continuation—not published till 1984—of his fictional fragment *Mr. Noon*. In the three "leadership" novels, man–woman relationships are primary, but the homosexuality is sublimated into "leader–follower" relationships and political ideas that are sometimes strongly reminiscent of fascism. But it seems clear in *The Plumed Serpent* that basic to the revolution proposed for Mexico, that is supposed to overthrow Western and Christian ideals and restore the worship of Quetzalcoatl, is a new relationship between man and woman. The European heroine Kate is supposed to learn the womanly superiority of the Mexican woman, Theresa, to give up demanding from her husband, General Cipriano, "the old desire for frictional, irritant sensation ... the spasms of

frictional voluptuousness ... orgiastic 'satisfaction,' in spasms that made her cry aloud." Instead, Cipriano "in his dark, hot silence, would bring her back the new, soft, heavy, hot flow, when she was like a fountain gushing noiseless and with urgent softness from the volcanic depths." In abandoning her craving for "the beak-like friction of Aphrodite" she can become the woman that Birkin and his prophetic avatars have been wanting. The resulting hot "gushing" would seem to correspond to the vaginal orgasm that Freud and his followers believed they could distinguish from clitoral orgasm. According to Brenda Maddox, Cipriano's deliberate denial of Kate's clitoral orgasm is the passage most offensive to feminist readers in all of Lawrence's writings.

### *Lady Chatterley's Lover*

In his most famous novel he abandons his "leadership" themes and returns to a celebration of the possibilities in the sexual relationship of man and woman, though a source for the novel may have been E.M. Forster's *Maurice*, which seems to be a homosexual version that Forster did not allow published till 1970, though Lawrence may well have known about it in manuscript. *Lady Chatterley's Lover* itself, which pioneered in the use of common spoken language to describe sexual acts and in their graphic depiction in a serious literary context, was not legally printed in the United States till the Grove Press edition of 1959. Lawrence's essay *A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover* attempted to defend it from the charge of pornography and made some interesting distinctions; he claimed that pornography—as opposed to writing that simply aroused a reader sexually—did "dirt on sex," and that *Jane Eyre* was closer to being pornographic than was his work or Boccaccio's.

The novel opens with a summary of how his heroine Constance Reid came to be married to Sir Clifford Chatterley, who, shortly after their marriage, was wounded in the war and paralyzed from the waist down. But before their marriage she did not care anyway about physical sex. What mattered to her was "the impassioned interchange of talk" with men. "Love was only a minor accompaniment." Above all, she wants to remain *free*. And however one might sentimentalize it, "Connie thinks,

... this sex business was one of the most ancient, sordid connections and subjections ... Women had always known there was something better, something higher and now they knew it more definitely than ever. The beautiful pure freedom of a woman was infinitely more wonderful than any sexual love.

When she and her sister Hilda actually have sexual intercourse with men, in “the actual sex-thrill within the body” they “nearly succumbed to the strange male power.” But they are able to treat it as a mere “sensation” and so remain “free.” For Clifford, even before he is wounded in the war, sex mattered little:

... He had been virgin when he married: and the sex part did not mean much to him. They were so close, he and she, apart from that. And Connie exulted a little in this intimacy which was beyond sex, and beyond a man's “satisfaction.” Clifford anyhow was not just keen on his “satisfaction” ...

Thus, when he goes off to war shortly after their honeymoon and returns paralyzed from the waist down, little is changed between them sexually. His paralysis is only a symbolic confirmation of what he already was. In his paralysis, he is meant to symbolize the condition of modern man in general. Indeed, there may be much of Clifford in Lawrence himself. But Clifford is especially meant to symbolize the condition of the cultivated upper classes. After the war, Connie and Clifford try to carry on in their sexless marriage. Clifford—obsessed with success, with the need for making a display of himself that Lawrence tells us is typical of modern men—takes up fiction writing. Clifford even tells Connie she may take a lover. His speech to her minimizing the importance of sexual connection as opposed to their relationship based on “the habit of each other” loses its credibility when he concludes: “we ought to be able to arrange this sex thing, as we arrange going to the dentist.” He achieves some success and gathers around him the intellectuals of the day. One of these “cronies,” Tommy Dukes, more honest than the others, tells them in her presence of the idiocy and profound hatefulness of their vaunted “mental life,” and he becomes Lawrence's spokesman in affirming that what one needs—though Dukes himself cannot claim to have them—is “a good heart, a chirpy penis, and the courage to say ‘shit!’ in front of a lady.” Dukes says his own “penis droops and never lifts his head up ... The penis rouses his head and says:

How do you do? to any really intelligent person. Renoir said he painted his pictures with his penis ... he did too, lovely pictures!”

Being present during the conversations of the “cronies” does not make Connie happy. She tries taking a lover from this circle—Michaelis, a young Irish playwright. But he is far more excited by having her praise his play than he could be in “any sexual orgasm.” And in their intercourse “Connie found it impossible to come to her crisis before he had really finished his,” so that he has to remain erect in her, “with all his will and self-offering, till she brought about her own crisis, with weird little cries ... [L]ike so many modern men, he was finished almost before he had begun. And that forced the woman to be active.” But, sick with disillusion with the life she has chosen, one afternoon she by accident comes upon the gamekeeper Mellors, “naked to the hips,” washing himself at a pump. She has a “visionary experience” seeing “the warm, white flame of a single life, revealing itself in contours that one might touch: a body!” Later, by herself, she feels her own body “going opaque” and feels that at twenty-seven she is growing old “through neglect and denial.” The “mental life” now seems to her to be a “swindle.” She takes to going into the wood, on the excuse of seeing the spring daffodils, and again encounters Mellors. But he “had reached the point where all he wanted on earth was to be left alone.” He avoids contact with her, dreading “her female will and her modern female insistency”—his estranged wife had evidently been one of the “beakish” sort. Mellors, though from the working-class, had been an officer during the war, but had chosen afterwards to return to his own class in rejection of the modern mentality of trying to rise socially.

In the meantime, Clifford discovers that what excites him more than literary success is what he can know as owner of his coal mines: *power*. The pursuit of power over potency is—as Mark Shorer explains in his introduction to the Grove Press edition—the modern way, instead of the way Mellors takes. Connie has been looking at the pheasant chicks that Mellors has been raising when she is seized with “the agony of her own female forlornness,” and Mellors, seeing a tear drop on her wrist, is overcome with a feeling of compassion for her—*compassion which is the same as sexual desire*. That overpowering feeling is, interestingly, an example of the kind of

feeling Freud means in his 1912 essay by full sexual potency, where the two streams of erotic feeling—tenderness and sensuality—combine, and, later in the novel, Connie uses terms that could well have come out of Freud's essay to explain to her incredulous sister what it is she and Mellors have together. Lawrence stresses that there is nothing *consciously intended* by either of them in the sexual act that is about to happen and that initiates their relationship — Mellors “stroked the curve of her flank, in the blind instinctive caress.” He takes her into the hut and at once must enter “the peace on earth of her soft, quiescent body.” The orgasm is all his. She feels “asleep” as it happens, yet, afterwards, feels “it lifted a great cloud from her,” yet does not know why and wonders if was “real”:

Her tormented modern-woman's brain still had no rest ... And she knew, if she gave herself to the man, it was real. But if she kept herself to herself, it was nothing ... And at last, she could bear the burden of herself no more. She was to be had for the taking ...

Modern man, but especially modern woman, have for Lawrence to come to this point of despair, where they have really given up trying to achieve happiness for themselves, and, especially, have given up the means that modern society offers (money, power, achievement, amusements) for satisfaction. Then the primal instincts can take over.

What works against all such sexual tenderness is “not woman's fault, nor even love's fault, nor the fault of sex,” Lawrence tells us. “The fault lay ... in those evil electric lights and diabolical rattlings of engines”—in “the insentient iron world and the Mammon of mechanized greed” that Sir Clifford manages and serves. Mellors wishes there were other men to fight this evil, but the novel offers no revolutionary hopes as did the “leadership” novels before it. The man and the woman will have to go it alone, hiding and trying to keep the feeling they have for each other. And Connie, with her “modern-woman” sensibility, fights this feeling herself. It disturbs her that it “really wasn't personal, “that she was “only really a female to him.” But she realizes that while men had been “very kind to the *person* she was,” they had been “rather cruel to the female”:

... Men were awfully kind to Constance Reid or to Lady Chatterley; but to her womb they weren't kind.

And he took no notice of Constance or of Lady Chatterley; he just softly stroked her loins or her breasts.

Indeed, since Mellors is presented in this novel as a paragon—not who Lawrence himself was but wished to be—Connie is in the position of learning to become what Lawrence thinks is a proper female. She learns through sexual experience. When she had no more heart “to fight for her freedom,” and, after he has his “helpless” orgasm, too soon for her though she feels “new strange thrills rippling inside her,” can no longer “harden and grip for her own satisfaction upon him,” he feels her need and instead of withdrawing is aroused again. Then she has an experience that leaves her “crying in unconscious inarticulate cries.” After this she lets “another self” come to life in her, “and with this self she adored him.” She still feels she can fight this adoration, can instead be “passionate like a Bacchante” and cling “to the old hard passion,” but she chooses the adoration: it was “her treasure.” Nevertheless, on another occasion, she can detach herself during the sexual act and “look on from the top of her head” so that “the butting of his haunches seemed ridiculous to her.” But when she tells him of her unhappiness afterwards, he takes her in his arms, strokes her “between her soft warm buttocks, coming nearer and nearer to the quick of her.” He is roused again and she “yielded with a quiver that was like death” and “went all open to him.”

...It might come with the thrust of a sword in her softly-opened body, and that would be death. But it came with a strange slow thrust of peace, the dark thrust of peace and a ponderous, primordial tenderness, such as made the world in the beginning ... She dared to let go everything, all herself, and be gone in the flood.

Finally, “in a soft shuddering convulsion, the quick of all her plasm was touched, she knew herself touched, the consummation was upon her, and she was gone. She was gone, she was not, and she was born: a woman.”

From then on, it is the malignancy of the “insentient iron world,” particularly through the agency of Clifford and Mellors' former wife, that the two must prevent from destroying them. Mellors tells her about his unhappy past with women and that he believes “in fucking with a warm heart”—that all would go well with the world if men and women could only do that. “It's all this cold-hearted fucking that is death

and idiocy.” Pregnant, she has to leave him for awhile so that he will not appear to be the father of the child, and her last night with him is “a night of sensual passion, in which she was a little started and almost unwilling.” Mellors had always shown special attention to her buttocks and anus—he says she has “the nicest, nicest woman’s arse as is.” Now she lets him penetrate her anus, and the “piercing thrills of passion, different, sharper, more terrible than the thrills of tenderness ... shook her to her foundations, stripped her to the very last, and made a different woman of her. It was not really love.” These thrills burn out “the deepest, oldest shames, in the most secret places. It cost her an effort to let him have his way and will with her. She had to be a passive, consenting thing, like a slave ... “She experiences “all the refinements of passion, the extravagances of sensuality” such as are shown “on the Greek vases, everywhere!” “In the short summer night,” the novel tells us, “she learnt so much. She would have thought a woman would have died of shame. Instead of which, the shame died.” At the end of the novel, Mellors is away learning farming, preparatory to living a life with her.

Of course, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, just because it is such a “Pilgrim’s Progress,” as Wayne Burns calls it, may not be as great a novel when judged by literary criteria as *The Rainbow* or *Women In Love*. Two earlier versions exist. In both, and especially in the first, Mellors is less of a paragon. The second version may be more novelistic than the final version. But the final version gives Lawrence’s sexual views in their most evolved, coherent, and explicit form. After remaining underground for decades, these views gained publicity during the Lawrence revival of the 1950s and ‘60s, especially after the 1959 trial that allowed its publication in the United States. It is not going too far to say that reading Lawrence influenced the youth movements of the ‘60s—but to what extent his message was understood is open to question.

### Biography

Born in Eastwood, Nottinghamshire, September 11, 1885, fourth of five children of a collier whose wife was a former schoolteacher. Attended Beauvale Board School, Nottingham High School. Winter 1901–1902 fell gravely ill with

pneumonia. Became teacher in Eastwood, began first novel, attended Nottingham University College. Met Mrs. Frieda Weekley (*née* von Richthofen) in 1912, eloped with her to Metz, returned to England in 1913 and married her after her divorce. *The Rainbow* published in 1915 and ordered destroyed for its sexual content. After that it was difficult for him to earn a living as a writer. Lived with help from friends and patrons, and after the war traveled (Italy, Australia, Mexico, and New Mexico, where Mabel Dodge Luhan gave him a small ranch), wrote fiction, poetry, literary criticism, essays, and, later, painted. *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* privately printed in Italy in 1928, banned in the United States until 1959. Died of tuberculosis in Vence in southern France on March 2, 1930.

GERALD BUTLER

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# LE PETIT, CLAUDE

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c. 1638–1662  
French libertine poet

Claude Le Petit began his writing career in order to pay for his law studies. When only seventeen years old, he helped correct proofs of the controversial *L'École des filles* and authored its preface, the *Madrigal*. His choice of subject matter and candid detail, together with his forthright views on established religion, were to prove his downfall. When the capital's police commissioner succeeded in having a troupe of prostitutes sent to America, Le Petit was inspired to write *L'Adieu des filles de joye à la ville de Paris* [*Farewells of Paris's Goodtime Girls*] (1657) a 320-verse poem which criticized the political expediency and ultimate futility of the punishment. The passion with which this case was considered reflects Le Petit's affinity with those falling foul of society's norms. He became editor of *La Muse du Coeur*, a weekly gazette, which lasted for eight issues. Contrary to the customary anonymity of this type of publication, he put his name to five out of the eight editions. After returning to Paris in 1661, he began writing satirical pieces such as *La chronique scandaleuse ou Paris ridicule* [*The Scandalous Chronicle or Ridiculous Paris*]. The work's title emulated *Rome ridicule* of Saint-Amant and Paris is depicted as 'la cité de merde' [shit city] and the Jesuits are described as 'Fouëtteurs de petits enfans' [child-beaters]. Members of the order, as well as the recently deceased Mazarin,

are accused of being avid practitioners of sodomy. In doing so, he was projecting a common insult hurled against libertine writers back to the camp of the accusers. He composed the *Apologie de Chausson*—a sonnet inspired by the case of Jacques Chausson who, together with his accomplice Jacques Paulmier, was burnt at the stake on December 29 1661, for the multiple rape of young boys. A novel entitled *L'Heure du Berger* appeared in 1662. This is a fantasy about a young man whose mistress is unfaithful, despite the fact she has always refused him sexual relations, and who spends a night of libidinous abandon with a mysterious woman he encounters.

His collection of poetical works, *Le bordel des muses ou les neuf Pucelles putains, caprices satiriques de Théophile le jeune* [*The Muses' Bordello or the Nine Virginal Whores, Satirical Whims of Théophile the Younger*] (1662), would later secure his conviction for blasphemy. One of the sonnets in this edition, 'Aux Précieuses,' alludes to lesbianism with its mention of a 'godemichi,' or dildo. This poem criticizes the precieuses, an intellectual movement of courtly women, and accuses them of hypocrisy by seeking satisfaction interchangeably in letters and sexuality (both solitary and Sapphic). This was published with the assistance of the two sons of the printer Pierre Rebuffé, and the title indicates that Le Petit saw himself as the literary heir of Théophile de Viau's subversive tradition. The collection contains earlier poems such as *Paris ridicule* as

well as new material. The first of the *Bordel's* dedicatory sonnets is named the 'Sonnet fourtatif' [Fucking sonnet] and is a laudatory description of various sexual pleasures, including male and female sodomy. This abrupt opening, and its use of straightforward vocabulary to describe sexual acts with no discrimination between heterosexuality and homosexuality, sets Le Petit's agenda and describes sexuality in a manner that goes beyond his self-proclaimed master, Théophile. Sonnet LIX attacks the cult of the Virgin Mary, though it is primarily a parody of flamboyant and excessive devotion and religious hypocrisy. Such anti-religious satire was an established feature of libertine writers such as Brantôme. While he owed a debt to his parish priest for having tutored him as a child, Le Petit's experiences at the capital's Jesuit college colored his judgement of the clergy. He opined that the Jesuits ran his alma mater 'par pure sodomie' ('out of pure sodomy'). The fact that he also penned a religious work, *Les plus belles pensées de saint Augustin, prince et docteur de l'Eglise* [*Selected Thoughts of St. Augustine, Prince and Doctor of the Church*] (1666), and took the trouble of having it examined and gaining the approval of three doctors of the Faculty of theology at the Sorbonne on 9 October 1661, demonstrates that he never entirely rejected Catholicism. It is curious that this treatise was not published, nor was it alluded to at his trial as a defence against suspicions of heresy and atheism.

The writer had attracted the attention of the ecclesiastical and civil establishment, and after the authorities got wind of the *Bordel's* existence, this provided an opportunity to precipitate his downfall. When Daubray, a police official, surprised Le Petit red-handed with a manuscript of work, his fate was sealed. The largely unknown twenty-four-year-old poet lacked the assistance of powerful protectors that had helped Théophile de Viau escape the death penalty, and had the misfortune to be writing during a climate of increasing official

anxiety towards a burgeoning genre of obscene-themed literature (already tested to the limits by contemporary writers such as Molière). He came to the attention of the authorities as an ideal candidate for receiving an exemplary punishment. Despite the fact that all copies of the work were destroyed by official order, a clandestine edition was published in Leiden in 1663. Le Petit's principal and dubious distinction, however, lies in the fact that he became the first, and the only, writer to be executed for the cause of censorship in seventeenth-century France.

### Biography

Born at Beuvreuil in Normandie, the son of a Parisian tailor, in 1637 or 1638. Educated at the Jesuit Collège de Clermont, Paris and passed first law examinations, 1655. Murdered an Augustinian friar as an act of revenge for the cleric's public disapproval of him, October 1657: fled France to avoid justice, spending time in Spain, Germany, Bohemia, Italy; returned to Paris, February 1661. Arrested for the clandestine publication of a licentious work: condemned for *lèse-majesté* against God and the saints, 26 August 1662; burnt alive after having been strangled beforehand, 1 September, 1662.

PAUL SCOTT

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# LÉAUTAUD, PAUL

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1872–1956

French novelist, essayist, theatre critic and diarist

Having resolved to devote himself wholly to writing, Paul Léautaud chose himself as his prime subject matter. His legendary misanthropy, misogyny (“I love woman, I do not like women”), and concern for animal welfare clearly stemmed from his unhappy and solitary childhood as told in *Le Petit Ami* (1903) and *In memoriam* (1905). He was abandoned by his mother, an aspiring actress, only a few days after his birth and it was his father, not an affectionate man, who raised him. Marie Pezée, a former prostitute, was hired to look after the child and acted as surrogate mother until she was dismissed in 1880 after reproaching her employer for setting a bad example to the child with his turbulent love-life. Paul Léautaud’s mother rarely visited him and he felt her absence keenly. In 1881, not wishing to see her son in the presence of his father’s sixteen-year-old mistress, she had the boy sent to her hotel room. He found her still in bed, barely clothed; it was the first time he had seen a woman “in such intimacy” and was greatly troubled by it. When he saw her again, in 1901, he was a man, and their meeting marked the beginning of a correspondence (*Lettres à ma mère*, 1956) whose incestuous overtones she found increasingly compromising and which she quickly brought to an end. Thirty-six years later, aged sixty-five, Léautaud was still dreaming about his mother: “I found myself with my mother (...) After lunch we made love very passionately, on her part and mine (...). She was completely naked, her face shining with pleasure. I’ve always had her—in my dreams.”

Except for three early autobiographical narratives, collected theater criticism, a few essays, and extracts from his diaries, Paul Léautaud published relatively little during his lifetime. He only came to prominence as a literary figure in his late seventies, when, in 1951, he reluctantly agreed to be interviewed at length for French national radio; his audience, particularly the

young, were stunned and charmed by his biting wit and sparkling conversation. The publication of his *Journal littéraire* (*Journal of a Man of Letters*) started the following year, but only three of the nineteen volumes appeared before he died in 1954. He emerged as an erotic writer in 1956 when his editor Marie Dormoy revealed the existence of a personal diary, *Le Journal particulier, 1917–1950*, which she published as a limited edition in what we now know to be an edited version. A second personal diary was published thirty years later, after Marie Dormoy’s death and at her request: It included the entries for the year 1933 concerning the beginning of her affair with Léautaud, which lasted until his death and remained secret until her own.

### *Le Fléau. Journal particulier, 1917–1930*

The first personal diary re-edited in 1989 focuses on Léautaud’s enduring affair with Anne Cayssac, whom he nicknamed *la Panthère* [The Panther] and later *le Fléau* [The Scourge]. This personal diary is a detailed record of their “sessions,” and a lucid, though obsessive account of his sexual dependency on a married woman, several years his senior, that he did not even like. She was a cantankerous, dominating, and possessive person, whose caring love for animals did not extend to the human species: “All my life,” Léautaud wrote at the time, “I shall never have any luck where love and tenderness are concerned.” It was with her, however, that at the age of forty-two he started enjoying sex to the full. She had a formidable appetite for sex and was never so ardent and attractive to him as after some violent outburst. They were perfectly matched: “She was,” he wrote, “the partner I had dreamed of, a being (...) possessing to the highest degree what I call the spirit of love, that is to say extreme licentiousness in word, attitude and gesture.” As he explained in *Amour*, a small volume of aphorisms inspired by *le Fléau*, love for him was first and foremost “physical sensual

attraction, (...) pleasure given and received, (...) mutual enjoyment, (and) the union of two human beings made for each other sexually.” “The rest,” he added, “the exaggerations, the sighs, the uplifting of the souls, are jokes, (...) the dreams of minds that are refined and impotent.”

### *Journal particulier, 1933*

In contrast to the first personal diary, which misses the entries for the first three years of the relationship with Anne Cayssac lent to her but never returned, the second private diary focuses exclusively on the year 1933 which saw the beginning of his relationship with Marie Dormoy. Léautaud was then, by all accounts, a wrinkled, toothless, shabbily dressed and smelly sixty-one-year old, and Dormoy an elegant and buxom forty-six-year old. The age difference was of concern to him and he was reluctant at first to respond to her advances: The affair with *le Fléau* was not quite over and he worried about the effect the new relationship might have on his health and his work. The diary gives a remarkably egotistic and crude account of the affair, which at first seems to only offer basic sexual gratification: Marie Dormoy’s body compared most unfavorably with Anne Cayssac’s and did not please him. As time passed, however, Léautaud became undeniably sensitive to her own characteristic beauty, her sexuality, and the way she cared for him. It is this gradual and understated awakening of emotion in a man entering old age that distinguishes this diary from the previous one.

The tone and style of the diaries, however, vary little. Léautaud, who was the epitome of the self-taught man, rejected all forms of literary embellishment. In novels, he insisted, we are never told about the “little wet mess” that follows the lovers’ embrace, and the embarrassing moments that ensue. Wary as he was of anything that remotely resembled grand, academic, or literary style, he opted for a spontaneous form of writing, akin in its simplicity to “written conversation”: “Anything worthwhile is written straight off, in the almost physical pleasure of writing, in the heat of the mind full of its subject.” Léautaud, whose sole purpose in life was to write, used the word “pleasure” to describe

both writing and sex. In the personal diaries, the two are inextricably linked, and what he says about experiences being more strongly felt and intensely savored when he wrote about them than when he actually lived through them also applies to the erotic.

### Biography

Born in Paris, January 18, 1872. Abandoned by his mother and raised by his father in Paris (1874–1882) and Courbevoie, a suburb of Paris (1882–1887). Left school aged 15 and held various office jobs in Paris, 1887–1908. Published his first essay in *Le Mercure de France* in 1895 and started moving in literary circles; was appointed secretary to *Le Mercure de France*, both a literary journal and a publishing house, in 1908 (dismissed 1941). As “Boissard,” was drama critic for *Le Mercure de France*, 1907–1920, *La Nouvelle Revue française*, 1921–1923, and *Les Nouvelles littéraires* in 1923. Never married but had lasting relationships with Jeanne Marié, 1889–1892, Georgette Crozier, 1894–1895, Blanche Blanc, 1898–1912, Anne Cayssac, 1914–1934, and Marie Dormoy from 1933 onwards. Wrote the first entry in his diary on November 3, 1893, and the last one on February 15, 1956. Died in Fontenay-aux-Roses, February 22, 1956.

MIREILLE RIBIÈRE

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# LEDUC, VIOLETTE

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1907–1972

French writer

Violette Leduc (1907–1972) has often been called France's greatest unknown writer. Admired by Jean Genêt and championed by Simone de Beauvoir, she had written three novels before she gained any serious critical attention. That attention came not for a work of fiction but for the first volume of her autobiography, *La Bâtarde* (1964). Her illegitimacy and its effect on her relationship with her mother, her poverty, her affairs, and her face, described by Simone de Beauvoir as “brutally ugly and radiantly alive”—all are a part of the fabric of that text. *La Bâtarde* established a dialogue with Leduc's novels; the autobiography doubled as a guide to understanding her earlier fictional texts. When considered in retrospect, Leduc's three earlier novels, *L'Asphyxie* (*In the Prison of Her Skin*) [1946], *L'Affamée* (*Ravenous*) [1948], and *Ravages* (1955), can be read as alternate visions of *La Bâtarde*. While such autofiction has become the norm for twentieth century literature (from writers as diverse as André Gide and Annie Ernaux), Leduc's works bring sexuality and sexual relationships, both lesbian and heterosexual, to the fore. Indeed, the originality of a woman writing openly about these topics created the scandal of her writing.

Leduc's works, fiction and autobiography alike, focus nearly exclusively on their female protagonist, her experiences of love and sexuality, and her disappointments. Leduc's sexual and emotional experiences with women and men, her long-term relationships with homosexual writers and intellectuals such as Maurice Sachs, Jacques Guérin, and Jean Genêt find their fictional counterparts in her novels, as most tellingly does her obsessive relationship with Simone de Beauvoir, who in some ways functioned as Leduc's ideal reader, her only intended audience. The erotic nature of the text substitutes for the unfulfilled relationship between Leduc and de Beauvoir. Leduc's fiction illustrates the range

of her stylistic experimentation and themes while her style of writing has been likened to a sexualization of the text.

## *L'Affamée* [*Ravenous*], 1948

Understanding Leduc's relationship with Simone de Beauvoir can serve as key to mapping the complex literary space of her fiction and autobiographical writings. *L'Affamée* presents an hallucinatory vision of the beginnings of the ambiguous relationship with “Madame,” the object of the narrator's fixation. Its form is an interior monologue, with no cohesive chronological structure. Hunger and sexual longing define the progression of the narrative. The narrator recounts her struggle to reach “Madame” in a series of unconnected, often violent fantasies. For example, the unrequited, unsatiated hunger inspires images of self-mutilation: “I know you're hungry. Slice your flesh. Eat.” (184) Both in form and theme, the text recalls Surrealist literature through its series of random violent images.

Finally, the narrator accepts her separation from “Madame” and realizes that the only way to bridge the chasm is through writing. The novel closes with the revelation: “To love is difficult but to love is a grace.” (254) *L'Affamée* overflows the boundaries of fiction and lays bare Leduc's obsession with de Beauvoir. The novel defines their later relationship in terms of a *jouissance* in literary, rather than sexual, terms.

## *Ravages* (1955)

Leduc's third novel originally began with the account of a lesbian relationship between two adolescent girls in a boarding school. This section, “Thérèse et Isabelle,” was cut from the original Gallimard edition of the novel because of lesbian sexual acts between the narrator, Thérèse, and another schoolgirl, Isabelle. Gaston Gallimard and the senior staff worried about the potential repercussions from the publication

of such a work, including a possible trial for obscenity. The moral climate of 1954, they concluded, would not tolerate such a frank description of lesbianism. After Gallimard's censorship of the novel, Jacques Guérin convinced Leduc to create a fake manuscript version of "Thérèse et Isabelle," which he published privately in a limited collector's edition. Eventually the reception of "Thérèse et Isabelle" elicited enough interest that Gallimard issued a highly edited version separately, in 1966. However, it was not until 2000 that Gallimard published the unexpurgated text.

The erotic scenes of the "Thérèse and Isabelle" episode shocked because of their frankness but Leduc had deliberately set out to challenge literary conventions. No other woman writer had written so explicitly about sex, least of all lesbian sex. The search of a new language for female sexuality leads Leduc to intertwine metaphors "we felt the rustling of taffeta in the hollow of our hands" with graphic details "she ... bruised my pubis with her thigh thrust between mine." Overall the descriptions are lyric and sensual in tone.

*Ravages* also recounts Thérèse's second relationship with a woman, a schoolteacher named Cécile whom Thérèse meets later in life. Thérèse and Cécile fall into the mold of a same-sex bourgeois couple. Cécile takes on the role of the provider while Thérèse becomes a housewife. Yet a second relationship develops between Thérèse and a weak young man whom she eventually marries. She becomes pregnant, has an abortion, and divorces. The parallels with Leduc's life are obvious. But the novel goes beyond the writing of the self. The complex interplay of the gender roles, traditional and non-traditional, and the tensions they create form the backdrop of each episode. Leduc's language loses much of the previous lyricism of prologue in describing the sexual encounters of her protagonist while retaining its sensuality. The tone becomes harsher, marked by short sentences that echo Thérèse's suffering.

### *Le Taxi* (1971)

Leduc's last novella, *Le Taxi*, explores a different type of taboo, incest between an adolescent brother and sister.

Come inside me!

...

Hurry up ...

I am inside you.

All the way!

Thus begins a series of twelve dialogues that take place in a taxi hired for the purpose of a day of love-making and revelry away from the rest of the world. The brief conversations, punctuated by the young couple's repeated sex acts, trace the progression of the taxi through the city and reveal the long preparation that had gone into this single day. To the question: "are we perverse?" comes the reply "we're privileged," exemplifying the attitude of the youths. The setting recalls both the claustrophobic atmosphere of Cocteau's *Enfants terribles* and Leon and Emma's ride in Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*, while the disembodied voices parallels the works of Marguerite Duras and Nathalie Sarraute. Unlike the lushness of Leduc's erotic language in "Thérèse and Isabelle," here the sparseness of text highlights the exuberance of the protagonists. Of all of Leduc's text, this one is unmarked by despair or suffering; rather it exemplifies desire satisfied.

### Biography

Born in Arras, 7 April 1907, illegitimate daughter of Berthe Leduc, a maid, and André Debaralle. Educated primarily in boarding schools, 1912–1926; failed baccalaureate in 1927. Moved to Vincennes in 1928, liaison with Denise Hertgès, 1928–1935. Took secretarial job with the publishing firm Plon in Paris, 1928–1932. Scriptwriter for Synops, 1937–1939. Married to Jacques Mercier in 1939; separated; 1941; divorced, 1947. Worked for various magazines during World War II; also engaged in black-market traffic. Traveled extensively from 1951–1955: central and southern France, Italy, Belgium, and the Netherlands, Spain. Hospitalized for a "nervous breakdown" in Versailles for six months, 1956–57. First visit to Faucon, 1961; bought house and settled there in 1965. Died of cancer in Faucon, 28 May 1972.

EDITH J. BENKOV

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LEGMAN, GERSHON (G. LEGMAN, ROGER-MAXE DE LA GLANNEGE)

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## LEGMAN, GERSHON (G. LEGMAN, ROGER-MAXE DE LA GLANNEGE)

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1917–1999  
American folklorist, bibliographer, lexicographer, and fiction writer

A polymath of extraordinary reach, Gershon Legman mapped the margins of popular culture. Over his long career he championed origami (the art of Japanese paper-folding), attacked the initiation rites of the medieval order of the Knights Templar, critiqued the typography of the fifteenth-century printer William Caxton, translated *Ubi Roi* by Alfred Jarry, and compiled a bibliography on the economist David Ricardo, but he devoted himself chiefly to the study of sexual humor and folklore. Personally irascible, he shared his erudition and insights generously; his home on the Riviera, crammed with a lifetime's collection of erotic materials, was the center of research into sexual folklore until the waning of censorship in the late twentieth century emboldened less courageous scholars. That censorship was real, and it prevented formal publication of some of Legman's work; as a

result, many items appeared in pamphlets of limited circulation or languish still in manuscript.

Too little is known about his early life (though he claimed that his parents wanted him to be a rabbi) to analyze Legman's personality and achievements with the unrepentant Freudianism he himself used to interpret oral and written expression, but it is evident that he was motivated by a fascination with sexuality, a passion for collecting, and a moral sense that manifested itself in continuous polemic. As a young man, he crusaded for women's rights and for rational population control, but gradually his energies flowed into an increasingly opinionated examination of a culture warped by its refusal to accept sex as a natural part of life. A residual puritanism, however, shaped his concept of the "natural": he often seemed homophobic, despite his advocacy of oral sex for all genders; he claimed that women who wore trousers or depilated their pubic hair were "neurotic"; he excoriated drugs and rock 'n'roll music, terming

the latter fascistic; he sneered at the “sexual revolution” of the 1960s, and called it a sham.

In the 1930s, Legman was one of several New York writers in the “Organization,” an informal group writing erotica for a wealthy private patron. Legman composed some of the stories that made up the *Oxford Thesis* series of erotic typescripts originally begun by Lupton Wilkinson, who wrote on commission for Oklahoma millionaire Roy Johnson (see entry on Mentulus, L. Erectus). Legman wrote *The Passionate Pedant* (1939) for Johnson himself, and kept copies to print for clandestine audiences. He probably assembled the volumes called *A Further Oxford Thesis on Love* (1938) and *A Later Oxford Thesis on Love* (1939) from stories anonymously written by himself, Clement Wood, Anaïs Nin, Carresse Crosby, Robert DeNiro, Sr. (father of the actor), and other members of the Organization. He probably helped his boyhood friend Robert Sewall (see entry on Sewall) gather other stories for *The Oxford Professor* (c.1948), and may have written some of that volume. The Kinsey Institute holds several short stories attributed to Legman (e. g., “Chippie Wagon” [1941?]). Writing erotica taught Legman a good deal about narrative and style (among writers, he admired Denis Diderot, Jules Michelet, and Thomas Carlyle) though he tired quickly of this opportunistic enterprise, and turned it over to Henry Miller and Anaïs Nin. Ironically, given his preeminence in underground bibliography, Legman himself never sorted out the provenance of these surreptitious volumes. Failures of memory aside, the reason for his reticence is just as ironic: despite a career of collecting, recording, and analyzing sub-genres, Legman avoided vulgarity in his own work, and actually sanitized the sadistic elements of one edition of Sewall’s famous *The Devil’s Advocate*. Legman’s first book for the general public, *Orogenitalism: An Encyclopaedic Outline of Oral Technique in Genital Excitation Part 1: Cunnilinctus* (1940), written under the anagram Roger-Maxe de La Glannége, was a manual on cunnilingus distinguished not only by his typically exhaustive treatment of technique but also by the careful diction he employed. (He later expanded the work to include fellatio.)

During the early 1940s, Legman’s interest in outlaw sub-cultures manifested itself in a lexicographical essay, “The Language of Homosexuality: An American Glossary” (1941), and in his

collaboration with birth control activist Robert Latou Dickinson and with the odd “Kenneth S. Green” (aka Rex King), a pedophile, on the latter’s massive diaries on penis size and infant orgasm, which Green sent to Alfred C. Kinsey, who would unwisely use some of Green’s statistics in *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* (1948). Through Dickinson, Legman met Kinsey, who hired him (in 1942?) to build archives for what would become (in 1947) the Institute for Sex Research (ISR) at Indiana University in Bloomington (now the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction). Although his passion for bibliography and folklore blossomed here, Legman left few traces at the ISR or at the prototype of Indiana’s Folklore Institute, founded in 1942 by Stith Thompson, who was soon joined by Richard Dorson, to systematize the study of folklore. Thompson devised the tale type index and the motif index to systemize comparative study of folkways, but declined to classify obscene materials. Dorson, also a seminal figure in folklore because of his insistence on the cultural and ethnic context of folk materials, later denied Legman a university instructorship on the grounds that he and Ozark folklorist Vance Randolph were simply “scholar-tramps” (*Roll Me in Your Arms*, 24), because the two were convinced of the value of “obscene” folklore that respectable academics shunned.

During his sojourn at Indiana University, Legman worked on bibliographic projects such as “Toward an Historical Bibliography of Sex Technique,” which catalogued photographs in the Kinsey archives by types of sexual behavior. Kinsey fired Legman in 1945, apparently over disputes about purchases and cataloguing of materials (Gathorne-Hardy, 232). A few years later, Legman published “Minority Report on Kinsey,” an attack on the sexologist for having used improperly gathered statistics, especially those on homosexuality, to buttress the conclusions of *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male*. Feeling beleaguered, Legman wrote “Sex Censorship in the U.S.A.” (1945) to contrast American and European attitudes towards sexual representation.

With financing from Jay Landesman, a St. Louis millionaire, Legman founded the journal *Neurotica* (1947–1951) to publish essays by Allen Ginsberg, Marshall McLuhan, Larry Rivers, Lawrence Durrell, and others. The journal’s

title suggested its thesis, that society had succumbed to psychic disorder, a syndrome best examined, Legman thought, by focusing on documents of popular culture. Legman's own *Neurotica* essays formed the nucleus of *Love and Death: A Study in Censorship* (1949), rejected by 42 publishers until Legman published it himself. In the volume he developed the argument he would elaborate again and again. For Legman, the "degeneracy" of American culture, as manifest in its choice of representations, was the result of its sublimation of natural sexual desire into preferences for violence and sadism. The more a culture represses sexual representations, said Legman, the more it will embrace violent images as socially acceptable substitutes. Because writers, filmmakers, and artists were forbidden to depict human desire honestly and candidly, audiences became used to seeing guns rather than penises, and aggression rather than affection. Worse, he said, a public fed a steady diet of mediated violence was far more likely to accept violence as a solution to social problems. *Love and Death's* chapter called "Not for Children," a reworking of the *Neurotica* essay "The Psychopathology of the Comics," was an analysis of comic books deformed by sexualized violence; it foreshadowed the celebrated anti-comic book campaign of Frederic Wertham. Other chapters of *Love and Death* targeted writers such as Raymond Chandler, Dashiell Hammett, Ernest Hemingway, and Philip Wylie, all of whom Legman charged with maligning women by casting them either as sadists ("Avatars of the Bitch") or as victims ("Open Season on Women"). Despite praise for the volume from Leslie Fiedler and William Carlos Williams, among others, the Post Office harassed Legman for trying to sell *Love and Death* through the mail.

Relocating to France in 1953 permitted Legman to pursue his career as a "scholar-tramp," albeit an impoverished one. Supporting himself with freelance writing, editing, the compiling of anthologies, and a small inheritance from a relative, he began in earnest his investigation of erotica, its classification, and the bibliographic efforts that recovering prohibited printed texts and oral expression required. Two books established his credentials. The first, *The Horn Book; and Other Bibliographic Problems* (1953, later expanded in 1964 to *The Horn Book: Studies in Erotic Folklore and Bibliography*) grew out of

Legman's tracing of editions of a famous text, *The Horn Book: A Girl's Guide to the Knowledge of Good and Evil* (1899), a guide to sexual technique. Legman's sleuthing revealed the activities of bibliographers such as Henry Spencer Ashbee, Louis Perceau, and Jules Gay, bookdealer-publishers such as Charles Carrington and Eric Dingwall, lexicographer-writers such as J.S. Farmer and William Henley, and collectors such as Bernard de La Monnoye and the Duc de la Vallière. Other chapters dealt with Legman's enthusiasms: Robert Burns's *The Merry Muses of Caledonia*, bawdy songs, limericks, and the need for a motif-index for erotic humor to fill out Thompson's index. Here Legman announced what amounted to his creed: "Sexual folklore is, with the lore of children, the only form of folklore still in uncontaminated and authentic folk transmission in the Western world. It has thumbed its nose for centuries at both censorship and print" (1964, 288). Cranky and colorful, the volume remains indispensable to students of erotica.

The second book, *The Limerick* (also 1953), gathered more than 1700 examples of "the only fixed poetic form original to the English language" (1969, lxxii) under a series of categories (e. g., "Strange Intercourse," "Virginity," "Buggery," "Prostitution"). In his introduction to the volume, Legman traced the limerick from its oral beginnings as nonsensical bawdy and satire to its more recent combination of intellectual ingenuity and obscenity ("the folk-expression" of academics [1969, xlv]), noting that periodic efforts to compose "clean" limericks invariably made them nasty ("the substitution of an allowed sadism for a prohibited sexual normality" [1969, xliii]). In a later second collection, *The New Limerick* (1977), organized in categories similar to those in the first volume, Legman tried to distinguish between limericks that qualified as "true folklore" and those that did not. He estimated that only a tenth of those he had collected, those "everyone knows," had actually "entered the authentic stream of orally transmitted folklore" (1980, xxx), but aside from noting the importance of constant repetition he did not shed much light on the dynamics of transmission.

Classifying examples on a scale of anxieties did not serve Legman well in the projects for which he is best known: *The Rationale of the Dirty Joke: An Analysis of Sexual Humor*

(1968) and *Rationale of the Dirty Joke, Second Series* (1975). Critics lauded Legman for amassing hundreds of jokes, but suggested that his analyses were superficial and sloppy, the result of allowing his thesis that sexual humor masks aggression to foreclose other interpretations. Reviews criticized him for insisting that “a person’s favorite joke is the key to that person’s character” (1968, 16) on the grounds that the joke reveals the teller’s secret fears even as he makes light of his neurosis, and also for claiming that the listener to a joke is the real butt of the humor (1975, 20). Critics also dismissed his attacks on such structural analyses as Vladimir Propp’s *Morphology of the Folktale*, observing that it was naive for Legman to claim that content alone determines the meaning of a joke. Folklorists chided him for failing to provide the context of jokes, for classifying jokes according to their hostile motifs, for never providing a promised index to the two volumes, and, above all, for summarizing rather than printing versions verbatim.

Legman deliberately summarized jokes rather than commit them accurately to print in the not so paradoxical hope of preserving their oral ephemerality. Doing so, however, exposed a contradiction in his principal thesis. If western cultures systematically warp sexual discourse into violent language and images, then why does the folklore he so meticulously compiled also exhibit the same aggressive traits? Oral transmissions in a past less given to censorship should have escaped the kinds of sublimation that Legman detects in print and visual media of the twentieth century. Legman’s methodology exhibits the perils of studying folklore, a discipline that embraces what are at base mysterious forms of communication. Ideally, theories should arise from careful comparative examination of examples, but the sheer volume of jokes, stories, and legends often reverses the process; theory and categorization are invoked from the outset to impose order on the chaos of conflicting examples.

Moreover, Legman’s faith in folklore as the primary, universal source of erotic representation led him to make extravagant claims about its vulgar but democratic commonality. “All folklore is erotic,” he would insist in “Erotic Folksongs and Ballads: An International Bibliography,” an amazing list of samizdat versions, spin-offs, reprints, paperback editions, and

other mutations of jokes, stories, songs, ballads, and broadsides that he published in 1990. Folklore is not simply a term used to distinguish venerable stories that contain obscenity from narratives that aspire to literary status: “Folklore,” said Legman, “is the voice of those who have no other voice, and would not be listened to if they did.” (“Erotic Folksongs,” 417).

Despite serious illness, he took on his last massive project. He and Vance Randolph never actually met, but the other aging “scholar-tramp” entrusted Legman with editing those portions of his archive of Ozark folklore long denied publication because of their explicit sexual content. Legman accepted out of a sense of obligation, having worried for years about the ephemerality of the items on which he based his own research. Long subject to seizure, erotic materials, especially those but slightly removed from their original oral expression, often survive only in single examples that must be hunted for years. Even where he was successful in tracking down fugitive manuscripts and destroyed editions, Legman, ever the careful scholar, was reluctant to publish papers based on examples of which he held the world’s only copy, since they were unavailable for others to evaluate. In an essay called “Unprintable Folklore? The Vance Randolph Collection” (1990), Legman settled some scores with Dorson and other folklorists, and promised to do justice to Randolph. Both carefully-edited volumes, *Roll Me in Your Arms: “Unprintable” Ozark Folksongs and Folklore* and *Blow the Candle Out: “Unprintable” Ozark Folklore*, appeared in 1992.

Although his reputation remains legendary, Legman’s contributions to the study of erotica may yet be judged by what he left unpublished. He may also eventually receive his due as a writer of erotica. Legman often disparaged his erotic fiction, usually in remarks that imagining sexual scenarios and fabricating desire diminished his own libido. Drawing on his own extensive sexual experience, however, added authority and verisimilitude to personalized tales of erotic encounters. For years Legman worked on an autobiography tentatively titled *Peregrine Penis: An Autobiography of Innocence* (the title is a play on Smollett’s picaresque novel, *Peregrine Pickle*). Only one small portion of that memoir, “Trio Amoroso,” has been published. “Trio Amoroso” is set during the World War II period in which Legman helped Brussel publish

the underground "Medusa" edition of Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*, the first American printing of the novel. This fragment contains glimpses of bookstore owner Frances Steloff, writer William Carlos Williams, artist Alexander King, and magazine magnate Henry Luce, set against a backdrop of work and leisure in New York City. Driving the narrative is the explicitly rendered intercourse of a ménage à trois involving Legman, his lover Magdalena, and their mutual lover, fashion artist Susan [Inez] Aguerra. In its lusty physical exuberance, the memoir superficially resembles those of Henry Miller, but Legman brings to it reflections on the nature of his own youthful sexuality and that of his partners, introspections that acknowledge the fragility of gender and desire.

More important, "Trio Amoroso" underscores significant aspects of Legman's legacy. First, it is an example of erotica written for intellectual sensibilities. In this respect, the maturity of "Trio Amoroso" differs markedly from the sniggering tales of the Oxford Professor. Second, it contains biographical information to be found nowhere else. Legman's portrait of Aguerra is the only account of this largely unknown erotic book illustrator, who drew under the name "Rahngild." If it is ever published, the larger autobiography will doubtless recall other equally fugitive figures in the history of American erotica. Third, "Trio Amoroso" reinforces Legman's conviction that writing erotica and studying it are both passions worthy of admiration. Legman's bibliographic studies and scholarly footnotes, enlivened with tales of real individuals who obsessively wrote and collected erotica, often make the same point: that creating sexual representations and interpreting them are immutably human pursuits. Beyond question such pursuits shaped Legman. Few scholars have given themselves up so completely to what were clearly labors of love.

### Biography

Born George Alexander Legman to Julia Friedman and Emil Mendel Legman in Scranton, Pennsylvania on November 2, 1917. Julia's uncle, Friedrich Krauss, was editor of two journals of erotica (1880–1910), *Anthropophytéia* [*The Sexual Relations of Mankind*] and *Kryptádia* [*Secret Things*]; the latter was later edited by

Freud. After one quarter at the University of Michigan, Legman educated himself at the New York Public Library, teaching himself several languages in the process. In the 1930s, he began working for the National Committee on Maternal Health, part of the Planned Parenthood Program in New York, where he would be arrested at least once for dispensing birth-control information, then considered a species of obscenity. In 1940, he briefly worked for Jake Brussel, a publisher and distributor of erotica, and otherwise supported himself by ghost-writing books, erotic stories, and radio scripts, and dealing in rare books. In 1953, as a result of what he called continuous persecution by the government, Legman moved to France, where, except for a year as a writer-in-residence at the University of California (1964–65), he remained. Legman was married to Beverly Keith, Christine Conrad (annulled), and Judith Evans. He had four children: Ariëla (1957), with Sima Colcher, and David (1968), Rafaël (1971), and Sarah (1973) with Judith Evans. He died of a stroke in Opio, France, February 23, 1999.

JOSEPH W. SLADE

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## LELY, GILBERT

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1904–1985

French poet and critic

Gilbert Lely is doubly meritorious in the history of erotic literature: as a poet, he is an excellent representative of surrealist eroticism, and as a literary critic he is the greatest expert on the works of the Marquis de Sade, whose correspondence and many unpublished writings he has revealed.

Pierre-Raphaël-Gilbert Lévy (who will take at the age of seventeen the pseudonym Lely) was born on the First of June, 1904, in Paris, at 8, rue Parrot (XII<sup>e</sup>me). His mother died when he was five years old, and his father, Adrien Lévy, trader of paper goods, after having remarried, sent him to the Lycée Jeanson-de-Sailly, a boarding school, in 1911, and then to the Lycée Lakanal de Bourg-la-Reine, from 1916 to 1920. When his parents retired in Hyères, in the Var, in 1921,

Gilbert Lely stayed in Paris, worked in the Théâtre de l'Œuvre as a secretary and actor, and published at the Jouve library *Les chefs-d'œuvre des poètes gallants du XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* [*The Masterpieces of the Gallant Poets of the 18th Century*], an anthology which denoted his precocity. It was exceptional that a man as young as he should show such erudition, presenting in original notices thirty-three poorly known poets.

Subsequently, Gilbert Lely published at nineteen years old his first collection of poems, *Aréthuse ou Élégies* [*Arethusa or Elegies*] (Alphonse Lemerre, 1923) and at twenty-three his second, *Allusions ou poèmes* [*Allusions or Poems*] (Bristol, Douglas Cleverdon, 1927). This was his classical period, when he displayed the influence of André Chénier. Still, he returned to surrealism in 1931, and his amorous lyricism, in *Je ne veux pas qu'on tue cette femme* [*I do not*

want this woman to be killed], a eulogy of Mata-Hari, (Editions surrealists, 1936, with a frontispiece by Max Ernst), and in *La sylphide ou l'étoile carnivore* [*The Sylphid or the Carnivorous Star*] (Editions le François, 1938), caused André Breton and Paul Eluard to give him the nickname of “the scabrous lamp.” Indeed, he presented himself as a worrying fiancé, Arden, who dreamed of sexual situations of strange sophistication.

Gilbert Lely became the editor-in-chief of the medical journal *Hippocrate* in Paris, from January 1933 to September 1939, and was admitted as a member of the Medical Historical Society because of his works. He wrote a series of brilliant articles on physicians like Philippe Ricord, the syphilis expert, or Philippe Pinel, who revolutionized the treatment of mental illnesses. It was in his office at *Hippocrate* that he met Maurice Heine, who had just edited Sade's *Les 120 journées de Sodome* [*The 120 Days of Sodom*], by Sade, and who would introduce him to the Marquis's works. During the war, Gilbert Lely was stationed as a nurse at the air force base of Tours. At the armistice, he went to join the surrealists in Marseille and prepared in 1942 his first version of *Ma civilisation* [*My civilization*], the book of poems that he would never cease to rework. This clandestine edition, limited to twelve typewritten copies, contained “a graphic of a 10-minute sexual congress,” with the chart of excitement and orgasm. Among the seven illustrated panels, there was a collage representing his first wife, Lucienne, whom he married in 1929 and divorced in 1937. *Ma civilisation* was published in 1947 by Maeght, in a deluxe edition illustrated by Lucien Coutaud. Its reprinting in 1949 was accompanied by a lower blurb by Yves Bonnefoy. Gilbert Lely was then working as a radio announcer.

On the 22nd of January, 1948, while visiting the descendants of Sade in Condé-sur-Brie, Lely obtained from Count Xavier de Sade the permission to inventory the two boxes handed down by his ancestor, which no one in the family had opened. In them he found a whole treasure of unpublished writings: letters, plays, notebooks, etc.... He published three collections of these letters: *L'Aigle, Mademoiselle* [*The Eagle, Miss*] (Georges Artigué, 1949), *Le carillon de Vincennes* [*The Bells of Vincennes*] (Arcannes, 1953), *Monsieur le 6* [*Mister the 6*] (Julliard, 1956), the *Cahiers personnels* [*Personal Notebooks*] (Corréa,

1953) and the rest, with a critical commentary. Possessing a knowledge of this author that no one had ever possessed before, Gilbert Lely wrote a *Vie du marquis de Sade, écrite sur des données nouvelles, accompagnée de nombreux documents, le plus souvent inédits* [*A Life of the Marquis de Sade, based on new data, accompanied by many, often unpublished, documents*], published by Gallimard in two large volumes, the first in 1952, the second in 1957. He also gave another edition, reviewed, corrected and extended by an examination of the works of Sade, in 1962. He also directed the “definitive edition,” at the Cercle du Livre précieux, of *Œuvres complètes du marquis de Sade, établies sur les originaux imprimés ou manuscrits* [*The Complete Works of the Marquis de Sade, Established on Many of the Printed or Manuscript Originals*] (1962–1964), in fifteen volumes with 360 illustrations. He added to the reprinting of 1966 a sixteenth tome of *Mélanges littéraires et Lettres* [*Literary Mixes and Letters*], with six introductions by his own hand. Much of what we know of Sade today we owe to Gilbert Lely. He enriched his *Vie de Sade* with new documents up to his last edition in 1982, at Garnier. His flamboyant style, together with his gift of evocation of the past and his meticulousness of a conscientious exegete, have made this biography an incomparable book. One of his admirers has called him the “prince of Sadiens”: nothing is more correct.

In 1977, outside of his *Œuvres poétiques* [*Poetic Works*], of an erotic lyricism, Gilbert Lely published non-commercially *Kidama vivila*, “sotadic poetry,” that is, frankly obscene, like *Lady K\*\*\**, a hymn to a woman copulating with “three libertines, endowed with scandalous members.” Its title is derived from a melanesian chant which begins with *kidama vivila ikanupwagega* [let us suppose woman one instant she is lying down, open], that he dedicated to his mistress Betty, concluding, “Hail, sweetness of my soul! The memory of your breasts, of your secret wetness, pierces me through, more acutely than the moans of orgasm, carried by hertzian waves, of all the women in Paris at the same instant.”

On the 19th of January, 1979, Gilbert Lely married Marie-Françoise Le Pennec, 46 years his junior, whose presence by his side stimulated him to the end. He died on June 4th, 1985, at his Parisian address, 12 rue Emile-Allez (XVIIe). The centenary of his birth was celebrated in Paris

## LESBIAN LITERATURE

in 2004, at the Sorbonne and at the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal, by a cycle of conferences presided by Marie-Françoise Lely.

SARANE ALEXANDRIAN

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# LESBIAN LITERATURE

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As a genre, Anglo-American lesbian literature is a phenomenon of the twentieth century. Whilst the literary exploration of lesbian themes had a first heyday in the early twentieth century, the study of lesbian writing in English developed, parallel to lesbian theory, from the 1970s onward. The genre of lesbian literature is polymorphous: it encompasses all literary forms, including novels, short stories, poetry, and so on. The genre has sometimes been divided into two main strands, fictional and autobiographical writings, although the boundaries between the two are fluid.

The first major accumulation of lesbian writing can be found in the modernist literature of the early twentieth century. However, the earliest known lesbian autobiography was written in the eighteenth century by the Yorkshire gentlewoman Anne Lister (published in 1998 as *The Diaries of Anne Lister*). Lister openly documented her lesbian desires, carefully noting how many women she slept with, whereby she referred to the sexual act as "kiss." Her autobiography provides a unique insight into eighteenth-century lesbian experience.

In the nineteenth century, the main strand of writing by women was connected to the feminist movement of the day. Its proponents include in

Britain the French-born Vernon Lee (her real name was Violet Paget), Australian-born George Egerton (Mary Chavelita Dunne), the South African Olive Schreiner, and Sarah Grand (Frances Elizabeth Bellenden McFall), who was born in Ireland. Grand coined the term "New Woman" which gave the literature its name. Much New Woman literature concentrated on the moral and sexual development of a female protagonist, often featuring close female friendships and alluding to different forms of female desire. Similarly, in the United States, Kate Chopin, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Edith Wharton produced for the time often candid and daring representations of female sexuality. Outside feminist writings, lesbian erotic themes also played a role in the literature of the nineteenth-century Gothic movement. Here, the eroticism of the female vampire featured in a number of texts, such as Sheridan Le Fanu's short story *Carmilla* (1872), which was based on the allure of female same-sex desires. *Carmilla* is exemplary of this kind of writing, which appears simultaneously fascinated and repulsed by lesbian sexuality. A different literary observation on lesbianism can be found in the work of Henry James. In *The Bostonians* (1885) James focused on a woman who is caught between the love for

a man and that for another woman. In *The Turn of the Screw* (1898), James more subtly explored female desire in the relationship between an eight-year-old girl and her governess. The religiously infused poetry of “Michael Field” provides a biographically unusual body of lesbian writing in the later nineteenth century. “Michael Field” was the pseudonym of the Englishwomen Katherine Bradley and Edith Cooper, who were aunt and niece—and lovers. As “Michael Field,” they published a series of homoerotic poetry volumes, the first of which was entitled *Callirhoë and Fair Rosamund* (1883).

In the first decades of the twentieth century a distinct artistic lesbian subculture emerged, which was connected to the concerns of the feminist movement. Some of the female authors of this period have been grouped together under the label “Sapphic modernism,” both for their increasingly open engagement with lesbian themes, and for the lesbianism of the authors themselves. The poetry of Hilda Doolittle, known as H.D., belongs to this group. Her poetry, such as the collections *Sea Garden* (1916) and *Hymen* (1921), subtly engages with erotic female same-sex longing. Her most explicit lesbian work is constituted by the largely autobiographical prose manuscripts *HERmione* (1926–1927), which were unearthed after her death. Here H.D. describes the relationship with her lover Bryher (Annie Winifred Ellerman), also a writer, who wrote under male literary covers. More open explorations of lesbian desire can be found in the short stories of Katherine Mansfield, especially *Bliss* (1920), which revolves around the female narrator’s sexual desire for another woman. Mansfield’s feminist concerns are similar to that of arguably the best-known woman writer of the period, Virginia Woolf. Women’s emancipation and female sexuality play a central role in Woolf’s work, much of which depicts lesbian homoeroticism. This is visible in her *Mrs Dalloway* (1925) in the portrayal of the relationship between the protagonist and her daughter’s governess, the suggestively named Doris Kilman. Three years later, Woolf published the gender-metamorphosing story of *Orlando* (1928), which intimated notions of same-sex desire through the sex change of the protagonist. *Orlando* was partly inspired by Woolf’s lover, Vita Sackville-West. The married Sackville-West was a prominent figure in contemporary Sapphist circles. She had first gained notoriety through her elope-

ment with Violet Trefusius. Sackville-West fictionalized their affair in the novel *Challenge* (1923). Trefusius later wrote a novel entitled *Pirates at Play* (1950), which teems with homoerotic and androgynous themes.

Djuna Barnes was another influential writer loosely linked to the Sapphic modernism. Her novels were influenced by her own life, especially her experiences within the lesbian communities of the early twentieth century. Barnes’ erotically explicit *Ladies Almanack* (1928) and *Nightwood* (1936) were inspired by the lesbian communities in Greenwich Village and Paris. Paris attracted many lesbian intellectuals of the day, and Barnes had an affair with one of the central figures of 1920s lesbian Paris, Nathalie Clifford Barney. Barney’s other lovers included the writer and music hall star Colette, whose work comprises the erotically charged short story *Nuits Blanches* (1934), and the reflective autobiography *My Apprenticeships* (1936). The Paris circle further included Gertrude Stein, who lived openly with her lover Alice B. Toklas. Stein wrote an account of her lover’s life entitled *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas* (1933), which is one of the most unapologetic and erotically explicit early twentieth-century lesbian texts.

The Paris circle was fictionally portrayed in what has become the classic of lesbian literature, Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness* (1928) [see entry]. Hall’s novel was influenced by contemporary medical and psychological theories of female homosexuality. Hall was not the first to draw on the new theories, however. In 1917, Clemence Dane (Winifred Holtby) published *Regiment of Women*, which presented a psychological case study of the relationship between the aptly named sadistic headmistress Clare Hartill and her submissive younger female colleague Alwynne. Arnold Bennett, who had woven the passionate friendship between women into the subplot of his main exploration of the unconventional love between a wealthy bachelor and a French courtesan in *The Pretty Lady* (1918), took a psychological approach in the short novel *Elsie and the Child* (1924). Here he suggested that female homosexual desire was a natural occurrence during puberty. In 1927, Rosamond Lehmann’s *Dusty Answer* focused in the central section of the novel on an erotic friendship between two female students at Cambridge, engaging with questions of the naturalness of female homosexuality.

## LESBIAN LITERATURE

This rich and varied production of lesbian literature came to a halt with the outbreak of the Second World War. In the immediate post-war period, one of the few writers who engaged with lesbian eroticism was Anaïs Nin. Many of her short stories, notably *Ladders to Fire* (1946), and experimental novels explicitly describe lesbian sexual desire. One of the few women writing about lesbianism in the 1950s and 60s was the American Ann Bannon. The repressive political climate of the McCarthy years is reflected in her novels, which portray the fears, but also the support among the gay community in Greenwich Village. Bannon's work was also amongst the first to explore the eroticism of butch-femme relationships, most explicitly in *Beebo Brinker* (1962), the fifth and last novel in a series of related works.

The 1969 Stonewall Riots in New York saw the birth of the lesbian and gay civil rights movement. The lesbian literature of the time influenced and was influenced by the radical lesbian feminist movement. In 1972, John Nestle founded the Lesbian Herstory Archives and Educational Foundation in New York. Like many of the writers of the time, Nestle published both fictional and theoretical works, including *The Persistent Desire: A Femme-Butch Reader* (1992). Among the most influential theorists and writers of the 1970s was Kate Millet, who came to fame with the theoretical milestone *Sexual Politics* (1970). Millet's political belief that the private is always the political informs her autobiographically inspired novel *Sita* (1977), which depicts the destructive sexual-emotional relationship she had had with an older woman. Tied in with radical feminist politics, much of the lesbian literature of the 1970s followed an anti-pornography agenda. However, some books such as Rita Mae Brown's successful *Ruby Fruit Jungle* (1973), contained explicit descriptions of lesbian sex. The celebration of lesbian desire was focal to many works, such as that of the French critic and writer Monique Wittig, whose *Le corps Lesbien* [The Lesbian Body] was published in 1973, or that of the radical lesbian feminist and poet Adrienne Rich. Rich produced a vast and varied number of poetry volumes, which have in common the search for a lesbian poetic voice. Famous for her critical work *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence* (1981), Rich explores and celebrates lesbian eroticism in her poetry, such as *The*

*Twenty-One Love Poems* (1977), and she continues to publish at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

In the 1980s, a number of distinct lesbian texts were published. Audre Lorde's autobiographical *Zami, or a New Spelling of My Name* (1982) was rooted in feminist concerns relating to how to express specific female experiences, in this case growing up a black lesbian. The lesbian critic and writer Sara Maitland paid tribute to the lesbian feminists of the 1960s and early 70s, for example in her short story *Lullaby for My Dyke and Her Cat* (1987). A radical break with early feminism can be found in the work of Pat Califia. In 1982, she published *Coming to Power*. Its explicit erotic content caused furore, as it challenged the radical feminist anti-pornography movement of the 1970s. Califia explored lesbian sado-masochism in a series of lesbian leather and vampire writings, including *Macho Sluts* (1988), and the short story "The Vampire" (1988). Erotica entered the lesbian mainstream with the opening of the lesbian sex shop *Sh!* in London in 1992, and the launch of the American erotic magazine *On Our Backs* in 1995.

In 1985, Jeannette Winterson's coming-of-age story *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit* was published, which became one of the most widely-read lesbian novels in Britain. Written in the tradition of lesbian autobiographical novels, the book's depiction of the lesbian protagonist is noteworthy for the way it unapologetically takes for granted lesbian sexuality. In her subsequent books *The Passion* (1987), *Sexing the Cherry* (1989), and *Written on the Body* (1992), Winterson continued to experiment with the narrative form, whilst depicting the often hilarious manifestations of sex.

Lesbian literature of the 1990s is made up of a wide range of different forms and subjects. It includes the haunting poetic voices of the black Scottish poet Jackie Kaye, whose most famous collection of poetry, *The Adoption Papers*, came out in 1991. In the same year the best-selling lesbian American author Katherine V. Forrest published *Flashpoint*, which combines a portrayal of lesbian relationships and contemporary American politics. Contemporary Ireland provided the location for Emma Donaghue's novel *Stir Fry* (1994), which humorously charts a young woman's sexual awakening. Donaghue's second novel *Hood* (1995) engages with issues of love and possessing someone, centered on the

impact of the lesbian protagonist's sudden be-reavement. The theorist Judith Halberstam and the queer activist and photographer Del LaGrace Volcano investigate the erotic allure of the drag king in the *Drag King Book* (1998), whilst Patricia Duncker explores the life of the nineteenth-century *James Miranda Barry* (1999), who, born female, lived life as a man to become a doctor, and went undiscovered until her death.

One of the most successful lesbian writers at the beginning of the twenty-first century is Sarah Walters. Her rich and intricate novels are set in Victorian England and follow the emotional and sexual adventures of a variety of lesbian characters. Waters' first publication *Tipping the Velvet* (1998) challenges gender and sexuality stereotypes with the story of the of the Oyster-girl turned music hall star turned tomboy turned activist Nan King. The second novel *Affinity* (1999) charts the mysterious net a female prison inmate draws around her lady visitor. In 2002, Walters published her third novel *Fingersmith*. *Fingersmith* pays a tongue-in-cheek tribute to erotic literature in the figure of a celibate male character who meticulously and obsessively records even the most minor erotic publication

to date. The two female heroines, meanwhile, find love and sexual fulfilment with each other.

HEIKE BAUER

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## LÉVEILLÉ, J.R.

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1945–

French-Canadian novelist, poet, essayist, visual artist, and television journalist

To date Joseph Roger Léveillé (b. 1945) has published twenty-one books in various genres: novels, short fiction, poetry, and essays. His most unconventional works include assemblages presented as “visual texts” using *collage* that have been published in unusual formats, including a densely printed 40” x 26” poster titled *Extrait*. Léveillé's earliest novels (*Tombeau* and *La disparate*, the latter published under the pseudonym Jesse Janes) and poetry (*Oeuvre de la*

*première mort* and *Le livre des marges*) invoke the polarities of desire and death, artistic creation and latent violence, and while they reveal unmistakably the influence of the French symbolists, notably Rimbaud, they anticipate the qualities that situate his subsequent work in the context of post-modern writing: fragmentation, intertextuality (allusions to other works), and an often playful self-referentiality. Léveillé's early novels share many features with the *nouveau roman* of Michel Butor and Alain Robbe-Grillet, and also with the novels of Samuel Beckett: indeterminacy (the deliberate creation of “blanks” or “gaps” by withholding or contradicting

narrative information), abrupt segmentation of plot, and general narrative ambiguity. His later poetry abounds with intertextual references to painting, sculpture, and music as well as literature, while his “visual” works evoke the Dada movements of the 1920s, although Léveillé’s texts are much more graphically suggestive and densely scripted. Like his most recent novels, they can be situated in a literature of the extreme, transgressing the framework of literary genre.

Léveillé’s eroticism manifests itself in virtually all his works, be it in the sensuality of the narrator’s gaze or in the explicit description of sexual experience. It is derived from conceptions of *eros* ranging from Epicure to Zen philosophy, conceptions according to which the erotic is a spiritual practice involving the entire body. Léveillé adopts the Freudian notion that it is the life-affirming erotic impulse (*eros*) that vanquishes *thanatos*, the force of death. Furthermore, *eros*, the force of desire, is inextricably linked to aesthetic creativity, both of which are characterized by a dialectic of presence and absence: the act of writing (rendering present that which is absent) is equated with the fulfillment of erotic desire, in that the author inscribes the “blank page” (an emblem of absence) with the presence of the feminine figure that constitutes at once the subject of the text and the object of desire.

In *Tombeau*, the polarity of *eros* and *thanatos* is thematized in a kind of paradox: the entire narrative is centered almost obsessively on the female figure whose death (absence) is implicitly overcome by *eros*, the creative act producing the novel itself. In a subsequent novel, *Plage*, the deserted beach and the blank page are metaphors for an absence that is displaced by the virtual presence of the multiplicity of female images that inhabit it. The feminine image is not only the object of the narrator’s physical desire, but she also appears as a carrier of cultural meaning: she is compared to a totem, an African statue, an amphora, and as she rises up out of the water, the origin of organic life, she also inspires its aesthetic (re)creation: Botticelli’s painting of the birth of Venus comes to mind. *Eros* is thus at once carnal desire and the ultimate source of all life as well as the vehicle for its aesthetic transcendence.

*L’Incomparable* explodes the borders of literary genre in its assemblage of “fragments” inspired by the Greek poetess Sappho, the

“incomparable” designated in the title. The work can be read both as an essay on the pleasure of the text, echoing French literary theorist Roland Barthes, and as a long lyrical prose poem in which the sensual pleasures of *eros* are inextricably bound up with aesthetic inspiration and the creative act.

*Extrait*, an enormous poster densely covered in small-print words, some of which appear in primary colors, radicalizes this “poetics of the fragment,” both formally and thematically. The words seem to be entirely devoid of context, and there are no syntactic marks such as punctuation. The persistent reader can nevertheless identify a thematic thread in the promise of pleasure and seduction evoked in each one of these decontextualized words, all of which Léveillé has excerpted, collage-style, from advertising. In its exhaustive listing of objects of desire, this mini-inventory of modern day-to-day life parodies and subverts the manipulative strategies of cynically eroticized contemporary advertising while it ironically affirms the timelessness and universality of these objects themselves.

Léveillé takes his exploration of the visual quality of the written text even further in *Montréal poésie*, published in magazine-format, and *Pièces à conviction*. In the preface to the latter, he poses a question that had already been raised by the Dadaists: “Est-il possible d’écrire comme on peint?” In other words, can writing be made to resemble the act (and the effects) of painting? In these densely constructed collage compositions, the signs of language become alienated from their habitual communicative functions. The iconic assumes a significance equal to the semantic, and as in all Léveillé’s work, it is charged with erotic signification. In “Corrida,” for instance, two roughly parallel, diagonally positioned bars of fragmented text whose shapes resemble the horns of a bull are clearly phallic. In “Prière d’ouvrir grand” [Open wide], the “o” in the center of the page evokes a wide-open eye, but also, due to the text fragments that converge on it, the “opening” that permits penetration and birth.

Léveillé’s later poetry, *Les Fêtes de l’infini*, *Causar l’amour* and *Fastes*, consists for the most part of a joyous celebration of an *eros* grounded in a sensuality negating the rupture between the erotic and emotive and the cognitive and intellectual. Far from constituting an object

of sublimation that would undermine erotic desire and its sexual realization, the cultural artefact, be it painting, music, or a work of literature, is closely associated with the love-object and even deliberately confused with it. As in the *chansons des troubadours* of ancient France, cultural emblems become the vehicle that “causes” love in both its erotic and spiritual manifestations. If in these poems it is erotic love and *joie de vivre* that create an “infinite feast” transforming (aestheticizing and eroticizing) everyday life, they are also what inspire their poetic expression.

In his latest prose works, notably in *Nosara*, the sexual act stands at the center of the narrative and is depicted with a rawness and explicitness reminiscent of Henry Miller. Like Miller’s Paris novels, the erotic is overlaid with the exploration of cultural alterity, or “otherness,” which manifests itself in the choice of setting and in the “other” cultural identity of the narrator’s lovers. Unlike Miller’s works, however, Léveillé’s are characterized by a subtext whose theme is aesthetic perception itself. If the erotic is the union of subject and object of desire, of Self and Other, the aesthetic is the incorporation of the “strange” or unfamiliar with the known, the familiar. Like its erotic counterpart, aesthetic pleasure is not only sensual, but also grounded in the recognition of the Self in the Other. The dialectic of presence and absence found in Léveillé’s earlier work here takes the form of oppositional complementarities, expressed in a play of interaction between male and female, yin and yang, light and shadow, figure and ground, in which, in true post-modernist mode, the fictive reality of the narrative is constantly reconstituted.

### Biography

Born in Winnipeg, November 10, 1945. Educated at Collège universitaire de St-Boniface, Winnipeg (BA 1966), and University of Manitoba (MA in French literature, 1968). Doctoral studies in French literature, University of Paris (Vincennes) and University of Manitoba (1969–1972). Married Suzanne Corbeil in 1970 (divorced in 1994). Married Christine Gosselin in 2004. Television journalist and producer with Radio-Canada since 1981.

ROSMARIN HEIDENREICH

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## LEWIS, MATTHEW GREGORY

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1775–1818

English novelist, poet, dramatist and legislator

### *The Monk: A Romance*

It was at The Hague in 1794 that Lewis—bored and unable to live within his father's allowance—wrote the novel that earned him the nickname "Monk." Lewis cited as his immediate source the *Santon Barsisa*, a Persian tale published in *The Guardian* in 1713, about a hermit whom Satan tempts to commit rape and murder.

He also drew on German, Danish, and Spanish legends. The strongest inspiration for *The Monk*, however, came from Gothic fiction such as Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto* (1764), William Beckford's *Vathek* (1786), William Godwin's *Caleb Williams* (1794), and especially Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794).

*The Monk* centers on Ambrosio, a Capuchin abbot in medieval Madrid. Thought to be incorruptible, he succumbs to every imaginable crime, including a lustful affair with Matilda de Villanegas, who has disguised herself as the novice

Rosario; the rape and murder of the beautiful virgin Antonia; the sexually tinged murder of Antonia's mother Elvira Dalfa; and the eventual pledging of his soul to Lucifer, who condemns him to a spectacular death that takes seven days. Lewis interweaves this plot with that of Raymond, the Marquis de las Cisternas, who attempts to rescue his beloved Agnes from her confinement in the convent of St. Clare. Don Lorenzo de Medina, himself smitten with Antonia, assists. Agnes is imprisoned and reported dead by the tyrannical Domina, the public recitation of whose crimes later sparks a riot in which she is torn limb from limb. Agnes is freed to marry Raymond, their child having died in the prison where she gave birth to it; Antonia being dead, Lorenzo marries Virginia de Villa-Franca, another inmate of the convent who has assisted in Agnes's rescue.

*The Monk* was published anonymously on 12 March 1796 to mostly positive reviews. A second edition came out in July 1796, signed "M.G. Lewis, Esq., M.P." These last two letters scandalized readers, notably Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who shuddered to think that a government representative should have penned such horrors. In a climate dominated by morality police such as William Wilberforce's Proclamation Society, *The Monk* became synonymous with pornography, although today we would not recognize it as such. Threats of prosecution and sales injunctions never materialized—possibly because, for the fourth edition in 1798, Lewis toned down the book's language and deleted a passage in which Ambrosio calls the Bible licentious.

Sexuality in *The Monk* has most commonly been understood in terms of contemporary politics; the Marquis de Sade thought such Gothic enormities clumsy but necessary to express "revolutionary shocks" (*Reflections on the Novel*, 1800). In what appears to be standard French-Revolution anticlericalism, Lewis exposes the monastic repression of healthy sexuality such as Agnes's, and even suggests it has turned Ambrosio and the Domina into deviants. That Ambrosio's crimes include incest—the raped Antonia is his sister, the murdered Elvira his mother—may further allude to the inbred corruption of the *ancien régime*. Others, however, see in Ursula's death the kind of rape-imagery that anti-revolutionary tracts such as Edmund Burke's *Reflections* (1790) employed to express a fear of the mob; or interpret Lewis' Catholic

church as symbolic of bourgeois domestic ideology, which similarly subjugates women.

In a more philosophical vein, *The Monk* has been linked to eighteenth-century anxieties about sexual identity and difference. If this period invented sexual dimorphism, as Thomas Laqueur has argued (*Making Sex*, 1990), then *The Monk's* effeminate males, domineering females, and transvestites ("Rosario"/Matilda) imply the instability of the one-sex continuum. Lewis's portrayal of the dangers of sexual desire, moreover, has been read in terms of his all-but-proven homosexuality—something that, unless veiled like *The Monk's* "Rosario"/Ambrosio plot, risked violent persecution by the church, the state, or the mob. Further grounds for *The Monk's* skepticism about sexuality may be found in eighteenth-century theories of the sublime, as advanced by Burke (*Philosophical Enquiry*, 1757) and Immanuel Kant (*Critique of Judgment*, 1790) and reinterpreted by Jacques Derrida (*The Truth in Painting*, 1978). That is, the human body provokes disgust when apprehended as a sensuous object, rather than as a mere doorway to a state—such as death or mutual love—in which subject and object alike are annihilated. Ambrosio's self-aggrandizing lust—beginning with the famous scene in which Matilda exposes her shapely breast and threatens to stab herself if Ambrosio rejects her—consistently turns to loathing; by contrast, the half-dead Agnes remains selflessly devoted to her child even after it putrefies.

The afterlife of *The Monk* has been colorful indeed. In 1798, a parody appeared titled *The New Monk, A Romance*, by "R.S., Esq." The author—possibly Richard Sicklemore—states that his purpose is to ridicule modern immorality and its expression in novels such as Lewis's. *The New Monk* thus relies on humorous substitutions and bawdy innuendo while refraining from the graphic descriptions favored by its predecessor. It takes a topical dig at the alleged erotomania of the Methodists by making its Ambrosio-figure a hellfire preacher, the Rev. Joshua Pentateuch. Rosario/Matilda becomes Peter/Betsy; Antonia, Ann Maria Augusta; Elvira, Olivia; Raymond, Henry Mountfordington; Agnes, Alice; the convent of St. Clare, the boarding school of Mrs. Rod. Having forsworn meat and alcohol, Joshua meets temptation in the form of a talking pork chop. Alice is imprisoned in a wine-cellar, as is Ann, whom Joshua

robs rather than rapes. *The Monk* itself crops up in the hands of several characters, including Henry, who notices striking parallels between Raymond's adventures and his own. The tale ends on a cautionary note, however, as Joshua murders both Olivia and Ann before being hanged.

Antonin Artaud hoped to realize *The Monk* as a film but, never getting farther than photographing a series of stills, instead published a novel, *Le moine*, in 1931. Unsure of his command of English, he probably relied on Léon de Wailly's 1840 translation. Artaud's version is, as he himself puts it, "neither a translation nor an adaptation...but a sort of 'copy' in French of the original English text" (17)—or, perhaps more accurately, a drastic abridgement. The erotic passages are substantially identical to Lewis's, although Artaud's brisker pace may be judged either to intensify or to diminish their effect. In one significant departure from Lewis, Artaud adds to Lorenzo's dream of Antonia's demonic abduction a vision of her being "fondled in the most obscene fashion" by a strange man while "she eagerly reciprocate[s]" (37). Generally, Artaud saw *The Monk* as a depiction of what happens when "feeling [is] repressed to its maximum degree"—adding that Lewis exhibits a "sadistic urge" that exceeds Ambrosio's, inasmuch as he erects various "barriers against the natural urges of love" if only to demolish them (17–18). While he found the "shoddy satanism" of its dénouement more "amusing" than compelling, Artaud admired the supernatural elements of Lewis's text for their power to purge "that common residue and excrement of the mind called *reality*" and provide intimations of the eternal (17, 19). The numerous other adaptations of Lewis range from *Zofloya* (1806) by Charlotte Dacre, who used the pseudonym "Rosa Matilda"; to the screenplay *Le moine* (1972) by Luis Buñuel and Jean-Claude Carrière.

### Biography

Matthew Gregory Lewis was born in London on 9 July 1775, the eldest of four children from the unhappy marriage of Matthew Lewis and Frances Maria Sewell. Educated at Christ Church College, Oxford, he went to Weimar in 1792–1793, where he met Goethe and became a proficient German scholar. He served as attaché

to the British embassy to Holland in 1794; and as M.P. for Hindon, Wiltshire from 1796 to 1802. Lewis inherited his father's sugar plantations in Jamaica upon the latter's death in 1812 and visited there in 1815–1816. A moderate abolitionist, he amended his will in 1816 to finance triennial inspections of his slaves; Percy Shelley, Byron, and Dr. Polidori witnessed the signing at Villa Diodati, Geneva. While returning to England from a second visit to Jamaica in 1818, he contracted yellow fever, from which he died on 14 May. His *oeuvre* of original compositions and translations includes some sixteen works for the stage, half a dozen "romances" and collections of tales, numerous ballads and other poems, and the *Journal of a West India Proprietor*.

ADAM KOMISARUK

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## LI YU

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1611–1680  
Chinese novelist

***Rou putuan [The Carnal Prayer Mat]***

Although it was in question for a long time owing to an erroneous dating, attribution of the *Rou putuan* to Li Yu was recently confirmed by the discovery, in Japan, of a manuscript providing its most complete and coherent version, and dating its completion to the year 1657; a period when Li Yu was fully devoting himself to novel-writing. The similarities of the *Rou putuan* with the writings of Li Yu are so numerous that doubt is hardly permitted. That feeling is also strengthened when one reads the commentaries added at the end of each chapter: these confirm that we are here dealing with an author fully mastering his mode of expression, willing to assert his originality and, what is more, willing to tackle the issue of the proper place of sexuality in life from a fresh perspective. In doing so, he displays a stark ability for innovation and a form of imagination which, as he admits in a commentary, "really mocks everything."

During the Zhihe era (1328), a young man of letters by the pseudonym of Vesperus [Weiyangsheng] remains deaf to the advice of a monk called Lone Peak [Gufeng] concerning sexual moderation, and instead gives free rein to a fantasy of his

urging him to try and marry the most beautiful woman in the world. Unable to be satisfied with the yet radiant beauty of Jade Scent [Yuxiang], his first wife and the prudish daughter of the austere Confucian greybeard Master Iron Door [Tieshan daoren], Vesperus sets to go hunting again. He is soon assisted by a master bandit and man of genius nicknamed The Knave [Sai-Kunlun], who quickly manages to convince him that the small size of his penis is a bridle to his pretensions. Once he's been surgically transplanted with the penis of a dog, which turns him into a matchless lover, Vesperus moves on to seducing Fragrance [Yanfang], a shopkeeper of ardent nature. Fragrance having eventually become pregnant, Vesperus on the sly conquers Cloud of Scent [Xiangyun], another beauty whom he had spotted long before his operation. The young woman introduces him to three relatives of hers: her aunt, who is a widow, and two "sisters" whose husbands happen to be away at the capital to take part in the official examinations and who have also proved, as husbands, not to be particularly well-gifted for nocturnal jousts. While Vesperus is unrestrainedly carousing with all four women, Fragrance's husband, a merchant by the nickname of Honest Quan [Quan Laoshi], seduces Jade Scent in a bout of revenge and gets her pregnant before selling her to a brothel in the capital, where she rapidly becomes the most sought-after prostitute in the

whole Empire. Enticed by her reputation, Vesperus, who by now thinks himself a widower—as his father-in-law was always too ashamed to confess his daughter's elopement,— joins the crowd of patrons who aren't exactly queuing up. But when he finally finds himself ready to get down to the job, the husbands of his various gallant conquests have already had a taste of his legitimate spouse's privileges, and Jade Scent commits suicide to avoid such an embarrassing confrontation with her husband. Realizing, at last, that he's been going astray, Vesperus returns to Lone Peak, the monk who had long ago tried to divert him from his tragic fate. Firmly resolved no longer to follow the winding roads of debauchery, he castrates himself and takes his vows together with a group of new converts, among whom we also find The Knave and Honest Quan.

A summary of the novel may certainly show how subtly Li Yu wove his plot; and in so doing, he actually respected a principle that he would later advocate for playwrighting, namely to build the plot around a key-character and a central action for the story to revolve around [*yi ren yi shi*]. It may also give an idea of the considerable number of saucy scenes that the author managed to accumulate, the effective description of which owes a lot to their variety. However, the strength of the novel lies not as much in what is being narrated as in the way Li Yu chooses to do it. In that regard, any attempt at summarizing eclipses the real innovations of the *Rou putuan*, a novel which continues the tradition of Chinese erotic novels—some of which are duly referred to, such as the *Chi pozi zhuan* [*Biography of a Foolish Woman*], the *Ruyi Jun zhuan* [*The Lord of Perfect Satisfaction*], and the *Xiuta yeshi* [*An Unofficial History of the Embroidered Couch*—only to better assert its superiority and explore the theme of sexuality even further than they ever did.

The appended commentary pertinently insists not only on the dazzling imagination here at work, but also and above all on the main formal innovations. It has to be conceded that these are indeed sizeable and, as such, amply justify that this novel be considered a masterpiece of Chinese literature in vernacular language.

The first and foremost striking feature of the *Rou putuan* is probably its constantly humorous tone, which naturally resorts to plays on words, but also to learned expressions diverted from

their original context. This humorous tone is carried by a remarkably fluid style which puts all the resources of vernacular language to good use. In addition, numerous entertaining metaphors give the narrative texture, such as comparisons between the futile resort to doping by candidates at the mandarin examinations and the illusory use of aphrodisiacs for sexual jousts by mediocre lovers, or between the art of literary composition and the practice of copulation. Li Yu furthermore very skillfully inserts digressions [*yilun*] in the narrative, sometimes even in the very height of a sex scene asides that gives him the opportunity to express his views on a variety of subjects including sexual practices, thereby turning the reader into some cat on a hot tin roof and reinforcing his/her interest in the story, the narration of which eventually resumes as if nothing had happened.

The novel combines such control of the output with perfect mastery in organizing the situations, many of the latter being chosen according to the surprise effect they may be able to trigger. Scenes of that kind are truly surprising and often comical; an example among others would be when Fragrance has Vesperus's sexual capacities secretly tested by her neighbor, who happens to be an excessively ugly woman. The effect that Li Yu draws from them is all the more powerful since the novel's chapters are all designed as independent episodes further assembled into a methodically organized progression, exactly the way they would in a theater play. Li Yu starts off by putting the reader into the comfortable position of a mere voyeur amused at the doings of a thoughtless young man so as to, later, better have him/her feel the horror of a tragic paroxysm which consummates the ruin of illusions, the latter eventually provoking the final revelation. Behind the novelist concerned with his effects, one feels the mark of the dramatist who presides over the destinies of his characters.

The number of characters is deliberately limited and reduced to a typology which characterizes Li Yu's works and which mainly operates on straight-forward oppositions between characters with clearly marked tempers. Thus, the rigoristic Confucian father who locks his daughter up to protect her from the dangers of the outside world contrasts with the open-minded bandit who frees himself from the barriers of privacy. In that regard, the character

of The Knave who, ridding himself of all barriers, offers a forthright viewpoint on the sexual reality of his contemporaries, is a real find. Besides, by providing the hero with the means for his emancipation, The Knave is actually at the origin of Vesperus's career as a great seducer. But the *tour de force* of this moral tale certainly lies in the recourse to surgery—a practice literally poles apart from traditional Chinese medical science—which in the novel enables a young man (of originally mediocre capacities, when all is said and done) to become a top-grade stallion through the transplant of an animal sex organ. As the commentary indicates, it is indeed “complete aberration, which invites us to see the hero's feats as purely bestial acts.” And at the same time as he turns his main character into an outstanding lover, the author also warns his reader of the dangers the latter would face were he/she to take the story he/she is so brilliantly being told too literally. “Fiction,” the commentary informs us, “is parable.”

The lesson to be learned, which could be summed up by the injunction that one should remain moderate in matters of sex, is not only expressed using the allegorical mode and through the commentaries, but also, very surprisingly and in an original way, in a long essay that takes up the entire first chapter of the novel. That essay is in fact the preamble of a far more comprehensive treatise, the elements of which are provided to the reader in the numerous dialogues that punctuate the story, forming a real *ars erotica* that goes much further than a mere introduction and gives the novel a true educational and moral character.

Li Yu used to describe his *Wushengxi* as “a refreshing drink in a house on fire.” The *Rou putuan* actually offers all the characteristics of a “silent comedy”; it is namely a book which, under cover of an erotic comedy likely to enthrall even the most *blasé* of readers, brings along original and disturbing views on a hotly debated subject. Of higher moral qualities than it may appear on the first reading, the novel was conceived according to a process that Li Yu unveils in the introduction: the elevated, varied, and sensual narrative, rich in licentious episodes, is supposed to be “like the date wrapped around the bitter olive which, alone, brings each and everyone to eventually experience the flavour of the fruit it conceals.” Recourse to this kind of technique proves necessary, according to the

author, in such times of trouble when “moral books” would serve only to “cover winepots or light pipes.”

The impact of the *Rou putuan* was tremendous at the time it was first released, and later on as well. Despite quickly becoming the target of a formal ban, the novel nonetheless continued to be circulated under various titles. Its influence on Chinese novel-writing, and mainly on that of erotic novels, was also considerable. Many a pattern, and even whole passages borrowed from it are to be found in other works. Yet, the *savoir-faire* it displays was never equalled, nor even really copied.

The same way as Li Yu's entire work is some sort of comet in the field of Chinese letters, this novel is a constellation of its own in that of Chinese erotic literature.

### Biography

Li Yu (1611–1680) is a quite original and astounding figure in the history of Chinese letters. As it is, his work and contribution widely exceed the sole field of literature. After failing three times the examination to what then was the step before last to an official position, the Bachelor's degree, Li Yu soon (probably around 1642) abandoned any hope of making a career in the Imperial administration. He subsequently withdrew from society for a while, before taking up various activities which were to become his only source of income until the end of his lifetime.

Throughout his life, Li Yu mingled with high-level officials; from his early days when he was living in the Jinhua prefecture of Zhejiang province, and later in Hangzhou, where he stayed from the beginning of the 1650's before settling in Nanjing ten years later. He was to return from that city only in the spring of 1677, to spend his last years by the shores of the East Lake in Hangzhou, a place which remains intimately tied to his most famous penname: “The Old Fisherman by the Lakeside” [Hushang liweng].

But although he would often associate with officials, Li Yu nonetheless made a living from what his prolific imagination could yield, much more than from the occasional support that some of these friends would grant him. And being an inveterate hedonist, he always took great care in creating a suitable environment for himself and his large household to live in,

often squandering the fruits of his inventiveness as fast as he had earned them.

Proof of Li Yu's ever-fermenting creativity is not only to be found in the field of writing, but also in that of publishing, as he, over the years, set up several publishing studios through which he issued his own works, as well as that of garden design and theater direction. All these activities led him to travel extensively across the Chinese Empire in search of contracts. And while, as a true charmer and captivating narrator gifted with pleasant conversation, he graciously bowed to the necessities of society, he would however never let go of his taste for provocation which, for instance, led him to put several of his very own concubines on stage and direct them as a theater group. Such actions tarnished his reputation for good and definitely draped his name and work with an aura of scandal. As a result, he was truly rediscovered only as late as the end of the Twentieth Century.

Li Yu, it has to be conceded, is a puzzling character: he was as innovative regarding his works as he was regarding daily life. The initiator of an art of living which places the pursuit of pleasure and of harmony above all the constraints of Confucian society, he would always seek to convince others of the validity of his own beliefs and share his tastes. In doing so, he would also unhesitatingly display his loss of affection for right-thinking routine, just as he would often hunt down generally accepted ideas. Put back in the context of a traumatic dynastic shift which ended with the setting up of Mandchu power (1644), his attitude is actually one of unequalled boldness. No longer part of the literati, as he was tuned into the world of business (publishing, design, theater management and direction), and yet not completely a businessman either, since he always kept in touch with literati circles (although his interest led him to the fringe of official culture), he somehow opened a new way which turned out to match his audacity and talent. The fact that he managed to keep his course certainly owes a lot to a strong personality blessed with wily optimism, but also to his fundamental conception according to which "there are no more major genres than there are minor ones; the important question is whether one excels in the genre one has chosen or not."

Li Yu's written production is in the image of the rowdy and bubbling nature of its creator.

It naturally appears profuse and original, but also provocative and laced with constantly underlying humor and irony. In as much as Li Yu would support the whole of it with unvarying fervor and took pleasure in constantly enriching it by implicitly or openly coming to the fore, it is thus difficult to take up one aspect of his work without referring to its entirety, and, even more so, to the author. For ages, Li Yu's work was however reduced to its most acceptable part.

Yet, it would be extremely inaccurate to limit its highlights, as many still often do, only to the two introductory books of his collection of open essays, the *Xianqing ouji* [*Casual Expressions of Idle Feeling*]. Besides this major treatise on dramatic art, the value of which has been prized ever since it was first published in 1671, Li Yu actually left a work covering the whole spectrum of literary genres that were valued at that time, ranging from poetry, an art which he practiced with much liberty and talent, to essay-writing and to theater, the latter genre being his favorite: he left us no less than ten successful comedies that were highly rated in his days.

He, who every single time had brought new life into genres that were being neglected or were losing momentum, could not possibly have avoided getting to grips with the art of writing novels in vernacular language, at some stage. He eventually did so, with consummate aptness and stunning mastery that were crowned with success. Within a period of three to four years, Li Yu thus managed to compose three collections of short stories and one novel in twenty chapters, delivering a work of remarkable coherence, revealing his will to offer a readership fond of novelty some quality entertainment while at the same time developing new forms of expression.

This work starts with the publication of two collections of tales entitled *Wushengxi* [*Silent Comedies*], probably between 1654 and 1656. The second issue, made up of only six fairly developed stories already shows real progress as compared to the first one, which consisted of twelve shorter pieces written in a form that was taking liberties with the traditional *huaben* format. Li Yu's style further evolves into an even more refined form of narrative with the publication of *Shi'er lou* [*Twelve Towers*], (1658) three years later, which offers twelve stories no longer told in one go but now organized in chapters. In these stories, the fading away of the oral form of the tale [*huaben*] inherited from the tradition of

public storytellers and taken up by late-Ming literati such as Feng Menglong (1574–1645) and Ling Mengchu (1580–1644) becomes even more obvious, making room for a form of literary expression deliberately meant to be read silently. In addition, this new approach to the genre owes a lot to Li Yu's innate sense of comedy and taste for theater. His choice of uncalled for and sometimes shocking situations, of eccentric characters, of issues viewed from innovative angles, and subject to thematic variations in which humor and irony blend together, gives Li Yu's ever-evolving work a unique flavour. The maturity of its ultimate stage—which Li Yu probably considered impossible to surpass—certainly owes a lot to the practice of novel-writing. To an author seemingly unable to be satisfied with the marginalia and end-of-chapter commentaries which he used to lard his texts with from the early days, the cutting up of the story into chapters, in that respect, allows for even more elbow room to maneuver. This way, he could insert his voice in the very narrative, through digressions or racy interventions in which humor vies with mischievousness, nay self-advertising. These two collections, which together total thirty short stories, constitute Li Yu's "official" literary work, and after signing them he incidentally started embodying a new type of literati as he, on several occasions, showed ready to defend his copyright—as author and publisher—before the law, against rather unscrupulous booksellers. Yet, he already ventures to throw in a few saucy stories and scatologic details when he, for instance, wishes to illustrate the superiority of a countrywoman's sense of wit on a highwayman's deceitfulness (W I 5), the love of an effeminate young boy for his friend that leads him to emasculate himself (W I 6), the jealousy of a husband titillated by an impish friend during a drinking binge (W II 10), the sensuality of a naiad (S 4), or the frigidity of a wife in need of attention (S 8). However, the overall tone and content remain

formally acceptable and good-mannered, as if care had been taken all along to remain within the limits of correctness. Such self-restraint must certainly have turned out to be extremely frustrating for an author who had repeatedly displayed his will to blow up all barriers, both formal and thematic! These barriers, he eventually did blow up; by writing the *Rou putuan*.

PIERRE KASER

Translated From The French  
by Victor Thibaut

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#### *Shi'er lou*

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# LIBERTINISM

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Historically, the libertine novel is a literary phenomenon of the French eighteenth century. The earliest examples were inspired by the Regency (1715–1723) but written and published under Louis XV, while the last ones were written during the French Revolution, notably by the Marquis de Sade. The end of Louis XIV's reign stood under the influence of the austere and religious Madame de Maintenon, and when the king died the court happily anticipated more joyous times, welcoming the Regency style. Free from Versailles etiquette and the centralized power wielded by the self-proclaimed Sun-King, the aristocracy flocked to Paris in search of renewed pleasures. The libertine novel signals this renewal of exuberant and frivolous attitudes, opposed to the strict morality enforced at Versailles after the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

The two main branches of the genre end with the French Revolution. The *mondain* libertine novel, an aristocratic genre *par excellence*, declined when French aristocrats were guillotined or went into exile. At the same time, erotic or obscene libertine novels became political, taking the shape of pro- or anti-revolutionary or anti-royalist pamphlets directed against Louis XVI or against the very unpopular Marie-Antoinette.

The English term “libertine” encompasses the French *libertin* (masculine) and *libertine* (feminine). The type and its associated thought and behavior are not an eighteenth-century invention: there had been libertines in the previous century. However, some contemporary critics insist on a distinction between *libertinage érudit* [erudite libertinism] in the seventeenth century and *libertinage des mœurs* (libertinism of behavior) in the eighteenth century. The erudite libertines were more explicitly anti-religious and more articulate in their philosophical views, although they were also condemned for their sexuality, most notably the practice of sodomy, and their general turpitude. The second-wave libertines appear less concerned with abstract philosophical systems and more directly interested in

sexual freedom, but they did have newer systems of beliefs. Theirs was an age that claimed frivolity as a philosophical tenet: far from being avoided or hidden, frivolity was now claimed as a moral and philosophical principle. It was appreciated not only by novelists and writers of fairy tales but also by philosophers who saw in the frivolous an ideal means to practice one of the fundamental tenets of the Enlightenment—didacticism. Jean-Jacques Rousseau, better known for his sentimental *Julie; ou, la nouvelle Héloïse* [*Julie; or, The New Eloise*] (1761) and his political treatises, such as *Du contrat social; ou, principes du droit politique* [*Of the Social Contract; or, Principles of Political Right*] (1762) also wrote a fairy tale, *La reine fantasque* [*The Whimsical Queen*] (1758). Voltaire also wrote dozens of philosophical tales of oriental inspiration, and Denis Diderot, the coeditor of the *Encyclopédie*, wrote a libertine novel in the oriental vein, *Les bijoux indiscrets* [*The Indiscreet Jewels*] (1748). The libertine side of otherwise prestigious Enlightenment philosophers was often erased from official histories of French literature: *The Indiscreet Jewels*, a novel in which a sultan who possesses a magic ring can make women's sex (“the jewels”) speak, was ignored for nearly two centuries. Diderot's writing a libertine novel has often been attributed to his dire financial situation, a myth created by the philosopher's daughter and by his friends after his death. It is now universally acknowledged that Diderot's libertine novel in fact makes an important contribution to his political and philosophical program. In his *Histoire de la sexualité* [*History of Sexuality*] (1976) Michel Foucault analyzed Diderot as a key witness to the sudden increase in discourses on sexuality in the eighteenth century, although it has now also been recognized that the sexual discourse provided by the jewels are highly biased, as no male “jewel” ever confessed in eighteenth-century libertine fiction.

But if libertinism is rife among eighteenth-century novelists and philosophers, there is no

real consensus about what exactly constitutes the “libertine novel.” The word *libertine* refers to a whole range of types: on the one hand, the free-thinking spirit who claims an individual right to knowledge, advocates free inquiry, and refuses the precepts of the Church; and on the other, a person who claims as inalienable the right to individual pleasure and sexual gratification outside the moral norms imposed by society. The expression “libertine novel” is just as problematic: to qualify, does the libertine novel have to be about *libertins and libertines*, or should the text itself be libertine? In other words, does its ideological program have to follow the precepts advocated by libertines themselves? Rather than reading this apparent confusion as a restriction, I will concentrate on the variety and richness of a genre that remains one of the most distinguishable features of a century that is mostly remembered as “philosophical” but that proudly claimed to be at once libertine and frivolous.

The libertine novel is polymorphous: it can be an epistolary novel, a memoir-novel, a novel in dialogue form, in the first or third person, and so on. The genre has often been split into two main categories: the *mondain* novel (also sometimes called the *galant*) and the erotic libertine novel. The *mondain* novel is often associated with the aristocracy, and it takes the form of confession-memoirs relating the coming of age of young male aristocrats. Prominent examples are *Confessions du comte de \*\*\** [*The Confession of Count \*\*\**] (1741) by Charles Pinot-Duclos and *Les égarements du cœur et de l'esprit* [*The Wayward Head and Heart*] by Crébillon fils (not to be confused with his father, Crébillon, a once-famous playwright now mainly forgotten). Other *mondain* or *galant* libertine novels include such epistolary novels as Claude-Joseph Dorat's *Les sacrifices de l'amour* [*The Sacrifices of Love*], *Les malheurs de l'inconstance* [*The Sorrows of Fickleness*] (1772), and the most popular eighteenth-century French novel, Choderlos de Laclos's *Les liaisons dangereuses* (1782). The epistolary genre was a favorite form of the libertine *mondain* novel as it allowed greater manipulation of characters, the plot unfolding at the same time as the writing of the letter. Better than any other genre, epistolary novels allow libertines to manipulate their prey by controlling not only what they do but ultimately what they read, write, and think. Writing thus becomes the

epistolary libertines' lethal weapon but also the cause of their demise—the Marquise de Merteuil's downfall in *Les Liaisons dangereuses* is brought about by the very same letters that had empowered her.

Erotic libertine novels such as Crébillon fils's *Le sofa* [*The Sofa*], Diderot's *Indiscreet Jewels*, and La Morlière's *Angola* (1746; *Angola: An Eastern Tale*) include more or less thinly veiled sexual allusions. Because of Antoine Galland's translation of *Les mille et une nuits* [*The Arabian Nights*] at the beginning of the eighteenth century, erotic libertine novels often draw on fashionable orientalist themes. They are often dialogues: a *libertin* reads an oriental and salacious tale to the countess he would like to seduce (as in *Angola*), or, in *The Sofa*, an oriental narrator tells a sultan and his sultana of his adventures when, transformed into a sofa, he was able to witness many libertine adventures. These pseudo-oriental novels are often satirical, and the erotic possibilities of the dialogue are never exploited. In fact, the tone is often amused or sarcastic: in Crébillon's novel, the stupidity of the male omnipotent sultan stands in contrast to the refinement of his sultana. La Morlière prefers not to give any clue as to the success of his libertine and leaves the novel unfinished (a libertine characteristic) by declaring that, unfortunately, the editor has not been given the last part of the manuscript.

Still ignored or rejected by some critics, the obscene libertine novel represents at once the most striking and popular genre of the eighteenth century. If some recent critics are still reluctant to attribute any value to these texts of the “second shelf” (as some French critics have referred to them), obscene novels better exemplify those definitions of the word libertine that include a philosophical dimension. As Robert Darnton has shown, these texts were “philosophical” at the time, and orders from the clandestine book trade included, side by side on the same list, works by philosophers (Diderot, Rousseau, Voltaire) and obscene texts, all under the same category of “philosophical texts” (see Darnton, 1995). Even so, historians have preferred to ignore the erotic output to concentrate on the philosophical impact of the eighteenth century on contemporary France. Yet the proliferation of philosophical writings coincides, after 1740, with a sudden increase in obscene texts. The vast production and numerous

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reprintings of obscene libertine novels throughout the century attest to their undeniable popularity.

While the first obscene novels were usually dialogues—*L'École des filles* [*The School for Girls*] in 1655 and *L'Académie des Dames* (Women's Academy), first in Latin and in French in 1680—the eighteenth-century obscene libertine novel may also be epistolary, written in the first or third person, a memoir-novel, dialogues, or even very close to drama. The first obscene bestseller of the Enlightenment was *Histoire de D[om Bougre], Portier des Chartreux* [*History of Dom Bougre*] (1740) by Gervaise de Latouche, a book which Adélaïde, daughter of Louis XV, appreciated so much that she wanted to share it with her brother. Their father intervened. *Dom Bougre* even spawned an entire obscene dynasty: later in the century, his sister's raunchy confessions were also published as *Mémoires de Suzon, sœur de Dom Bougre* [*Memoirs of Suzon, Sister of Dom Bougre*] (1777) as were his niece's memoirs, *Histoire de Marguerite, fille de Suzon, nièce de Dom Bougre* (1784; *History of Marguerite*). The most popular obscene novel throughout the eighteenth century, published the same year as John Cleland's *Fanny Hill*, was *Thérèse philosophe* [*The Philosophical Thérèse*] (1748), attributed to Boyer d'Argens. It tackles the philosophical problems of human nature, temperament, and social organization and is written in an anti-clerical vein. It was reprinted throughout the century, and Sade even calls it the first truly immoral book in his *Juliette* (1797). Then came Fougeret de Monbron's *Margot la ravaudeuse* [*The Amorous Adventures of Margot*], Andréa de Nerciat's *Félicia; ou, Mes fredaines* [*Félicia; or, My Mischief*] and many other scantily dressed confessions.

Contrary to the first (*mondain* or *galant*) or even the second (erotic) *libertinage*, these obscene novels depict characters who either are not of aristocratic origin or do not function in the aristocratic world. And while *libertinage mondain* is interested in male rites of passage organized by more mature women, the obscene *libertinage* focuses mainly, although not exclusively, on female rites of passage (two exceptions include *Dom Bougre* and *Le libertin de qualité* [*The Noble Libertine*], attributed to Honoré Gabriel de Mirabeau, whose young hero becomes a gigolo). In obscene *libertinage*, female protagonists

either end up in prison or lead a happy life enlightened by philosophy, as is the case with Thérèse.

Whether the novels belong to what today we would call pornography (a word first used in the nineteenth century) or to the more prestigious genre of *mondain* boudoir pre-Sadean libertinism, they share with Enlightenment philosophers one common concern—pedagogy. All libertine novels are mainly about the education of young men and women and their entry into the world of conventional aristocracy. Consequently, the moral implications of the erotic component are not only indirect but also sly: working against the grain of morality, the libertine novel deals primarily with the non-oppositional integration of new members into a society whose rules are not to be changed. By its nature and its objective (as a *Bildungsroman*), the libertine novel is faced with a dilemma: how can novels pretend to be at once libertine (i.e., oppositional) and also portray the efforts of heroes and heroines (aristocrats or future prostitutes, male and female) to fit into that particular society? This contradiction is often reflected in the closure of libertine novels: libertine heroes and heroines either eventually find “true love” and live happily ever after, or else they end up disfigured like Laoclos's Marquise de Merteuil. Similarly, the heroes and heroines of the obscene branch end up happily married or diseased, locked up or castrated. In other words, they are either completely rejected or just as completely adopted by a society that remains untainted by unruly, but temporary, sexual prowess and practices.

Undoubtedly the most notorious libertine author from the eighteenth century remains the Marquis de Sade, nicknamed the Divine Marquis. While locked up in the infamous Bastille (accused, among other things, of incest and numerous murders), Sade wrote among the most philosophical and most cruel of libertine novels. The libertine tradition culminates in Sade, who united in his work the old (and rather artificial) divide between the libertinism of credo and of behavior: his works are at once philosophical (notably atheist) and they list with a sometimes suspicious complacency endless varieties of sexual practices that usually involve cruelty. In addition to being among the most prolific libertine authors, Sade is the eighteenth-century writer whose work has been the most analyzed

by members of the twentieth-century French intelligentsia, from Georges Bataille, Maurice Blanchot, and Pierre Klossowski to Jean Paulhan and Roland Barthes. Sade wrote in many genres, from short stories, *Les crimes de l'amour* [*The Crimes of Love*] (1800) to epistolary fiction, *Aline et Valcour; ou, Le roman philosophique*, 1795. His most famous productions are *Les 120 journées de Sodome* [*The 120 Days of Sodom*], *Justine; ou, les malheurs de la vertu* [*Justine; or, The Misfortunes of Virtue*], (1791) *Histoire de Juliette; ou, les prospérités du vice* (1797) [*Juliette*], and *La philosophie dans le boudoir* [*Philosophy in the Bedroom*] (1795). Sade's novels, still banned in the 1950s, are now being edited for the prestigious Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, a literary Pantheon immortalizing the classics of French literature. After editions causing much publicized lawsuits leading to the condemnation in 1957 of publisher Jean-Jacques Pauvert, this collection, printed on a paper referred to as "Bible paper" because of its thinness, marks an ironically fitting fortune for the "Divine Marquis."

Ultimately, the libertines exemplify the paradoxical relationship between the Enlightenment and new forms of morality and sexual ethics. Both fiercely aristocratic and *mondain*, the libertine novel also found comfort in heroes and heroines who reacted against the strict norms imposed by the Church. Ultimately, however, libertines were not allowed to oppose the state apparatus that had allowed the French aristocracy to survive and dominate for so long. Everyone agreed that changes were necessary, but libertines who did not conform were expelled, imprisoned, or maimed. It is not clear, however, if the reason for such closures was strictly moral or if the power to eliminate opposition so drastically was a case of wishful thinking, the last respite of

an arrogant and refined class that felt its power and authority were already undermined, as the 1789 revolution would soon confirm.

JEAN MAINIL

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# LIBRARIES

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The preservation of many works of erotic literature has frequently depended on the complex interactions not only of booksellers, collectors, and scholars, but also of police and customs agents, all of whom erratically deposited books considered morally questionable and culturally worthless in those few libraries willing to house and even to hide them. Many books never made it into libraries, of course, and have been lost. Those which did remained vulnerable to theft, mutilation, neglect, and removal by censors. Today, archival policies are more enlightened and acquisitions of modern examples of popular works are more Catholic, but gaps in the world's erotic heritage are legion.

## Major Repositories

Despite a persistent rumor probably started inadvertently by Alfred Kinsey, who joked to a visitor that the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction owned the largest collection of erotic books outside of the Vatican, the Vatican Library has never compiled an archive of erotica, though it does own a few important volumes. The largest and most legendary repositories of classic erotic books, that is, those published in various western (and a much smaller number of oriental) languages prior to the early twentieth century, are in four major institutions: the British Museum Library (London), the Bibliothèque Nationale (Paris), the Library of Congress (Washington), and the Kinsey Institute for Research in Sex, Gender, and Reproduction (University of Indiana, Bloomington). For obvious reasons, these libraries exercise some control over access to erotica collections. Scholars should attempt to ascertain ahead of time the holdings of particular archives by using published guides and bibliographies, beginning perhaps with Deakin's bibliography of bibliographies.

British Museum (BM): The core collection of the British Museum Library, the so-called

Private Case, was assembled by Henry Spencer Ashbee, greatest of bibliographers of English erotic literature, then supplemented by the collections of Edward Phelps, once housed in the Guildhall Library but transferred to the BM in 1950, and Charles Reginald Dawes, part of which was transferred to the BM in 1964. According to Paul Cross, deaccessions and losses had, by 1991, reduced the number of items in the archive to 2,143, of which Patrick J. Kearney's *The Private Case* (1981) lists 1,939 (Cross, 225). Kearney's long-promised second volume of his bibliography will trace those lost and missing. The collection, which boasts such early examples as "Antonia's" *The Crafty Whore* (1658), an English adaptation of Aretino's *Ragionamenti*, is unparalleled, and previously unnoted manuscripts and troves of ballads and bawdy poems turn up from time to time. Students attempting to locate similar English-language items in other libraries should consult Alfred Rose's still useful *Register of Erotic Books* (originally issued under the name Rolf S. Reade in 1936), a bibliography of 5,061 entries compiled from shelflists in the British Museum, with interpolations from the Bodleian Library at Oxford University, the Cambridge University Library, the Vatican, and a few other minor English archives.

Bibliothèque Nationale: The French national library began depositing erotic books in a special "Hell" section during the Napoleonic era. In 1991, according to Cross (225), the L'Enfer collection of the Bibliothèque Nationale contained roughly 1500 books, of which 108 were in English. Most of the rest, though many nationalities are represented, are examples of classic French erotic literature from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. The 1998 revision of Pascal Pia's first (1975) edition of *Les Livres de L'Enfer*, itself an updating of earlier guides, has been supplemented by 200 additions from the Roger Peyrefitte and Michel Simon collections. Digitalization has helped the

Bibliothèque Nationale to integrate books from L'Enfer into its main online catalog, which makes searching much easier.

Library of Congress: Integration is also the practice of the Library of Congress. Where once access to erotic books in the so-called Delta (or Blue) section was limited, the Library now catalogues its items with the main collections. SCORPIO (the LC online catalog) lists them by author, title, and subject. That has been a rational strategy for coping with the flood of erotic books into the Library since the 1960s, when the waning of censorship led publishers of erotic books to apply for copyrights they previously would have not sought out of fear of prosecution; copyrighting a work requires that one copy be deposited at the Library of Congress. On the other hand, dispersal of restricted materials has sometimes meant that scholars have to search more diligently for items considered erotic.

Kinsey Institute: The Kinsey Institute houses the world's most concentrated collection of sexual materials: books, journals, reprints, ephemera, art, artifacts, film, photographs, data, and biographies, many of which are unique. Its erotic fiction sub-collection is replete with manuscripts, folklore, and classic bound volumes in many languages, some from the Dawes Collection, some deaccessioned duplications from the BM's Private Case, some from European collections, notably many volumes spirited away from the library of Berlin's Institut für Sexualwissenschaft before it was destroyed by the Nazis in the early 1930s. American works are impressively represented by imprints from pre-Civil War publishers to modern pulp houses. Especially valuable are the vertical files containing dealer catalogs and flyers; these old and new brochures indicate what sort of materials have circulated over time. The Kinsey's photography archives are the world's largest, with more than 70,000 individual prints, and its erotic film collections, especially strong in stag films, are the world's most historically comprehensive. Rooms hold erotic art and artifacts both Oriental (e.g., a phenomenal group of Japanese erotic woodcuts) and western. The electronic catalog is available on-line. Scholars can use it to locate specific texts, but extensive searches of particular genres of erotica, some of which have not been fully indexed, even under the Kinsey

Library's unique nomenclature and descriptors, require the services of staff that includes anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists. Research libraries throughout the world own the 120 microfilm reels of the Institute's mostly eighteenth- and nineteenth-century materials (novels, joke collections, woodcuts, scholarly works, etc.), but the microfilm set and its index, *Sex Research*, do not reflect additions deposited since 1983. Staff members, however, continuously revise and update bibliographies available for purchase.

To these four major institutions might in the future be added two others. The first is the Russian State Library (formerly the Lenin Library) in Moscow. Nikolai Skorodumov, deputy director of the Moscow State University Library, assembled 11,000 items of erotica (books, postcards, artwork, articles, pamphlets, and objects), which were moved to the Lenin Library in 1947. These and subsequent additions have never been catalogued, but visitors claim to have seen erotic poems by Lermontov and Pushkin, samizdat versions of erotic novels from the 1920s that were clandestinely circulated in the Soviet Union, and various erotic books from the West, some seized by authorities, others donated by collectors (Schmidt). Strong sub-collections of folk tales, chastushka (short rhymed folk songs), and barkoviana (bawdy burlesque poetry, a Russian version of an eighteenth-century French genre) are also likely. Eventually, these archives may revise the longstanding conviction that Russia and Slavic countries produced no erotica of note.

Second in potential are the erotica collections of the Institute for Advanced Study of Human Sexuality in San Francisco, which has followed an admirable policy of gathering chiefly modern ephemeral publications before they could be lost. The success of the strategy, however, has resulted in prolonged storage of thousands of uncatalogued materials literally in warehouses in widely dispersed locations. Eventually, students at the Institute, which grants graduate degrees in sexology, will get around to identifying and indexing these large, far-flung archives. The Institute's San Francisco library maintains modest collections of fiction and memoirs, mostly contemporary American examples, poetry (in manuscript and published form, much of it local), extensive collections of short stories

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(again principally contemporary American), erotic periodicals containing fiction, and dissertations by its graduates on erotic genres.

### Other Libraries

In *Bibliotheca Erótica*, a valuable research tool, José Antonio Cerezo has identified and cross-checked titles from the collections of the British Museum, the Bibliothèque Nationale, and the Kinsey Institute against significant holdings by the Biblioteca de Catalunya Barcelona, the Biblioteca Municipal de Madrid, the Biblioteca Nacional (Madrid), the Bodleian Library (Oxford), the Bayerische Stadtbibliothek (Munich), the Bibliothèque Universitaire (Montpellier), the Cambridge University Library, the Library of Congress, the New York Public Library, and the Wiener Stadt-und-Landesbibliothek (Vienna). Not surprisingly, concentrations in these repositories tend to be heaviest in works written in the languages of their respective countries, so that the Bayerische Stadtbibliothek, for instance, is a good source for nineteenth-century German examples. For German libraries, the bibliographies compiled by Hayn, Gotendorf, and Englisch and those included in the *Bilderlexicon* are indispensable.

Two other libraries deserve special mention. The first is that of the American Antiquarian Society of Worcester, Massachusetts, which was founded by Isaiah Thomas, perhaps the most distinguished of early American printers, and one who pirated an American edition of Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*. Although the AAS has no particular erotic orientation, its cabinets of books published in America before 1877 contain sensational and risqué works, including 42 Indian Captivity narratives and books written by George Thompson (*Venus in Boston*, 1849) and unknown authors (*Confessions of a Washington Belle*, 1863). It is especially rich in "sporting papers" such as *The Whip*, *The Flash*, and *The Libertine*, the scandalous tabloids of the 1840s in whose pages appeared some of the first erotica written by American authors. Available also are period publisher and dealer catalogs. Curators at the AAS, moreover, are familiar with early advertising and printing technologies, traffic in contraband, and the histories of marginal publishers.

Also important is the New York Public Library, whose wide-ranging acquisition policies

have garnered both finely-bound classics and extremely cheap editions in many languages. Erotic books were once catalogued within a separate card system under what Gershon Legman called the xxx designation, and older, more fragile items are often still kept in special rooms, but many others can be requested through normal channels, and careful searching will discover English, German, French, Russian, and Slavic works from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries as well as Oriental examples in both original languages and translations. Cheaper editions tend to be available only on microfilm, a medium adopted by the Library to preserve ephemera and to prevent theft. A scholar searching for erotic stories published during the 1920s and 1930s will find on a single microfilm reel an entire sub-collection of fifty pamphlets published—or in some cases mimeographed—under such imprints as the *Erotica* Bibliography Society of London and New York, the French Modern Art Society of Paris, the London Press, the Parisian Publication Company, the Havana Publishing Company (most of the places of publication are spurious), and many others. The New York Public Library now owns the holdings of the International Gay Information Center, which include fiction by virtually all American writers working in gay erotic genres from the 1960s to the 1980s. Routinely catalogued in CATNYP, the library's digital catalog, individual items are available to patrons in the main reading room.

University libraries also repay investigation. Trinity College (Oxford), for example, holds the Sir Francis Dawson Collection of erotic books, chiefly in the English language. Harvard holds the extremely rare manuscript of Butler's *Dil-doides*, and the Magdalene College Library at Cambridge owns a copy of Millot's *Escole des Filles* (1655), the book that so inflamed Samuel Pepys. Determined to build research centers, newer American universities have been more aggressive than their European counterparts in securing significant literary artifacts, often in manuscript form. Given the headstart of older institutions and the expense of acquiring classic texts, newer universities are more likely to cherry-pick singular items when they appear on the market. Dealers and auction houses now sell internationally, so that works may end up far from their countries of origin. Thus, books published by the eighteenth-century English erotica

publisher Curll are in the University of Kansas Library; German, French, and Russian erotic titles are available at the Providence Athenaeum (Providence, Rhode Island). Competition among research libraries can be intense, with the result that pieces can be scattered. Henry Miller's prodigious output has been fragmented among the University of California at Los Angeles, the Henry Miller Memorial Library at Big Sur, California, the New York Public Library, the University of Southern Illinois at Carbondale, the University of Texas at Austin, the University of Virginia, and Yale University.

Occasionally writers donate their papers to their alma maters, as in the case of John Colleton (Robert Walter Marks), who left the manuscripts of his erotic and mainstream works to the College of Charleston, in South Carolina, but more celebrated authors may also sell them to the highest bidder. Institutions with the deepest pockets usually prevail. Selected items at the Harry Ramson Humanities Research Center at The University of Texas at Austin (one of the more aggressive acquirers) include the earliest known poetic fragment of *The Court of Venus*, but also the papers of the British Sexological Society from the 1910s to the 1940s; a collection of Havelock Ellis and another of Frank Harris; unusually broad collections of Radclyffe Hall and James Joyce, the latter including 39 copies of the first edition of Joyce's *Ulysses*, some with annotations by original owners such as Lawrence of Arabia; a large archive of civil rights attorney Morris Ernst, who defended *The Well of Loneliness* and *Ulysses* in America; the papers of Aleister Crowley; the papers of Jean Cocteau (especially his drawings), Pierre Louÿs, and Henri Pierre Roché; and many letters by authors of erotic works.

In recent years, academic interest in issues of gender and sexuality has led libraries and advocates for minority subcultures in most western countries to archive explicit texts. Brown University holds a pulp erotica collection that, with 4,600 gay novels (but only 31 lesbian titles), outstrips that of the New York Public Library. In addition, Brown's Katzoff Collection contains 31,500 mostly literary works relating to gays and lesbians, including the John Preston (author and editor of gay literature) and the Larry Townsend (sodomasochistic fiction and pictorial erotica) subcollections. Brown also supports a truly massive gathering of women's romance

novels of varying degrees of explicitness. Guides by Gough and Miller and contributors to Cornog's *Libraries, Erotica, and Pornography* can help locate other such gay and lesbian collections. Scholarship on popular culture genre has fueled acquisitions of demotic literature. In decades past, folklorists compiled folk tales, ballads, broadsides, songs, poems, and chapbooks, depositing them in libraries such as the University of California (both Los Angeles and Berkeley), Indiana University, Harvard, and the Nottingham University Library, as well as in many European institutions. Modern day equivalents are underground comics and erotic graphic novels such as those housed at Bowling Green State University (Ohio), the University of Minnesota, and Michigan State University. French universities now accumulate bandes dessinées (comics) just as Japanese institutions purchase manga. In the same spirit, the National Library of Australia has begun to archive sexual materials from the Internet. It has been recording selected Web sites since 1996, including those which feature erotic fiction, and it steadily adds others in an attempt to establish a historical timeline.

Virtually all large public libraries throughout the world have been the recipients of erotic books when donors insisted that they accompany more "desirable" bequests. In today's relatively tolerant climate, librarians may quietly enter the items into catalogs, especially since, as Evelyn Geller points out, legendary "inferno" collections once closeted by public libraries in America usually contained books that are now considered harmless (Geller, 61). Legal records of seizures and prosecutions can be revelatory as well. The papers of the pioneering American anti-censorship attorney Theodore Schroeder, who defended many literary works prosecuted in the early twentieth century, are in the library at Southern Illinois University; the early records of the New York Society for the Suppression of Vice, which seized many books, are in the Library of Congress, while the papers of John Saxton Sumner, Comstock's successor as leader of the Society, are at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin (Madison). The British Museum holds the only surviving copy of the Polunbi Catalog (*Verzeichnis der auf Grund des [section] 184 des Reichstrafgesetzbuches*), which lists books seized by police during the Weimar Republic.



## LIBRARIES

In searching for materials, especially primary texts, students of erotic literature should bear in mind several factors. First, many extensive collections are still in private hands, especially in France. Collections infrequently migrate; the most celebrated was that of J.P. Morgan, whose heirs removed it from his New York library and sold it back to French aficionados. When owners die, heirs may dispose of parcels without publicity, and it can take years for these to find their way into libraries. Second, collections in libraries often reflect the biases of their compilers. Some bibliophiles systematically strove to gather complete runs of authors or genres, while others sought only rare or expensive examples, ignoring cheap, “trashy” but nonetheless historically valuable ephemera. Still other donors obeyed the dictates of their own tastes, so that an assemblage of flagellants might not be representative of a place or historical period. Similar caveats apply to materials haphazardly seized by police or customs agents, and then seconded to a repository, a practice that has notably contributed to the growth of holdings in the Bibliothèque Nationale, the Library of Congress, and the Kinsey Institute, where readers often find court docket numbers stamped on copies. Third, despite the efforts of the Kinsey Institute to regularize sexual subject headings, many libraries prefer not to use them. Public libraries in particular avoid the heading “erotic literature” for fear that it will act as a flag to censors, and they are even less likely to employ formal terms for fetishes (though they occasionally opt for euphemisms such as “covert cultures” or “alternative literatures”) especially now that so many catalogs are available online. Even so, electronic services are a boon, because they make global searches increasingly viable. OCLC, RLIN, and WorldCat often furnish the location of specific editions in particular libraries, and can sometimes be used to request them.

JOSEPH W. SLADE III

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## LORRAIN, JEAN

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1855–1906

French novelist, journalist, and poet

As a writer, Jean Lorrain spanned the *fin de siècle* spectrum, from Zola's squalid naturalism to Maeterlinck's otherworldly fantasies, but without any sense of proportion or good taste. His novels, short stories, and poetry are a compendium of the decadent fads of the period: Florence and Venice, Medusa and Ophelia ("the charm of a virgin and a perverse boy," "Sur un portrait de Botticelli"), gems and poppies ("a breast-plate studded with amethysts grips his torso and he wears a huge crown of enormous purplish poppies," *Coins de Byzance*); melancholy lilies and irises which "revealed to me my infamous and chaste dishonour," *La forêt bleue*); barbarians and Byzantium ("Yes, let them come, let them burn everything here; let them empty my coffers, let them crush my pearls, let them crucify the steward, let them rape my mother," *Coins de Byzance*); the paintings of Gustave Moreau, Jan Toorop, and James Ensor; Sarah Bernhardt, for whom he wrote unproduced plays, and Yvette Guilbert, for whom he composed lyrics; Wagnerian operas and Arthurian legends, the color mauve and Black Masses, motley masks and necrophiliac orgies, erotic delirium and odors "of sex, of cosmetics, of sweat." All this is described in a lapidary vocabulary, an indigestible mix of *recherché* arcana and the latest slang.

The world of Lorrain's fiction is ruled by women, whose morbid and perverse psychology

is expressed in interior decoration, wardrobes, and scents. Madame Litvinoff in *Très russe* (1886), with the "sourire inquiétant de Joconde," dominates feminine men, "doux comme un enfant," and practices chastity as an erotic refinement. Another of Lorrain's heroines concentrates on making half-naked acrobats fall from their trapezes and tightropes. Depravity is common in courtesans like "the pianist" whose expert fingers can rouse enfeebled dotards, or the twelve-year-old "graveyard hooker," who plays the schoolgirl for pedophiles. Even the chlorotic virgin in *Ames d'automne* wants to warm her chilled extremities inside the bosom of a stable-boy. The fashionable blend of Sadic and mystical themes is found *par excellence* in *Princesses d'Ivoire et d'Ivresse* (1902), teeming with enchanted maidens and *femmes fatales*.

An ether addict, perpetually in failing health, Lorrain excelled at portraying physical decrepitude and superannuated desire. For him, love consists of the intimate contact of two solitary and incompatible beings. It can only be expressed in excess, which leads to madness or violence. Characters who long for beauty tend to be repellent lunatics or venial perverts. Near death, impelled partly by patriotism, partly by a sense of waning fashion, Lorrain attacked the idols of his youth in his unfinished novel *Pelléastres*, savagely criticizing aesthetes, Wagner and Maeterlinck. Nor had he any compunction about mocking other's sodomitic penchants, calling Jacques d'Adelsward-Fersen "a petty suburban

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Nero,” whose taste for Black masses “is better suited to the pink mass (vaseline and essence of Guerlain).”

### ***Monsieur de Bougreton (1897)***

The title character is a flamboyant charlatan, the narrator’s guide through Amsterdam. A grandiloquent, impoverished dandy based on Barbey d’Aurevilley, starving to death in his fine linen and laces, he recounts stories of low-life and grotesque passion. There is the Spanish girl, raped fifteen times, who has in expiation had 15 rubies imbedded in her flesh. Another tale tells of a chaste Dutchwoman, who dotes on her she-monkey and her macaw, and insists that her Ethiopian slave, clad only in a pair of leather shorts, help her, nude, into her bath and dress her again. One day the lady is found strangled, her throat cut, and her breast half-devoured.

### ***Vice errant: Les Norontsoff (1902)***

Vladimir Norontsoff is a fabulously wealthy Russian prince, who, loaded down with vices like an idol with precious stones, lives on the Riviera in a sumptuous villa. He imposes his mad caprices on his sycophants: dressed in sumptuous robes, he often receives on a *chaise percée*, has two sailors abducted from the port of Nice to spin him yarns, and organizes a fantastic party in honor of Adonis where he goes too far by serving his guests three naked tattooed men on an immense, flower-decked platter. Norontsoff is a Neronian absolutist, a Slavic scion of Byzantium who despises the Tatar hordes of the modern world. His destructive mixture of rage, ennui, and love is so contradictory that he has to kill himself to live out the desires of his delirious imagination.

Lorrain lavished his full talent for description on what he called a “heart-breaking chronicle of a frightful usury of the soul.” He considered the book a moral work: “To hypocrisy and human cowardice, to the ferocity of decent people and the decency of social climber, to the acknowledged defenders of virtue [...] I dedicate these pages of sorrow and lust, a great lust whose frightful distress and incurable ennui they cannot conceive.”

### ***Monsieur de Phocas (1910)***

Subtitled *Astarté*, its protagonist is the young Duc de Fréneuse, alias M. de Phocas, Lorrain’s answer to Huysmans’s Des Esseintes in *A Rebours* (other major influences are Rachilde, Wilde, Moreau, Whistler, and Toorop). Cherubic in appearance, but icily impotent, owing to his acute cerebralism, he lives in a state of hallucinatory tension. Each sensation is exacerbated, each thought obsessional, each desire magnified in this etiolated sensibility. His morbid desires are vitiated only by a sort of voluptuous somnambulism.

This complete neurotic seeks out extraordinary experiences, moving like a voyeur from drug-fuelled high-society parties to crapulous slums, hoping to grasp in transitory fleshly pleasure a flash of terror or pain, yet tormented by awful visions. These peregrinations are guided by weird characters such as the painter Ethal who catches in a picture the death agony of a young model. Phocas goes to his death seeking a wonderful shade of green he had once glimpsed in a pair of eyes, a certain glaucous gaze of Astarté, goddess of Lust, cold as emeralds and moving as the sea. Phocas’s disenchantment makes him a cross between the glacial aesthete and the bestial barbarian, a hybrid of Dorian Gray and Mr. Hyde. Lorrain’s matter may be derivative, but the overruling mood, a sort of mournful and sadistic sensuality, is very much his own.

### ***Le tréteau***

Written in 1906 and published posthumously, *The Boards* is a highly entertaining novel of theatrical life. Intricately constructed, it concerns the liaison of an actress Linda Monti, based largely on Sarah Bernhardt, and Mario Nérac, a young man come to Paris from the Midi to make a success as a playwright, based partly on Lorrain. They become lovers and the actress imposes her protégé’s works on Paris. Rivalries, intrigues, the interference of the actress’s lesbian sister, and the malice of a cast-off author lead to a duel. Mario, gravely wounded and partially paralyzed, is taken home by his mother, away from the influence of the fatal actress. (Mothers in Lorrain are always long-suffering saints.) Each character in this

backstage comedy of manners is based on a real person, and no one is spared. For all its glamour, literary Paris is portrayed as a charnel house and a jungle, as if the dying Lorrain had poured his disillusionment, bitterness, and rancour about the theater into this novel.

### Biography

Martin-Paul-Alexandre Duval, son of a Normandy ship-owner, arrived in Paris in 1881 to make a literary reputation as Jean Lorrain. His first published poems *Le Sang des dieux* (1882), which daringly featured Ganymede, Antinous, “Hylas, his arms polished by Hercules’ kisses,” and Bathyllus scorching sailors in low dives with his come-hither glances and revealing dances, met with modest sales but major publicity. They reflect Lorrain’s own weakness for what he called *Fleurs de boue*, especially fairground pugilists, “those gentlemen of the ring, a tiger skin/About their loins, bare chests, their own skins fine and clear” (*Modernités*). Himself of strapping physique, with the moustache of a Viking, Lorrain painted his face, rimmed his eyes with kohl, and adorned his fluttering hands with bizarre rings.

Lorrain soon won fame as a journalist, in such periodicals as *Le chat noir*, *La vie moderne*, and *Le courrier français*, where his columns were devoured for their colorful reportage and innuendo-saturated gossip. He haunted the galleries and theaters, puffing a painter or slating a star in articles which he signed with names from Sentillana and Salterella to Mimosa and Stendhaletta. “As unctuous as a frosted pastry,” Lorrain became known as “the Petronius of the decadence...the best observer of a milieu of which he was also the worst ornament” (Philippe Jullian). An early example of the celebrity homosexual as social and artistic arbiter, a role later played by Andy Warhol and Truman Capote, Lorrain was pilloried in Armory’s comedy *Le monsieur aux chrysanthèmes*.

LAURENCE SENELICK

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# LORRIS, GUILLAUME DE AND JEHAN DE MEUNG

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### Lorris, Guillaume de

c. 1215–c. 1278

### Meung, Jehan de

c. 1250–c. 1305

### *Romance of the Rose*

The huge *Romance of the Rose* (almost 22,000 octosyllabic lines) introduces itself as an *ars amandi*, a treatise about love—especially about the methods to win the favors of a lady. The first part, written around 1225 by Guillaume of

Lorris, follows the rules of courtly writing: presented as the first-person retelling of an allegorical dream, that has proven completely true in the narrator's real life, it describes how the young man wanders to the door of the closed garden of the God of Love; on the wall he sees the pictures of those who do not belong with love: Age, Poverty, Envy, Avarice, and so on. Love is an activity reserved for the young, the rich, and the idle. Welcome by the beautiful "Oiseuse" (the personification of Idleness, she spends her time combing her hair and looking at her reflection in a mirror), the young hero then falls in love with a beautiful, budding rose. He makes voluntary homage to the God of Love, who gives him the ten commandments of Love, plus a few practical pieces of advice, and promises he will get his reward if he serves Love well. The allegorical encoding of the text gives the story-line a very abstract tonality; feeling, moral attributes, and qualities are embodied by one-dimensional characters who play their part in the courtly game. With the help of "Bel Accueil" (or "Pleasant Greeting," the young lover succeeds in stealing a kiss from the Rose, but then she is imprisoned in a tower built by the villain "Dangier" ("Shame/Prudence") and Jealousy. Guillaume's poem ends after 4,056 lines in the midst of the desperate narrator's complaint, in the best tradition of the love-stricken *trouvère*. Despite the concrete advice and anecdotes provided by a few characters who try to enlighten the young lover about the real nature of love, this first *Romance of the Rose* is very much a courtly *cansó*, the narrative development of the typical lyrical situation.

Almost fifty years later, a rather famous writer by the name of Jehan de Meung takes over the story of Guillaume and his Rose where the previous author left it (actually, he does not say anything about the change in writers before the middle of the romance, five thousand lines further). However, Jehan's approach is much more pragmatic, or cynical: the goal is certainly not any more to obtain the Rose's love, but to enjoy her ultimate favors in the most straightforward way possible. In order to reach that goal the lover enlists a number of somewhat disreputable characters, like "Faux Semblant" the hypocritical false cleric or "la Vieille" (an old hag who turned a pimp when she could not sell her body anymore); all of them try to give sound advice to the lover, putting the accent on the satisfaction

of erotic desire without caring about the so-called noble love. The most impressive change is the replacement of the God of Love by his mother, the Goddess Venus. She embodies feminine sensuality, and through the means of her burning arrows awakens the desire of the Rose, who stops being a passive object of passion to become an active participant in the game of love. Venus does not care overly for courtly discourse, and the text strongly suggests that even when she hides it, woman is "hotter" than man and can barely wait for the satisfaction of her inexhaustible lust. The rise of Venus over her son reveals the fascination and fear of feminine sexuality at the root of Jehan's continuation of the *Romance of the Rose*.

After the Rose has been inflamed by Venus' arrows, the lover-narrator turned pilgrim is able to enter the fortress built by Jealousy. The last sequence of the *Romance* is actually a long metaphor of the sexual act, depicted very graphically as the various steps of a successful pilgrim's quest; precisely when the pilgrim reaches the heart of the sanctuary, however, the dream ends up abruptly, and the dreamer wakes up. Although the second part of the *Romance* was at the root of the so-called "Quarrel of the *Romance of the Rose*," it seems that Jehan of Meung is not primarily interested in the *ars amandi* initiated by his predecessor. Two of his most original characters are Nature and Genius, her chaplain. Both follow the tradition started by Alanus de Insulis in his *De planctu Naturae*, according to which Nature bitterly deplores the various vices developed by mankind, mainly sodomy, to escape its *natural* destination—*crescete et multiplicamini*. The refinements of courtly love, as well as the tricks pertaining to venal love, detract human beings from playing the only serious game intended for them by God, the game of generation. Nature and Genius incite men and women to make love in order to produce offspring, without caring for the niceties of civilization.

Except for this generative duty laid on man by God himself, however, the poem does not have much use for the feminine. The text is deeply misogynistic—although not more than most clerical writings of the time. Sexuality is indeed seen in a rather positive light, as long as it satisfies the requirements of generation, but at the same time the possibility that women do enjoy sex makes them into whores who are not to be

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trusted. Paradoxically, what starts out as a courtly poem exalting noble love for a lady ends up as an apology for free sexuality disengaged of any reference to love, and as a tacit dismissal of all women as being no ladies at all. Jehan of Meung's *Romance of the Rose* will remain for two centuries the bluebook of misogyny, although it is somehow more concerned about gathering knowledge in all areas pertaining to sexuality, the relationship between man and woman, and what can be loosely called "love"—including a discussion on semantics and the meanings of words.

ANNE BERTHELOT

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# LOUÏS, PIERRE

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1870–1925

French poet and novelist

Pierre Louÿs (he adopted the archaizing spelling c. 1889) is notable for the quantity and variety of his erotic production and the playfulness and exuberant humor that characterizes much of it. It was written throughout his life, with the same obsessive method that he brought to documenting his active sexual life, to research into and classification of female experiences, including a *Manuel de Gomorrhe* [Manual of Gomorrha] on sodomy, and to erotic photography. It was not a sideline distinct from his published work (three very different novels, stories, prose poems, and Parnassian poetry); it provides the most provocative expression of his unchanging views. The Preface to *Aphrodite* sets up as an ideal the

morality of antiquity based on the right of the individual to pursue happiness while respecting that of others. Sexuality and sensuality ("volupté") have a central role in human life and are mankind's *raison de vivre*. Sexual and moral freedom have however been restricted by conventional morality, prudishness, and "Protestantism," against which he constantly campaigned; nudity and sexuality should be seen not as shameful or sinful, but as subjects for contemplation, even worship.

On Louÿs's death some 400 kg of unpublished erotic manuscripts—the figure probably expresses astonishment rather than an accurate estimate—were discovered in his library, and dispersed uncatalogued through specialist booksellers. Some 1,200 pages have subsequently been published, at first clandestinely in limited editions,

starting in 1926 with *Trois Filles de leur mère* [*Mother's Three Daughters*] and the *Manuel de civilité* [*Handbook of Good Manners*]; as much again is probably still in private collections. Much of it is incomplete: Louÿs was as capable of abruptly changing his subject of interest as he was of obsessive work developing one idea. All the works conjure up alternative closed worlds given over to sex. Louÿs's erotic work is not the relation of individual experience; it involves all humanity in frenzied consensual sexual activity, free from any coercion or violence, which displaces all other activities and values. The only restriction in his ideal of erotic liberty, which embraces lesbianism, incest, sodomy, coprophilia, and bestiality, is towards male homosexuality, generally ignored or treated as incomprehensible, although it does figure fleetingly in a few works. Louÿs's key idea is summed up in the poem "Philis, il serait bon...": "Rien n'est en soi pervers, ni vil, ni ridicule" [Nothing is in itself perverse, base or ridiculous]: our only guide should be the quest for pleasure.

Louÿs's published work provides a world, a theme, and above all a language to exploit in sexually explicit parallel versions. The sequence of prose poems, *Les Chansons de Bilitis* [*The Songs of Bilitis*], composed in a uniform pattern of four paragraphs that form a prose sonnet, purport to be a translation of the works of a Greek poetess contemporary with Sappho (Louÿs enjoyed practical jokes and hoaxes). They form a "lyrical novel" tracing her awakening sensuality in the natural paradise of Pamphylia, her love for the young Mnasidika on Lesbos, and her life of debauchery as a courtesan on Cyprus. For Louÿs the twin dangers of erotic writing were a Satanic or a smutty presentation of woman and sex. The subversive hedonism of the poems rehabilitates a natural sensuality and tranquilly accepts heterosexual and lesbian sexuality and prostitution. The poems are also bold in their discreet but unambiguous allusions to the clitoris, masturbation, artificial phalluses, sodomy, and fellatio. The volume's index teasingly lists poems that were "not translated," implying the existence of some too audacious to print. These hints are developed by Louÿs in the *Chansons secrètes de Bilitis* [*Secret Songs of Bilitis*]. Some are alternative versions of the published ones: where in the opening poem, "L'Arbre" [The Tree], a young girl sits innocently astride a branch, in the "secret" version she

stimulates herself; in another, Paris sees not "the secret" but "the vulva" of the three goddesses. Sometimes the erotic version makes more sense than the published one and clearly precedes it; in other cases it is clearly a subsequent elaboration. But all keep the same atmosphere of uncomplicated sexuality in an idyllic world.

The same idealized pagan world is found in *Aphrodite*, an evocation of the life of courtesans in 1st-century BCE Alexandria. Through the relationship between the courtesan Chrysis and the sculptor Démétrios the novel demonstrates the danger of passion that enslaves and the paradoxical superiority of art and imagination—here, as Jennifer Birkett has argued, the privilege of the male—over physical reality. Again the published novel was bold in its relaxed presentation of sexuality: in the opening chapter, Chrysis has her pubic hair shaved and masturbates in the bath. Louÿs had to excise one scene of bestiality from the published novel, but planned a series of 172 monologues of seduction for Chrysis, abandoned by Démétrios, not as part of the novel, but existing parallel to it. Ten were completed; in them she conjures up a series of erotic experiences to entice him back from a handsome youth, culminating with coprophagy. They are a linguistic *tour de force*, a set of lyrical variations on a theme exploiting the novel's style: long harmonious sentences and elaborate imagery.

*Les Aventures du roi Pausole* [*The Adventures of King Pausole*] is in contrast a light-hearted philosophical tale presenting a benign king with two Louÿsian principles: do not harm others, apart from that, do what you will. He rules over a utopia where characters can respond uninhibitedly to all the calls of sensuality. It has its counterparts in two very different works. *Histoire du Roi Gonzalve et des douze princesses* [*The Tale of King Gonzalve and the Twelve Princesses*], part utopia, part fairy tale, traces the gradual sexual initiation of his twelve compliant and enthusiastic daughters, aged from 18 to seven-and-a-half, by the King himself, assisted by his chambermaid. The potential repetitiveness is avoided by Louÿs's inventiveness. Court protocol intrudes incongruously into new areas (it does not permit the King to take the same virgin twice in succession). The daughters are differentiated by their manner and language: Tertia, aggressive and contemptuously vulgar; Septima, cheerfully indecent; Prima, languorous and literary; Puella (nine), impudent and with a



taste for sweat and coprophagy... Louÿs plays off the outrageous explicitness of the daughters against the restrained, formal voice of the third-person narrator. The varied incestuous sexual acts are extended by dialogue, as the sisters bicker, boast, and egg each other on, rather than by depiction. The second parallel novel, *L'Île aux dames* [*The Island of Ladies*], echoing Jules Verne's *L'Île mystérieuse* [*The Mysterious Island*], exists as little more than an outline for a novel, though it runs to some 120 pages. The utopia of sexual freedom is here all encompassing. The heroine, Fernande, lands on an unknown island where she is guided around the town by Lucienne, gets to know her family, is introduced to court, and finally becomes a prostitute specializing in sodomy. What she discovers with initial surprise, then enthusiastic involvement, is a society, from court to working quarters, solely, openly, and uninhibitedly occupied with sex. The children above all know no obstacles in the form of modesty, family relationships, or class. The island had been discovered in 1623: the expedition's leader, named 'King,' decreed the "licence de foutre" [licence to fuck] which allows total freedom for all male and female subjects to enjoy any sexual activity with consenting women or girls (again, this excludes male homosexuality), in private or in public. Virginity is banned after puberty; abduction and rape however are capital offences. Louÿs's inventive imagination devises local equivalents for the diverse aspects of normal life: the various booths at the fair, the religious festivals, the annual court orgy (by invitation only), the Charity Brothel that raises money for the poor. Above all, Louÿs's classificatory zeal conjures up lists: a delirious catalogue of street names, the titles of the establishments in the Street of Forty Brothels, the program for a concert at the lesbian boarding school. New trades prompt neologisms, like "cunnovate" for the fortune-teller who can read pudenda. These "absurd complications" are conjured up with a sense of bizarre detail, and sometimes teeter into the excessive: theatrical coprophagy, or the brothel of dead women to cater to necrophiliacs. At the same time some ideas have subsequently been overtaken by reality: men putting their penis through a grill to be anonymously fellated; the sex museum (waxworks represent positions); illustrated guides to masturbation; prostitutes behind shop windows.

Louÿs's published work thus stimulated the production of parallel erotic versions; so did parody. In the *Manuel de civilité pour les petites filles à l'usage des maisons d'éducation* [*Handbook of Good Manners for Little Girls, Especially Recommended for Use in Schools*], Louÿs's blithely deadpan guide to "good behavior" offers a series of instructions for behavior in a variety of situations: at home, in class, out shopping, at the theater, or the seaside... The humor calmly takes for granted a defiance of conventional morality, and both the proscribed and the prescribed evoke outlandish situations: partners are masturbated at society balls and priests in the confessional, beggars are offered fellatio, and dildos are given as wedding presents. "If you have used a banana to amuse yourself with alone or to make the chambermaid come, do not replace it in the fruit bowl without having carefully wiped it." "Do not ask a chambermaid to go down on you more than twice a day. You must not tire out the servants." As the work is, again, a stylistic exercise, Louÿs plays with verbal as much as behavioral impropriety. Obscene expressions intrude into the prim instructions: "Do not say: 'When you suck him he comes at once.' Say: 'He is impulsive.'" The world predicated is dominated by masturbation, incest, and sodomy, embodying an underlying universal desire for sexual satisfaction on which only hypocrisy, misguided modesty, and a narrow view of virtue impose restraint. "You must understand this truth that everyone present, whatever their age or sex, has the secret desire for you to go down on them, but that most will not dare to say so."

In the known narrative fiction, which includes several abandoned fragments, parody enables Louÿs to adopt a variety of voices for evoking spontaneous and guilt-free sexual encounters. He mimics the Bible in *Au temps des juges* [*In the Time of the Judges*], the Oriental fairy tale in *Farizade* (with spoof learned footnotes), the "Realist" autobiography of a prostitute in *Mémoires de Joséphine* [*The Memoirs of Josephine*], where the atmosphere of squalor is pushed to comic excess and the events plunge into absurdity. The most substantial is *Toinon* [*The Erotic Adventures of Toinon*], a first-person narration by a sexually and linguistically innocent girl joining a boarding school, of her sexual education. As this is substantially complete by the end of the first night and the other girls are equally

knowledgeable, Louÿs introduces variety in the form of an English-speaking assistant mistress.

Several works could be grouped under the heading “plays”; they are essentially “armchair theater” designed for reading and the imagination rather than for performance (unlike, say, Maupassant’s *A la feuille de rose, maison turque*). Not only would they present problems in staging an action which is both relentlessly sexual and frequently acrobatic; Louÿs uses dialogue to displace performance. On the one hand exchanges between characters, rather than stage directions, evoke acts that they are in the act of performing or about to perform: in *Jeunes filles*, Lucienne describes an elaborate position she has dreamed up, and dictates it to the participants, then Jean as a spectator describes what he can see when it is assembled. But also an exchange between characters can imply the activity they are engaged in, while simultaneously conjuring up another encounter in the past that is stimulating them now as they recall it. In this “double scenario” the narration of events is shifted to the character, foregrounding its essentially linguistic nature. Jean sodomizes Simone, but this present act is evoked simply by her instructions; at the same time she questions him about his activities with the other two girls, Berthe and Lucienne, and this exchange simultaneously conjures up a second, past act.

These theatrical works, though substantial, are all abandoned fragments presenting Louÿs’s hedonism in differing conventional settings: parody is ever-present. *Jeunes filles* presents the initiation of Simone as she stays with two sisters. The successive acts represent not so much plot development as the extension of sexual activities as Simone moves from ignorance and distaste to curiosity, then enthusiastic participation (Lucienne conveniently possesses an 8-cm clitoris—one of the recurrent implausibilities of Louÿs’s scenarios, where female autonomy goes hand-in-hand with a masculinized portrayal of female sexuality: women get hard and ejaculate). Participants (the maid, her boyfriend, the mother) are added as the play progresses around the house. *Connette et Chloris* hilariously parodies the situations and language of seventeenth-century French theater, introducing the complications of lesbianism and intercourse into the jealousies, betrayals, and unrequited loves of Racinian tragedy. The verbal comedy lies in the contrast between the formality and restraint of Classical

tragedy and the activities evoked. *Filles de ferme* [*Farm Girls*] represents a marathon of cunnilingus and coprophilia by a sexually voracious 14-year-old girl in a caricatural rustic setting reminiscent of Zola’s Naturalist fiction.

This “theater” is at its most successful—inventive, ludic, provocative, linguistically varied—in *Douze douzains de dialogues* [*Dialogues of the Courtesans*], a sequence of brief exchanges, all shorter than a page, mostly between female characters, with settings ranging from society balls to street corners, classified under twelve headings: women masturbating or masturbated, phallogophores, mothers and daughters... The challenge of a numerical framework prompts a proliferation of varied scenes. The sequence is again triggered by a pre-existing work: Lucian of Samosata’s *Dialogues of the Courtesans* that Louÿs had himself translated in 1894. The exchange establishes the context and evokes the action; it frequently relies on the “double scenario”: two women masturbate as they talk on the telephone, one arousing her partner by describing another couple observed in mutual cunnilingus, and inviting the telephonist to join in. Louÿs conjures up absurd or bizarre situations: maids gossip about the help they have to give the girls in their houses; concierges encourage sex on the staircase; children play hot cockles, using penises rather than hands. Even conventional situations are enlivened with an exuberant lack of inhibition, or by inventive details: the maid being interviewed by a new mistress takes off her hat to demonstrate her oral skills. The *Dialogues* rely above all on the inventive and ingenious use of language. Louÿs deftly mimics a range of registers, from the invitation to sodomy couched as an invitation to a dance at a ball, to the stream of obscenities proffered by a 10-year-old girl.

### *Trois filles de leur mère* [*Mother’s Three Daughters*]

The French title suggests that they take after their mother, probably written *c.* 1913, stands apart from other fictional works, both narrative and theatrical, in its coherence and completeness. It is a freestanding work neither parodying another genre nor complementing one of Louÿs’s own works (though there are parallels with the Spanish novel *La femme et le pantin* [*The Woman and the Puppet*], in which an older

man trapped in an obsessive relationship with a young woman tells how she repeatedly entices, exploits, then refuses him. The 20-year-old narrator meets in turn, living in an adjacent apartment, Mauricette (aged 14), her mother Teresa (36), and her sisters Lili (10) and Charlotte (20), and is led by them through a varied, increasingly outrageous series of sexual acts, first individually, then jointly. Although he makes his preferences clear to Mauricette at the start: “To make love,” this straightforward pleasure is one that they refuse, tricking him either with their agile bodies or by extracting promises into other acts. As the novel progresses, these become more complex, and they are increasingly displaced by mediated representations: first by the women’s accounts of their pasts, then by the evocation of future acts and by playlets in which they and the narrator improvise on scenarios the women have devised (prostitute and client, lecher and young girl, classroom scene, catechism). This process is increasingly frustrating for the narrator, so much so that, exactly halfway through the novel, after his first encounter with each, he escapes to visit his friend Margot, exhausted but desperate to make love “in front,” and does so to great relief. After this first cycle he is drawn back to the four women, but is increasingly frustrated. On the fourth day Mauricette announces that she will allow herself to be publicly deflowered by him (she is still technically a virgin). Although the act is announced three times, in increasing detail, and even rehearsed with Teresa paying Mauricette’s role, it is never carried out; the narrator becomes baffled by the games that the four women are playing with him and their role-playing. The novel ends with an abrupt epilogue: the family leaves, without ever reaching the deflowering of Mauricette; but also with a promise (or threat) of resumption: Teresa leaves a note with the *concierge* saying: “We will meet again.”

The novel is in many ways a compendium of Louÿs’s erotic writing, both in its insistence on his favorite themes: uninhibited and guiltless sexuality, the dominance of sodomy, masturbation, and incestuous sapphism, and by integrating ideas from other works: Teresa’s practical hints about fellatio recall the *Manuel de civilité*, the playlets recall the *Dialogues*, the catechism scene recalls *Histoire du roi Gonzalve*. The action is verbal, not just in the reliance on dialogue to evoke ongoing and to plan future sexual activity,

and on the “double scenario” where narrating about the past accompanies present activities, but also in the foregrounding of language. For once there is a role for the voice of a male narrator (elsewhere Louÿs tends to rely either on dialogue, as in the playlets, or the narrative voice of fictional women in pseudo-memoirs, or an omniscient external narrative voice), which is played off against the voices of the four women: Teresa, authoritative; Mauricette, defiant; Charlotte, languid and self-deprecating; Lili, playful and impudent. From the beginning the narrator’s coy periphrases are met by the provocative frankness of Mauricette, both in what she does (displaying her virginity) and in her language (repeating “I’m wanking” eight times). Restrained, a bit pedantic, he relies on the reader being able to pick up incongruous but deft cultural allusions, from the music of Louÿs’s friend Debussy to Catullus or La Fontaine. For the women freedom of language is a source of pleasure just as much as sex is: as Teresa reaches one climax she unleashes on the narrator a torrent of obscenities. Whether as spectator or participant in their scenarios, he is bewildered, recurrently judging them “mad,” discomfited by their self-assured quest for their own pleasure, in sodomy (which avoids the dangers of conception), in masturbation (as Charlotte says: “You come when you want”), and increasingly disturbed by his discoveries about them. Teresa has brought up Charlotte so that she has a “vice”: to be aroused when insulted; she vainly attempts to get the narrator to insult her as she conjures up for him a series of degrading acts to which she has been subjected, culminating in her relationship with a notable who imposes acts of bestiality. But even then, as she evokes fellating farm animals or being sodomized by a goat, she arouses in the narrator only desire and pity. Nor can he respond to Mauricette’s masochism, similarly the product of her mother’s “education,” inculcated as a conditioned reflex. He submits to their more excessive demands reluctantly and cannot describe certain scenes. The rational, open-minded, even libertine narrator had initially looked forward enthusiastically to the prospect of unlimited sex with his four neighbors. He finds himself trapped in an alternative world of apparent sexual freedom, and used, as spectator or as participant, in acts that they determine and increasingly stage-manage. The language and deeds of the seemingly inexhaustible women

frustrate, outrage, and bewilder him. Louÿs's premise is that there are no moral limits: the inhibitions of the "liberated" narrator serve perhaps more forcefully than elsewhere to dissolve any fixed guidelines.

The foregrounding of language is heightened by a constant sense of artifice: both actions and the novel itself are highly self-conscious. The narrator at times thinks himself in a novel that he cannot quite make sense of, plays humorously with psychological and moral paradoxes, and comments on his actual writing (and loses track of what he is saying mid-sentence). He addresses the reader directly, attributing to this "reader" a range of different possible characters: male or female, naïve or experienced, hostile or sympathetic, commenting on potential reactions and assuming a range of different voices, from the ironically moralizing to the flippant. He repeatedly insists that his implausible tale is true as the women's exploits become increasingly implausible (as in Charlotte's preposterous account of Lili's conception, achieved by transferring sperm from her anus to Teresa's vagina, or Lili's massaging of the narrator's penis from inside Teresa's vagina during anal intercourse), and, as John Phillips has argued, these exploits provoke increasingly astonishment and admiration rather than arousal: this is the comic world of Boccaccio or Rabelais, not that of Sade. The final evening is dominated by play-acting: Lili's performance as a serpent-girl accomplishing oral autoerotic acts is followed by a series of improvised playlets. Sex is an "act" in which the narrator, like the hero of *La Femme et le pantin*, cannot know the true feelings of the others; it is a performance, both in that it increasingly involves gymnastic expertise (the family are double-jointed acrobats) and that it is a display for spectators, as when Mauricette demonstrates her newly-acquired skill at fellatio by executing it "brilliantly" on the narrator before the others. It is also a game, with its combination of rules, improvisation, and pure enjoyment, especially for the younger girls, reinforcing the playfulness of the novel as a whole. And in these areas it is the women, especially Lili, who are the natural performers.

In Louÿs's published erotic poetry, pre-existing works, forms, or characters often provide the challenge to produce a set of variations. He parodies past literature (La Fontaine's fables, the exotic Romanticism of Hugo or Musset) by

inserting invitations to sodomy or drunken debauchery, and reworks folk songs and children's game rhymes by introducing sexuality or obscene words. Not all these variations are comic: the reinvented Wagnerian heroines of *Le Trophée des vulves légendaires* [*The Trophy of the Legendary Vulvas*] maintain an appropriately heroic status in their sexually voracious exploits. In *Pybrac* the springboard for invention is the moralizing *Quatrains* of the sixteenth-century Guy du Faur de Pibrac, Louÿs's target the morality campaigner Senator René Béranger. He produces a series of alexandrine quatrains in the manner of the *Manuel de civilité*, mostly starting: "Je n'aime pas à voir..." ["I do not like to see..."], each conjuring up a vivid scenario of some activity contrary to conventional values of decency in family, religion, or society: the schoolboy masturbating behind his mother, then ejaculating over her dress; a soldier raping a girl of 17, then sodomizing her, being fellated, and having his penis bitten off. Not only does the moralizing voice paradoxically evoke what it condemns; Louÿs ironically adopts a tone of mild disapproval for a series of activities that are outlandishly excessive, apparently implying that something just slightly less excessive would be quite acceptable, again undercutting moral guidelines by tut-tutting at a shepherd who sodomizes a 13-year-old shepherdess, then ejaculates in her mouth, on the grounds that "wisdom in love is content with less." 314 of these quatrains have been published; a manuscript of over 500 more was auctioned in 1936 but has disappeared; two other manuscripts exist in private collections. *Pybrac* is perhaps the most extreme demonstration of the fact that a simple idea can lead Louÿs to seemingly endless multiplication: his erotic work is excessive both in its insistent return to key preoccupations and words, and in the proliferation of variations on a single model.

It is in poetry in particular that formal difficulty can serve as a stimulus: Louÿs's friend Paul Valéry defined the poet as someone to whom the inherent difficulty of his art gives ideas. Over one third of the published erotica is rhymed (poetry or verse playlets). There are several examples of extreme ingenuity in rhyme scheme: an acrostic sonnet on lesbians, a poem using the notes of the tonic sol-fa as rhymes. The many non-parodic poems published fall into two main groups. One is of serious and lyrical poems, such

as *La Femme*, planned in 1890 as a sequence of twelve groups of twelve sonnets, each celebrating in the manner of the sixteenth-century poetic *blason* a part of the woman's body, a type of woman, or an act. They are Parnassian in their choice of a difficult form, and exploit musicality of line and a traditionally poetic language with rare or archaizing vocabulary and with imagery drawn from nature, precious stones, religious worship, or classical mythology. The emphasis is on delicacy, sensuality, and mystery; the poems seek nobility and intensity, while in no way disguising the physical reality of the activities hymned. The second group consists of brief scenes evoked in a few octosyllabic quatrains. Inside this constraining form, with its short lines and rigid rhyme scheme, Louÿs produces witty, neat, or ironic sketches spiced with realistic detail and displaying an excellent ear for popular language, in the manner of *Douze douzains de dialogues*. Here the language is not conventionally poetic but direct, sometimes obscene. A snatch of dialogue suffices to conjure up a scene—between prostitute and customer, bourgeois woman and servant, mother and daughter—light-hearted, outrageously subversive of conventional morality, and with an undercurrent of disrespect for authority and the establishment. Mothers encourage daughters to masturbate; a maid advises her mistress that incest or sex with domestics is better for her son than going out “to catch the pox in town”; schoolgirls are let off their homework as they were prostituting themselves.

Not all the poems fit into these two categories: there are—for instance—some serious poems that represent sexual acts lyrically but with a direct realism and specifically modern accessories, such as sewing machines or bicycles. “Camille,” the verse monologue of a hermaphrodite, first published in 1994, or the novel *L'Île aux dames*, only published in 1988, are, the one in terms of character, the other in setting and form, very different from Louÿs's previously known erotic work in these genres. His unpublished works may reserve surprises: the revised edition of Jean-Paul Goujon's study (2002) signals their diversity, from spoof news items to erotic dialogues in English, and they include several hundred poems. Louÿs operates with a bewildering variety of forms and tones: a realism that can be satirical or crude; utopian fantasy; idealized antiquity; parody; elevated lyricism.

Two things, nevertheless, remain constant. One is the simple hedonistic message whose very straightforwardness lends itself to countless variations. The other is a limited number of recurrent preoccupations that fill the differing alternative sexual worlds that he creates. Much of the work is anchored in the *Belle époque* that he knew, from brothels and street prostitutes to society balls or gentlemen seeking thrills with the lower classes. Louÿs's permissiveness and individualism have affinities with the literary anarchism of contemporaries like Remy de Gourmont: a hatred for the state's restrictive laws, a mockery of bourgeois respectability, of which the church forms part, are coupled with delight in showing the frank enjoyment of all who defy convention. He never depicts dangerous passion, jealous and obsessive, which (in his published works) leads only to humiliation, enslavement, and death. He may depict characters like Mauricette who enjoy pain, or even coprophilia, but shuns violence and cruelty. Guilt is totally absent. The insistent preoccupations are incest and lesbianism, with a marked tendency to involve young girls in these, especially in the formulaic setting of boarding school (a closed feminine world) or among the working class; Louÿs's fantasy presents them consistently as sexually aware, surpassing the adults in their uninhibitedness, and spontaneously enthusiastic for all manifestations of sexuality, confidently usurping the role of the adults. Sodomy, enjoyed by both participants, is obsessively present and is the subject of nearly half his erotic poems, corresponding to a personal interest (Louÿs kept a file, with dated photos, labelled *Enculéés* [*Women sodomized*], covering 1892–1907).

The settings of Louÿs's erotica may seem dated: an idealized antiquity, 1900s Paris, worlds of fantasy that are its double, but it is in some ways modern. The role of formal difficulty and numerical patterns as the trigger anticipates the practices of the OuLiPo writers of the 1960s and later who used formal constraints to prompt literary creation. The exuberant excess of the activities evoked goes hand-in-hand with a verbal excess: Louÿs attacked not just the lack of sexual freedom in his time, but the inability to talk about it, so he repeats forbidden words, rewrites innumerable variations on the same scene in a series of works which remain pre-eminently linguistic exercises. The self-consciousness and playfulness underline the fictive

nature of the text: it is a game, a linguistic construct, in the brief and witty dialogues in prose and verse as much as in the interplay of voices and the ironic teasing of the reader(s) in *Trois Filles de leur mère* or the sequence of *Pybrac*, works both infinitely extensible but equally capable of being abruptly dropped.

### Biography

Pierre-Félix Louis was born 10 December 1870 in Ghent, Belgium. After his mother's death in 1879, his upbringing was largely entrusted to his half-brother Georges Louis, who may have been his father. Educated at private establishments in Paris 1879–1882, then Ecole Alsacienne, Paris 1882–1888, Lycée Janson de Sailly, 1888–1889. Registered Faculté des Lettres and Faculté de Droit, Paris, 1889–1892 but attended little and failed examinations. Military service 1893–1894, discharged for ill health. Dissipated within three years his inheritance on majority (1892), and extravagance left him in frequent financial difficulty even after the success of his novel *Aphrodite* (1896). Ceased to publish new work after 1901 and increasingly withdrew into private writing and scholarship, his health and eyesight progressively declining (cigarettes, drugs). Traveled notably to England, visiting Oscar Wilde (1892, 1893), Bayreuth (1891, 1892), Belgium (introducing Debussy to Maeterlinck, 1893), Spain (1895, 1896, 1900, 1903) and North Africa (Algeria 1894, 1895 with André Gide, 1896–1897, Egypt 1901). Married Louise de Heredia 1899 (divorced 1913), Aline Steenackers 1923 (one son, two daughters); one son by Marie de Régnier. Died of emphysema, Paris, 4 June 1925.

PETER COGMAN

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## LÜ DONGBIN

c. 755–c. 805  
Taoist sexual alchemy

### *True Classic of the Complete Union, by All-assisting Lord Ch’un-yang*

This longish title, *Chunyang yen-cheng fu-yu ti-chün jiji chen-ching*, so translated by Robert van Gulik, is rendered somewhat differently by Douglas Wile: *All-Merciful Lord Chunyang’s True Classic of Perfect Union*. The book exists only in compilations, together with another work of Deng Xixian, *Explanation of the Meaning of the Cultivation of Truth, by the Great Immortal of the Purple-gold Splendour* [*Zijin guangyao daxian xiuzhen yanyi*], under the common title of *Baizhan bi sheng* [*Victory assured in every battle*].

The Chinese text, as copied in van Gulik’s *Erotic Prints* from a late nineteenth-century Japanese print, is said to be identical to a small Chinese block print of the Wan-li era (1573–1620). According to van Gulik: “Whereas the main text shows many archaic features, the commentary bears the hall mark of a late Taoist sexological text, and seems to date from the early Ming period” (15th century). Wile (p. 114) agrees with this theory and classifies both works among handbooks for householders.

The term *yanyi* (amplifying the meaning) was, since the sixteenth-century, a rather common

denomination for popular amplification turning history into romance. Would it be far-fetched to consider the original edition as a late Ming commercial venture caring for a larger public at a time when prohibition of such book was lax? Should it be read as a pleasant pastiche of the battle of love rather than a serious guide to immortality? The following work seems to preclude such a hypothesis.

The main text of the booklet, less than four hundred words, is divided by commentaries in nine sections where the opposition we/ them (the enemy) is to be explained as ego/she. The archaisms, sounding Tang (618–906), are indeed within the reach of any scholar of average competence of that time. The comments, in rather plain language, must not have been out of the reach of an eager though popular readership. Let us submit to the best of our judgment the penultimate paragraph when the description of the final battle turns rather more technical, in the tentative translation below:

While we slow down, they rouse up, and the situation becomes again momentous. While arms clash, we enter and retire again, sucking anew their supplies and seizing their grains. Tortoise, tiger, snake and dragon: retracting, terrifying, swallowing and absorbing. For sure they will throw up their arms. We shall reap winds and rains. That is what completes victory and lengthen peace for a whole generation. The battle

is over and arms at rest. Stretched in the void, we aspire for rest, lying on the back. Returning the booty to our armoury, we climb the highest point.

**Momentous** means the intensity of her excitation. Her arousal being complete, one must again enter, deep or shallow, methodically, and retire again a short while. One should **suck** her tongue and **seize** her breasts. When following the previous procedures, her true essence will be entirely shed while one gathers and absorbs it. After this **completion**, the true Yang is to be obtained. A dozen years form a **generation**. By mastering the true Yang after completion it is possible to lengthen one's life by a generation. **Armoury** means the marrow-sea, the brains. The **highest point** is the *niwan* (top of the brain). After the battle, it's time to dismount and rest, lying on the back. By **stretching** the waist and undulating, we ascend the **highest point** in order to return to our primal stock. Then, protected against any disease, we should obtain long life.

What is this true Yang leading to immortality? The preface of Deng Xixian clarifies somewhat what is at stake: "After completion, *jiji* (translated in the title *Complete Union* by van Gulik, *Perfect Union* by Wile), is the name of a hexagram in the *Yijing* (Confucian Classic of Mutations). The upper trigram is called *kan*, the lower *li*. *Li* is the male, but the void (a broken line) in the middle is the true Yin. That is why male is Yang on the outside, but Yin inside. *Kan* is the

female trigram, full male in the middle. That is why female is Yin on the outside, but male inside. In the intercourse of *kan* with *li* true Yin can be absorbed to reinforce true Yang which becomes pure Yang. That is why "after completion" is part of the title of the following book."

### Biography

Dongbin is the well-known nickname of Lü Yan who may have lived around 755–805.

ANDRÉ LÉVY

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## LÜ TIANCHENG

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c. 1580–c. 1620  
Chinese novelist

### *Xiuta Yeshi* [Unofficial History of the Embroidered Couch]

*Xiuta Yeshi* [The Unofficial History of the Embroidered Couch] is a short novel likely written about 1600, in the flourishing region south of

the Yangzi river in China. This work, like many other works of pornography of its time, has limited literary value, and its fame has been tied to its status as pornography rather than as literature. It did not survive the Qing dynasty (1644–1911) censorship and quickly fell out of wide circulation, while erotic novels of greater literary merit like the *Jin Ping Mei* became increasingly famous and now are counted among



the masterpieces of Chinese literature. *Xiuta Yeshi* was not singled out by the Qing Imperial code but rather was among many works banned and burned by decrees of 1688, 1702, and 1710 prohibiting all fiction with obscene words. It was later singled out by name and banned by the Prefect of Zhejiang in 1844 and the Governor of Jiangsu in 1868. *Xiuta Yeshi*, was never forgotten, though, since it is mentioned twice by name as an example of pornographic literature in the much more famous and well-regarded novel *Rou Pu Tuan* [*The Carnal Prayer Mat*], and referenced by many other works as epitomizing Ming pornographic fiction.

The plot of *Xiuta Yeshi* is simple, and serves primarily as a framework to recount all manner of sexual acts and to describe them in very coarse, direct language. It concerns a candidate of literature named Yao Tongxin, who goes by the name of “Dongmen” who has a beautiful wife and a homosexual lover who is a younger colleague called Zhao Dali. After Dongmen’s wife dies in the first pages of the story, he marries a bawdy young girl named Jin, who at his behest has a liaison with his friend Dali. Dali’s mother is a young widow called Mrs. Ma, who is infatuated with Dongmen. Over the course of the novel, these four people engage each other in sexual combat, in all possible combinations and positions; with the young maids of the Dongmen household occasionally joining in. Jin, Mrs. Ma, and Dali all die untimely deaths, and Dongmen repents and enters a monastery.

One of the few remarkable aspects of this novel lies in its vigorous colloquial style, using specific slang, rather than euphemisms, to describe anatomy and sex acts. The poems at the end of each chapter are the only aspect of the work to receive critical praise, in part because they approximate the poetry in more esteemed works of erotic narrative. Much of the value of *Xiuta Yeshi* lies in its cache as the epitome of popular Ming pornography, its citations by later, better works, and its indebtedness to earlier ones. In particular, it is influenced by *Jin Ping Mei*. The protagonists Dongmen (“Eastern Gate”) and Jin of *Xiuta Yeshi* are obvious references to Ximen (“Western Gate”) and Jinlian, the most notorious characters of *Jin Ping Mei*. There is borrowing of phrases and motifs, for instance the odd situation of a Buddhist monk supplying characters with dangerous sexual aphrodisiacs. As an anthropological text, it is

notable for its representation of a much wider spectrum of sexual activity, fellatio, anal sex, cunnilingus, male and female auto-eroticism, and so forth, than is presented in more literary works. Thus it serves primarily as an important work for the study of literati culture and the history of Chinese literature.

There is evidence that *Xiuta Yeshi* was quite popular during the time of its author. Over the last decades of the Ming Dynasty, it was published in no less than three separate editions. In the waning years of the Ming which fell in 1644, the *Xiuta Yeshi* and similar obscene novels were read all over China, and exerted great influence on erotic paintings and picture albums, which frequently featured their poems. Most erotic pictures in Ming Dynasty sexual manuals are also accompanied by an explanation in verse. Additionally, erotic albums often featured poetry alongside their pictures matching the name of the poem’s metrical pattern or a line of the poem to a subject or sexual position featured in the plate. Many of the poems in *Xiuta Yeshi* and erotic albums are entirely or practically identical, showing a widespread community of producers of erotic literature and painting that were mutually influential.

### Biography

The title page of early editions ascribe the authorship to the “Master of Perverse Desires,” but it now appears that *Xiuta Yeshi* was written by Lü Tiancheng (c. 1580–1620), a native of Zhejiang province, who seems to have spent most of his life in Suzhou and Nanjing. Chiefly known as a poet, he may have also written another erotic novel called *Xianqing Bie Zhuan* [*Unofficial Record of Leisurely Passion*]. It has been postulated by Van Gulik that the poems in *Xiuta Yeshi*, its primary literary achievement, were composed by a number of authors. These were likely members of the author’s literary group who met regularly and wrote poems while drinking and enjoying the company of courtesans. The famous scholar Li Zhi (1527–1602) added a commentary, and Feng Menglong (died 1644) edited the text.

ANDREW SCHONEBAUM

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See also **Jin Ping Mei Hong Lou Meng Zhulin Yeshe**

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## LUNCH, LYDIA

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1959–

American poet, dramatist, and novelist

The artist Lydia Lunch may best be described as a *confrontationalist*. Whether Lunch is using music, film, photography, poetry, prose, or spoken word, she engages her audience with the apathy and oppression of modern industrialized society: “the ills that obsess” her. Her material is, thus, primarily non-fictional. She marks as influences Henry Miller, Hubert Selby Jr., and Jean Genet: artists she sees as having had no fear in revealing “the truth about their lives.”

Many of Lunch’s spoken word pieces focuses on human sexuality. In *Oral Fixation* (released in 1988; included on 1996 reissue *The Uncensored Lydia Lunch/Oral Fixation* and on *Crimes Against Nature*, 1994, reissued 1999), sex is presented as “an animal act” that has been convoluted by emotion. Lunch portrays sexuality as a struggle in which “the human animal” vainly attempts to control sexual instinct “in order to ... fit into the *norm* of society.” With “the banality of” life becoming “too chronic and depressing a constant to bear,” it is only “the threat of constant danger or the imprisonment of incomprehensible pain” that can offer a “suitable distraction” from “dull reality.”

Noted among Lunch’s musical works for displaying a concern with the erotic are 1989’s *Stinkfist* and 1998’s *Matrikamantra*. *Stinkfist* is a percussive sexual mantra depicting the “life cycle as practiced in the ritual of coition.” Lunch collaborated on the album with Jim

“Foetus” Thirlwell (formerly of the Birthday Party and using the alias Clint Ruin). *Matrikamantra* (Mother of all Mantras; Om; the magical sound that brought forth everything in existence) is a double-CD in what Lunch calls the illustrated word style. Lunch’s E.M. Coiran and Baudelaire inspired lyrics are set against the atmospheric musical compositions of Joseph Budenholzer. The album deals with what Lunch calls the “transgenerational orgy” that perpetuates human existence. It opens with the song *Need to Feed*, which includes lines from *Paradoxia: A Predator’s Diary* that discuss the void within the self and a search for meaning beyond the cycle of life and death.

Among her films, *Fingered* (1986) and *Visiting Desire* (1996) are noted for their erotic content. *Fingered* was directed by Richard Kern. Lunch scripted and performed in the 25-minute, black-and-white film focusing on the relation between sex and violence (see Bataille’s *Eroticism*, for relation between sex and violence). In *Visiting Desire*, director Beth B placed her camera before a bed and had twelve people, including Lunch, interact with each other in attempts to satisfy their sexual desires. The results highlighted the connection between sexuality and identity.

In 1982, *Adulterers Anonymous* (a book of poetry) was released. Lunch collaborated with Exene Cervenka, formerly of the Los Angeles punk band X. Many of the poems present the brutal side of the male/female sexual relationship that is the focus of much of Lunch’s work. In 1992, *Incriminating Evidence*, illustrated by

## LUNCH, LYDIA

Kristian Hoffman, was released. The book is a collection of some of Lunch's spoken word pieces (*The Beast* and *Daddy Dearest* are on the CD *Crimes Against Nature*; *The Gun is Loaded* has been released on video), essays, stories, and plays. Lunch thrusts upon the reader a challenge to examine the darker side of human existence. This includes frank and vivid considerations of the sex/violence matrix. In the play, *South of Your Border*, Lunch posits that power and control are central to this matrix. Whether it is Captain Leonardo raping, beating, and cutting a bound Lydia Lunch, or Lunch, as a dominatrix, threatening her bound, hooded client, the roles of victim and victimizer are not absolute: they vary between situations dependant upon who controls the sex/violence matrix.

*Paradoxia: A Predator's Diary* was Lunch's first novel, published in 1997 by Creation Books. The novel is an autobiographical work that chronicles the author's relationships with men. Throughout the book the duplicity of Lunch's character is evident. Her desire to control, abuse, and consume men is matched with her quest for men who are themselves seeking to control, abuse and consume. She is a predator preying on predators.

The novel aptly begins with the first and defining male relationship of her life: her father Lenny. He is portrayed as a small-time hustler and gambler turned door-to-door salesman who thrives on the weak resistance that lonely housewives offer against his sexual advances. Lunch identifies herself as her "father's daughter" in that she has inherited his predatory nature.

Raised under his mental and physical (violent and sexual) abuse, Lunch's psyche is constructed as a copy of the father's, that of the male predator: "So twisted by men, a man, my father that I became like one"(7). She defines males and herself as being ruthless, arrogant, stubborn, distant, and cruel. She admits to adoring these qualities in males but is also cognizant that men despise these same qualities in women. In Lunch's work, the physical male/female binary is maintained while the mental binary is torn asunder. This establishes the role reversal of sexual mentality and ensuing power struggles that underlie Lunch's conflictive relationships with men.

However, there is an affinity between Lunch and her partners: the desire for an excessive behavior that breaks through the boundaries of social constraints. These excesses are manifested

in drug and alcohol indulgence, violence, and sexual practices, usually in combination. Propelled by an insatiable thirst, Lunch travels through locals which include New York, Los Angeles, London, San Francisco, and New Orleans, recounting a journey of one-night stands, orgies, and long-term relationships with a cast of sexual partners that includes women, young-boys, musicians, artists, drifters, and criminals. The constant upon which these myriad encounters are tied is Lunch's attempt to "find someone, anyone, something, anything, that could feed into me what I needed" (Lunch uses these lines in *Need to Feed*). Lunch's epiphany comes with the realization of her "vampirism," her understanding that she was trying to steal from others those aspects of their being which reminded her of herself. Of this struggle through mutilation, physical and mental, self-inflicted and received, and her own penchant for using others, Lunch concludes: "I was looking in vain for myself as I willingly disappeared inside of others"(149).

### Biography

Born Lydia Koch in Rochester, New York 1959. Ran away from home to New York City at the age of 14. In 1976, started New York "No-Wave" band *Teenage Jesus and the Jerks*. Lunch's career picked up momentum in 1979 when the band was featured on the *No New York* album, conceived of and produced by Brian Eno. In 1984, Lunch founded Widowspeak Productions to facilitate the release of her diversifying art and that of other non-mainstream artists. The labels first release was of spoken word material, *The Uncensored Lydia Lunch* (1984). Co-presented with Matthew Yokobosky, curator of the Whitney Museum, *The History of Underground Film*. Taught a visiting artist workshop in the Performance/Video Department of the San Francisco Art Institute. Coeditor of online magazine called *Sex and Guts* where Lunch contributes essays and reviews on myriad topics and products ranging from the political to the erotic.

MICHAEL KEARNEY

### Selected Works

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*Incriminating Evidence*. Illustrated by Kristian Hoffman, 1992.  
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*Crimes Against Nature*. (Audio), 1994.  
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## LUSTFUL TURK, THE

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*The Lustful Turk* was first published in 1828 in London by John Benjamin Brookes and reprinted later in the century by William Dugdale. The anonymous author of *The Lustful Turk* appears to have also written *Scenes of the Seraglio*, a similar work published first in the 1820s by Brookes that was also reprinted by Dugdale.

An epistolary novel largely composed of letters between Emily and her cousin Silvia, the Dey of Algiers and the Bey of Tunis, it also features a description of convent life in Italy and recollections of abductions and seductions that are loosely bound together by the theme of harem life. *The Lustful Turk* sets out many of the fantasies and tensions in nineteenth-century Orientalist literature by focusing on the “Eastern” predilection for Western women and the sexual decadence of the harem. According to Edward Said, such Western beliefs about the Orient emerged from “a battery of desires, repressions, and investments, and projections.” Thus, the novel details a Western libidinal investment in the East, rather than mapping the libido of the East itself. The novel features heterosexual intercourse, deflorative rape as a method of inducing female passion, flagellation, anal intercourse, and anti-clerical allegations. Set against the Greek uprising against the Ottoman Empire,

the story makes use of current anti-Turk accusations laid out in Byron, Gothic motifs, and eighteenth-century libertine works. Thus, the writer demonstrates a familiarity with contemporary literature and with the history of pornography.

The main story of Emily Barlow and her cousin Silvia, begins in 1814 when Emily’s parents send her to the marriage market in India. On her voyage, Emily is abducted by Moorish pirates who send her to the Dey’s harem where he rapes her, thereby awakening her passions. Little distinction is made in the novel between Moors, Algerians, Arabs, and Turks or between seduction and rape. Throughout the story, virginity is an aphrodisiac to men and a impediment for women; the penis becomes a weapon and an instrument of pleasure a “wonderful instrument of nature—this terror of virgins, but delight of women.” (*The Lustful Turk*, 39) As her familiarity with the harem and its inhabitants grows, Emily recounts the histories of its inhabitants which include an Italian, a Greek, and a French woman. The Italian woman, Honoria, married her lover but was afraid to consummate the union. An abduction on the Mediterranean brought Honoria to the Dey’s harem where she was flogged for struggling and then raped, introducing her to sensuality.

## LUSTFUL TURK, THE

Honorina informs Emily of the Dey's penchant for anal sex bringing about a stalemate: Emily struggles to use the Dey's affections for her to guarantee his abstinence, whereas the Dey sees it as one of his natural rights to her body. Emily's searches for an ally in the contest and finds that a Greek girl in the harem also dislikes anal intercourse. This leads to another aside: a failed but heroic attempt of Greek resistance told through the Ozman's machinations to steal the Greek girl's virginity. Oddly enough, while the Turks are vilified for murdering her lover and father, the Dey is absolved of all responsibility because of his skills as a lover. The letters then relate Silvia's abduction by the Dey. Interspersed with these harem stories are letters that detail the Dey's own sexual machinations and desires, and "found" letters from priests who supplied the harem with women from Italian convents.

This novel contrasts the hypocrisy of the Western treatments of sexuality with the sensual transparency and sexual pleasures of harem life. The harem stripped away social proscriptions from Western women and encouraged them to realize their supposedly inborn sexual nature. Western convents and marriages impede female sexual pleasure; the harem, in contrast, creates an ambiance for abandoned sexuality as each girl lets go of false modesty and prudery to find sexual pleasure. At the same time, though, the variety of women confined for a single male's pleasure extols the benefits of unrestrained, rampant masculine privilege. The plethora of women and complete sexual control over them allows for an exploration of man's capacities for sexual freedom, but only at the expense of the women's. Attempts to reconcile despotism with natural sensuality lead to a model in which women desire a loss of freedom when controlled by a good master. "The Dey, indeed had soon discovered my folly [chastity], and like a man of sense, took the proper method to subdue me. In this way, in one short night, you see, he put to rout all my pure virgin scruples, rapturously teaching me the nature of love's sacred mysteries, and the great end for which we poor weak females are created." (*The Lustful Turk*, 62–63)

*The Lustful Turk* illustrates the pleasures of the harem but demonstrates that these pleasures devolve into degeneracy in sexuality as in politics. The Dey is eventually castrated by a harem slave when he "commenced his attack on her second maidenhead." Because he loses all desire as a result of castration, he liberates his harem and the inhabitants return home. Still, the Dey's skills as a lover remain unquestioned: Emily comments that she will never marry until she finds as good a lover as the Dey. The vacillation between admiration for the harem and condemnation for Eastern sexual degeneracy, particularly the Eastern penchant for sodomy, frames the story. *The Lustful Turk* resolves this by showing the Turk to be at once both dominant and subordinate, rampant and castrated.

Although at the time it was published the epistolary novel had gone out of vogue in English literature, *The Lustful Turk* shows its continued efficacy as an erotic medium; the confessional letters create multiple viewpoints allowing for multiple subjectivities and a great deal of indeterminacy. The loose links between letters creates a pastiche-effect rather than a clear narrative structure. The continued representation of women as needing domination, however, creates a model of female sexuality that was outdated, even for nineteenth-century erotic literature, but one that presaged later erotic tales like "The Story of O."

LISA Z. SIGEL

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## MACORLAN, PIERRE

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1882–1970

French novelist, essayist, journalist, poet, and *chansonnier*

Pierre MacOrlan was a major exponent of post-1918 *inquiétude*, the cultural and intellectual disorientation following World War I. Although he only established himself as a novelist with the pirate novel *Le Chant de l'équipage* (1918) and the major body of his work was produced between the two world wars, his extensive career began before World War I and continued until he was in his eighties. He is best known for his 1927 novel *Le Quai des brumes* following its adaptation into a successful film (1938) directed by Marcel Carné and starring Jean Gabin and Michèle Morgan; nonetheless, other novels, such as *L'Ancre de Miséricorde* (1941), also brought him considerable commercial success. MacOrlan was a member of the prestigious Académie Goncourt and received the Légion d'honneur in 1967 (although reservations about his morality due to the pornographic writing he had published under his own family name before World War I delayed this for two years).

MacOrlan's distinctiveness as a writer resides in his invention of what he calls *le fantastique social*, an unhealthy, threatening presence hidden beneath the surface of modern bourgeois urban society, of which modern technology, satanism, violence, and, in particular, morbid sexual violence are key elements. Within this *fantastique social* he constantly uses techniques and subject matter from German Expressionism to depict the disturbing landscape of the modern city, post-1918 inflation and decadence, prostitutes and gangsters, and doomed adventurers. His bleak, negative view of sex is discernible in some of his essays but is most evident in his established, post-1918 fiction—for example, in the satanism of *Le Nègre Léonard et maître Jean Mullin* (1920) and *Picardie* (1943), in the female espionage fiction of *Filles d'amour et ports d'Europe* (1932) and *La Nuit de Zeebrugge* (1934), in the portrayal of murdered prostitutes in *Quartier réservé* (1932) and *Le Tueur no 2* (1935) and in the unconventionally eroticized poverty of the prostitute character Nelly in *Le Quai des brumes* (1927). The title characters of the apocalyptic novels *La Cavalière Elsa*

(1921) and *La Vénus internationale* (1923) share characteristics with his prostitutes and his female spies in that they are all ultimately portrayed as masochists who are the victims of what, for MacOrlan, is sexually stimulating violent death, whether it be as the dismembered prostitutes in *Quartier réservé*, the female spies hanged or shot by firing squad in *Filles d'amour et ports d'Europe*, or the crucified Claude in *La vénus internationale*.

The eroticization of sexual violence with women as victims links the more mainstream post-1918 fiction described above to MacOrlan's earlier pornography. Many critics, and indeed MacOrlan himself, claimed that his pornographic writing was merely a way of relieving hunger in what was a period of unremitting poverty for him, but there is evidence which belies this claim. Although his pornographic output was indeed written mostly before World War I, four pornographic novels were also published after the war when he was established, and while MacOrlan did use a variety of pseudonyms for his pornography, he also used his own family name (Dumarchey, possibly in defiance of the "respectable" uncle who had brought him up), and crucially the sadomasochistic preoccupations of his pornography are central to his post-1918 fiction. The pornography is conventional and functional, with undeveloped characters, in particular the females, and for the most part the effect is relatively tame. *La Semaine secrète de Vénus* (1926) is an example of this "soft-core" pornography. Possibly in line with his post-1918 position as an established writer (although published anonymously), this novel is written in a much more highbrow style than some of the earlier pornography. Comprising seven male "confessions" alongside the depiction of sexual acts, it also contains much philosophical reflection. The confessions are variously situated in an office with a "modern" typist; in the street with a member of *les classes dangereuses*, with *une gigolette*, and with a prostitute who will be murdered; in brothels; and at a devil-worship ceremony. These diverse settings reflect MacOrlan's constant interest in "modernity" and in the pulp-fiction categories of gangsters, prostitutes and satanism. However, MacOrlan also wrote a number of pornographic texts which were more "hard-core," focusing almost exclusively on flagellation, which French courts required to be destroyed—*Les Aventures amoureuses de Mademoiselle de*

*Sommerange* (1910), for example. Some of MacOrlan's pornography has continued to be republished since his death, for example: *La semaine secrète de Vénus*, *Les aventures amoureuses de Mademoiselle de Sommeranges*, and *Petite Dactylo*.

There is no romantic love depicted in MacOrlan's established fiction, and this is not surprising given that his treatment of sex is grounded in his sadomasochistic pornography, with its defining paradigm in Eros and Thanatos, in an obsession with death and particularly the execution of women. In exploiting the pain and suffering of his female characters, MacOrlan draws, again, on the pulp-fiction categories of satanism, espionage, and prostitution and manages to force his readers into the prurient, voyeuristic position of realizing that they are reading pornography, the power of which he has no doubts about. Like the adventure writing he theorizes on in *Le petit manuel du parfait aventurier* (1920), MacOrlan maintains that erotic writing can have considerable power over a reader and that this is dangerous because it unleashes the imagination.

### Biography

Born Péronne, France, February 26. Educated at the Lycée d'Orléans and then the Ecole Normale d'Instituteurs, Rouen (1888–99). Arrived in Paris (Montmartre) in 1899. Spent 1901–5 in Rouen as a copyeditor/proofreader for a publisher before returning to Montmartre. Traveled to London, Le Havre, Knokke, Bruges, and Naples before 1914. Married Marguerite Luc (1913). Invalided out of World War I at Bapaume in 1916. Subsequently traveled to Alsace and the Rhineland, Barcelona, Brest, Tangiers, Tunis, Berlin, and Brighton after the war, often as a journalist. Moved from Paris to Saint-Cyr-sur-Morin in 1927. Elected to the Académie Goncourt (1950). Awarded Légion d'honneur (1967). Died June 27.

ROGER W. BAINES

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## MADNESS

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The definition of madness has not remained stable and probably never will, for defining madness is primarily a social act, the concept of madness itself a cultural construct. There is no such thing as a transhistorical or universal definition of madness. The term is simply a generic one used to label a wide array of ideas and/or behaviors thought to be abnormal. Because our beliefs and practices change over the centuries and differ across cultures, so too does our perception of what is rational or irrational, what is sane or insane. Beliefs that would have seemed perfectly reasonable to a person living during the Middle Ages might seem rather mad to those of us living in the twenty-first century. In the medieval realm of medicine, for example, it was considered important to keep women under control or subordinate, for medical authorities believed that if a man allowed his wife to move toward

any degree of equality, she would be liable to somatic change and apt to challenge him for control. This idea may have gained support from the writings of the tenth-century philosopher and physician Avicenna, who asserted that if a hen fought with and conquered a rooster, she would grow spurs.

Like beliefs, practices that might seem mad to us today were considered perfectly acceptable or even desirable in the past. In 920 CE, during the reign of the Southern Tang dynasty, the ancient Chinese practice of foot binding became popular and remained so until it was formally outlawed in 1911. Despite the fact that the binding of a five-year-old girl’s foot resulted in the breaking of bones, the malformation and malodor of the foot, an inability to walk without aid, and in some cases ulceration, paralysis, and gangrene, the practice was considered highly fashionable;



## MADNESS

and on an adult woman, the tiny three-inch foot, referred to as the “golden lotus,” was considered erotic. Crippling the body for the sake of eroticism was not limited to the East, however. In the 1800s and early 1900s, women in many Western countries wore corsets laced so tightly that a 26-inch waist became a 17-inch waist. And while a corset may have given a woman the S-curve silhouette considered desirable at the time, it also, if laced too tightly, created lower back pain, breathing difficulties, and knee problems. With the rise of the twentieth century’s “let it all hang out” attitude, the corset ceased to play a central role in everyday fashion, becoming instead a popular fetish item, the costume of the dominatrix; and for those living in the first decade of the twenty-first century who wish to take their fetishism to what might be called its dramatic and artistic height, it is possible to get a corset piercing: two vertical columns of back surface piercings that mimic corset eyelets through which ribbon can be threaded. Although an erotic attachment to a handkerchief seemed aberrant enough to be labeled a paraphilia in nineteenth-century Vienna, today this fetish would seem quaint indeed, for now there are acrotomophiliacs, or amputee devotees (nicely exemplified by Flannery O’Connor’s Manly Pointer, a young Bible salesman who is attracted to a woman because of her wooden leg), and apotemnophiliacs, or amputee wannabes, who wish to have a limb removed in order to feel whole. Clinicians refer to this condition as “body integrity identity disorder.” The slide from fashion to fetish is a short one, and although perversion was not assigned its sexual sense by the Oxford English Dictionary until the publication of its 1933 supplement, it has always been easy to draw a vector from the sexual to the perverse to the insane.

Perhaps the most vivid example of this vector, capable of showing in narrative form the vicissitudes of madness, is hysteria, which has a long and venerable history. For centuries, the symptoms of hysteria have been associated with “deviant” sexual conduct and conditions such as masturbation, stimulation by pornography, irregular menstruation, and childlessness. And thus, since the time of Plato, the cure for hysterical abnormality has been the “normality” of marriage and pregnancy. We may be accustomed to thinking of hysteria as a Victorian

ailment, but it has been around for centuries, the oldest known record being an Egyptian medical papyrus dating from about 1900 BCE. The Egyptians believed the cause of hysteria to be the dislocation of the uterus, which they conceived of as a mobile organism, capable of shifting up and away from its normal position. Given this explanation for the cause of hysterical disturbances, the cures the Egyptians came up with seem perfectly logical if rather humorous. In order to get the uterus to return to its proper place, one of two approaches could be taken: a woman’s genitals could be treated with fragrant substances to attract the uterus from below, or a woman could be given unpleasant-tasting potions to swallow in order to force the uterus back into place from above. In medieval times, hysteria was no longer thought of as an illness but as a form of witchcraft or demonic possession. By the eighteenth century, the explanation for hysteria had become attached to the notion of “sympathies” and the nervous system. Because women were supposed to have a more highly impressionable sensibility than men, they were more frequently attacked by the illness. It is not surprising that in the early nineteenth century, moral and ethical components had been added to hysteria’s etiology. By the late nineteenth century, Freud was connecting the medieval theory of possession to his own theories of the foreign body and the splitting of consciousness. And by 1897, his analyses of hysterical patients had convinced him that the “medieval demons” that possessed them were actually close male relatives such as fathers, uncles, brothers, and cousins. If what typically comes to mind when one thinks of the hysteric is something akin to the creature that New York physician E.H. Dixon wrote of in the 1840s:

[a] “patient writhing like a serpent upon the floor, rending her garments to tatters, plucking out handfuls of hair, and striking her person with violence—with contorted and swollen countenance and fixed eyes resisting every effort of bystanders to control her

it’s no surprise that this is how the hysteric is represented in a literary text such as *Jane Eyre*, which features Bertha Mason, the quintessential madwoman in the attic whose intemperate and unchaste behavior was said to have prematurely developed the germs of insanity.

BECKY McLAUGHLIN

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MAHABHARATA

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Kama as a deified abstraction appears from time to time in the *Mahabharata*, usually accompanied by his twin vice, Krodha (Anger), less often by his wife Rati (Sexual Pleasure). And the *Mahabharata* on occasion refers to, but does not tell, the story of Kama's conquest by Shiva. But *kama* as a force in human life dominates the text, determining major moves in the plots.

The basic problem posed by *kama* in this text is that in generation after generation, kings keep falling in love with the wrong women, thus putting the royal line of success in jeopardy and leading to violent, deadly conflicts. It begins with the inappropriate lust (*kama*) of the great-grandfather of the heroes, King Shantanu, who, first of all, falls in love with an incarnate river goddess (the Ganges). She makes him promise to destroy all of their children at birth, until at last the eighth, Bhishma, survives to be the legitimate

son (though the Ganges departs, abandoning him) [1.94]. Shantanu then falls in love with a lower-class woman, Satyavati, a fisherman's daughter and already a woman with a past: she has already given birth to the sage Vyasa after a one-night stand with a sage [1.99]. Satyavati makes Shantanu promise that her son(s) will rule, passing over Bhishma, whom she forces to swear a vow of eternal chastity, and Shantanu, overpowered by *kama*, rashly agrees to this. When Shantanu dies, and his sons by Satyavati die, Bhishma is unable to assume the throne; Vyasa therefore begets sons by Shantanu's widows, but these sons are flawed: Pandu is "pale" (which seems to amount to being functionally impotent) and Dhritarashtra is blind [1.100]. (A parallel quandary appears in the *Ramayana* when Dasharatha falls in love with a woman who demands that her son, rather than Rama, the legitimate heir, assume the throne.)

Pandu becomes king but is again undone by *kama*. He kills a sage who took the form of a stag to mate with a doe. The dying stag/sage curses Pandu for killing him at such a special moment, when the sage was deluded by *kama*. He therefore curses Pandu to be similarly “deluded by *kama*” and to die at that moment, lying with the woman he loves. And this does happen. Elsewhere in the *Mahabharata* [1.173], another king who has been cursed to become a man-eating demon devours a sage who was making love to his wife (still in human form), and the wife, furious because she had not “finished,” curses the king to die if he embraces his own wife. (Again there is a parallel text in the *Ramayana*, though it is composite: Rama’s father, king Dasharatha, mistakes a boy for an elephant, kills the boy, and is cursed to lose his own son [2.57–8]; and the author himself, the poet Valmiki, saw a hunter kill the male of a pair of mating cranes, and when the hen grieved, Valmiki cried out, “Hunter, since you killed one of these birds at the height of its passion, you will not live very long” [1.1–2].)

Death and sex are thus closely intertwined in the foundational plot, as they are in countless subplots. The *Kamasutra* (composed in the 3rd century CE, the end of the period of the recension of the *Mahabharata*) warns against the dangers of desire and cites an episode from the *Mahabharata*: “Kichaka with Draupadi ... and many others afterward were seen to fall into the thrall of desire and were destroyed” [1.2.34–36]. Yashodhara, the 13th-century commentator on the *Kamasutra*, tells only part of the story: “Kichaka is said to have been super-powerful because he had the strength of a thousand elephants; but even he was destroyed by desire, for Bhima killed him when he lusted after Draupadi.” “Killed him” is putting it mildly: Kichaka demands that Draupadi come to his bed; Bhima, one of Draupadi’s five husbands (about whom more later), dressed as a woman, takes Draupadi’s place and beats Kichaka to such a pulp that when people find his mangled corpse the next morning they say, “Where is his head?” “Which are his hands?” [4.21.1–67]—yet another example of deadly sex in disguise.

Yashodhara mentions Draupadi again, a bit later, when the *Kamasutra* quotes another scholar who said that any married woman who is known to have had five men can be seduced without moral qualms [1.5.30], and the

commentator adds: “If, besides her own husband, [a woman] has five men as husbands, she is a loose woman and eligible for everyone who has a good reason. Draupadi, however, who had Yudhishthira and the others as her own husbands, was not eligible for other men. How could one woman have several husbands? Ask the authors of the Epic!” Draupadi, the heroine of the *Mahabharata*, indeed has five husbands, the five sons of Pandu (including Bhima and Yudhishthira), under circumstances extenuated in various ways by various texts (both in the original Sanskrit version and in various retellings in Sanskrit and in vernacular languages) but never sufficiently to protect her from frequent slurs against her chastity. So the tradition looks upon them, too, the sons of Pandu, as having made a problematic sexual choice, not with regard to the particular woman but with regard to the practice of polyandry.

The sage Shvetaketu, cited often in the *Kamasutra* as a sexual authority, also has a sexual history, as Yashodhara reminds us:

Once upon a time, there was so much seduction of other men’s wives in the world that it was said:  
 Women are all alike,  
 just like cooked rice, your majesty.  
 Therefore a man should not get angry with them  
 nor fall in love with them, but just make love with them.  
 But [Shvetaketu] forbade this state of affairs, and so people said:  
 “[Shvetaketu] forbade common people  
 to take other peoples’ wives.”  
 Then, with his father’s permission,  
 Shvetaketu, who had amassed great ascetic power,  
 happily composed this text, which distinguishes  
 those who are eligible or ineligible for sex.

This is told at greater length in the *Mahabharata* [1.113.9–20]:

The great sage named Uddalaka had a son, named Shvetaketu, who became a hermit. Once, right before the eyes of Shvetaketu and his father, a Brahmin grasped his mother by the hand and said, “Let’s go!” The sage’s son became enraged and could not bear to see his mother being taken away by force like that. But when his father saw that Shvetaketu was angry he said, “Do not be angry, my little son. This is the eternal dharma. The women of all classes on earth are not fenced in; all creatures behave just like cows, my little son, each in its own class.” The sage’s son could not tolerate that dharma, and made this moral boundary for men and women on earth,

for humans, but not for other creatures. And from then on this moral boundary has stood: A woman who is unfaithful to her husband commits a mortal sin that brings great misery, an evil equal to killing an embryo, and a man who seduces another man's wife, when she is a woman who keeps her vow to her husband and is thus a virgin obeying a vow of chastity, that man too commits a mortal sin on earth.

The Epic keeps insisting that this is all hearsay, as if to make us doubt it; the primal scene that it imagines is a vivid, quasi-Freudian narrative, explaining a kind of sexual revulsion. A Brahmin's right to demand the sexual services of any woman he fancies evokes violent protest in ancient Indian texts; a notorious example in the *Mahabharata* is the story of Yavakri, who tried to exert this right on the wife of another Brahmin and died [3.137.1–20].

This basically negative attitude to *kama* is only slightly balanced by stories in which good women love good men and save them (as Savitri saves her husband, Satyavan, when the god of death comes to take him way), or at least wait faithfully for them (as Damayanti waits for Nala) or, finally, follow them through thick and thin, as Draupadi follows her husbands into exile. But the *Mahabharata* is, after all, a tragic text, and in it love, certainly sexual love, is more tragic than romantic.

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## MANGA

### Japanese comic books

Manga are a multimillion-dollar industry and are published in a number of genres and styles on a variety of topics. During the peak period of the manga boom in the early 1990s, manga were estimated to comprise 40 percent of all print publications in Japan, and *Shōnen Jump*, the most popular among boys' manga, routinely sold over five million copies a month. However, manga are not simply for children but have a wide readership among adults as well. *Eromanga*, or

so-called erotic manga, are very popular, and many titles exist, aimed at both men and women.

The term *manga* originally meant “random sketches,” and antecedents of the genre can be found as far back as the seventh century. However, the origins of modern manga, which are an amalgam of illustrations and text, can be traced to illustrated tales popular during the Edo period (1603–1868). This was a time of increasing urbanization, when literacy was spreading throughout the newly emergent middle classes. The development of woodblock printing technology ensured

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that books, or at least unbound printed sheets, were available at a sufficiently low price to appeal to a broad audience. *Yomihon*, or “reading books,” that employed simplified scripts as well as elaborate illustrations were printed on a variety of topics, of which one of the most popular proved to be *ukiyo-zōshi*, or “floating-world story books.” These contained tales about the courtesans of Japan’s brothel districts (euphemistically known as the “floating world”). Most of these tales are fairly innocent in nature, but a pornographic genre known as *shunga*, or “spring pictures,” developed that explicitly focused on scenes of sexual intercourse involving a wide range of partners in a variety of poses, including autoerotic and homosexual scenes. Trouble with the censors meant that this kind of reading matter was frequently banned, and it remained impossible to reproduce these illustrations uncensored in books or museums in Japan until as recently as the early 1990s.

The depiction of sex in modern erotic manga is constrained by Article 175 of the Japanese penal code, which prohibits the sale of “indecent” material to minors. In actual practice, definitions of indecency where pictures are concerned tend to focus exclusively on depictions of pubic hair and sexual organs. So long as these are not included in the picture, material of an erotic nature is permitted, even in comics aimed at a young audience.

Since the 1980s, the most widespread form of erotic comic aimed at men has been “Lolita complex” stories referred to in Japanese as *rorikon*. It is commonly observed that *seinenshi* (magazines for youths) and *seijinshi* (magazines for adults) often contain at least one *rorikon* story, in which a young girl is featured as a sexual object. However, the very stylized manner in which these girls are drawn, with long legs, blond hair, and big, saucer-like eyes, works against a literalistic reading of these images: they are not meant to depict “real” girls. Since Article 175 is interpreted as prohibiting only realistic depictions of sex, *rorikon* manga can contain a range of paraphilic activities, most commonly sadomasochistic scenarios in which the girls are groped by phallic stand-ins such as alien feelers, tentacles, or machine parts. Extreme versions compose a distinct subgenre known as *hentai* (or “perverted”) manga, which are not generally available from kiosks and high-end bookstores.

“Ladies’ comics” (*redikomi*) cover the same kind of themes as do comics for men. At their peak in the mid-1990s there were over fifty women’s titles published monthly with a combined annual circulation of 120 million. Many of these manga contain at least one erotic story, and some titles, such as *Comic Amour*, the most popular women’s *eromanga*, focus exclusively on erotic stories, many of them written and illustrated by women artists like Milk Morizono. The sex depicted is not necessarily softer or more romantic than that featured in men’s manga but frequently explores fantasies of rape, anal penetration, pedophilia, bondage, and sex with transvestites, transsexuals, threesomes, foursomes, and in orgies.

One of the most interesting aspects of Japanese comics is the fascination for depicting male homosexual liaisons in *shōjo* manga, or girls’ comics. Stories about boys in love with boys date back to the early 1970s, when a newly emergent group of women artists dispensed with the tired boy-meets-girl theme that had previously characterized the genre. Instead, artists such as Moto Hagio and Keiko Takemiya began to depict *bishōnen*, or “beautiful boys” who were in love with each other. Classics of this genre, when collected in book form, can run into several volumes and include Hagio’s *Tōma no shinjō* [*The Heart of Thomas*] (1974), which is the tragic tale of a menage à trois that takes place in a German public school at the turn of the twentieth century. The first same-sex bed scene featuring beautiful boys was drawn by Takemiya in her *Ki to kaze no uta* [*The Song of the Wind and the Trees*] (1976). By the end of the decade, stories about the homosexual liaisons of beautiful boys had become as common in girls’ manga as *rorikon* stories were to become in men’s. In 1978, *June* became the first monthly manga to specialize exclusively in boy-love stories, selling, at its peak, 150,000 copies a month.

Interest in boy-love stories has been stimulated in Japan due to the existence of a vibrant amateur manga movement comprising mainly young women artists and writers who create and distribute their own comic books at *komi-etto* (comic markets) and, increasingly, on the Internet. This amateur genre is known as YAOI, an acronym of the Japanese phrase Y*A*manashi, Ochi nashi, Imi nashi, which means “no climax, no point, no meaning” and refers to the somewhat slender plots that the authors create

as a pretext to get their male heroes in bed together. It has many similarities to the “PWP” (Plot? What plot?) genre of slash fiction, popular among Western women, which takes the male leads of popular TV dramas and imagines them in sexual interaction with each other.

New media such as the Internet, computer games, and mobile phones (which in Japan are used to surf the Net) have cut into manga sales in recent years, but there is no sign that erotic manga are about to disappear. Indeed, the development of the Internet has increased the number of amateurs who create their own stories and illustrations and has given wider distribution to extreme *hentai* stories that could not be published in print form because of censorship.

MARK McLELLAND

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## MANN, THOMAS

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1875–1955

German novelist

Thomas Mann’s homoerotic writings are remarkable for their simple, honest, and open presentation of raw emotion and genuine passion. These writings also tend to be among Mann’s most accessible and personal, reflecting his own nascent and lasting yearnings and appreciation of male beauty. In spite of Mann’s apparently stable marriage of 50 years, most biographers acknowledge his bisexual, if not primarily homosexual, orientation, and critics readily interpret his characters as the embodiment of Mann’s own sexual frustration. Two works of particularly homoerotic merit balance each other in this theme and context, providing the reader with male heroes, one an awkward adolescent, the other a mature, solitary man, transformed by their devotion to beautiful male figures: *Tonio*

*Kröger*, 1903, and *Death in Venice* [*Tod in Venedig*], 1912.

The eponymous hero of *Tonio Kröger* is, like Mann himself, a physically dark figure who wants to become an artist. He is slight and gangly, and he believes that his hair, eyes, and skin reflect his racially mixed background. Although *Tonio*’s central struggle lies in his coming to terms with his mixed heritage, he also struggles briefly with his initial homosexual feelings. His first true love is the remarkable Hans Hansen, the epitome of an idealized Germanic male: extraordinarily handsome, blond, blue-eyed, well-built, and athletic. He is also, at least to the adolescent *Tonio*, popular, intelligent, and kind. A simple walk together fills *Tonio* with palpable joy, and the narrator declares *Tonio*’s intense love for Hans, while noting that it is sexually and emotionally unrequited. *Tonio* himself believes that his passion is founded in the purity

and harmony with which Hans appears to interact with the world, and the world with him. He loves Hans for what he is not and for that which he cannot become. Likewise, he knows that Hans cannot reciprocate the same desires for someone so seemingly foreign and out-of-place; tellingly, Hans will call him by only his German surname, Kröger, because he is repulsed by Tonio's given, foreign name.

Mann allows Tonio to experience this intense crush as little more than a brief phase, quickly introducing Ingeborg Holm, a blond, blue-eyed female counterpart to Hans. Tonio's passion for Ingeborg seems no less intense, but she, like Hans, remains an unattainable image rather than a clearly defined character. Tonio leaves town to become an artist and returns several years later. The objects of his earlier desire have become nearly indistinguishable, and it is no surprise—for neither the reader nor Tonio—to learn that they are a couple by the conclusion of the work. Tonio writes to a friend that he feels stranded between the worlds of the bourgeois (represented by his father) and the artist (his mother), and he is not fully at home in either realm. He declares that his deepest and most secret love will forever be reserved not for Ingeborg, nor for Hans, but for what they represent: the blond, the blue-eyed, the happy, and the commonplace.

*Death in Venice* could well be considered an ersatz sequel to *Tonio Kröger*, as Mann introduces Gustave von Aschenbach, a sickly but respected novelist in his fifties who finds his passions restored by a beautiful youth. Like Tonio, he is also physically dark and slight, and he too is drawn to his opposite. Walking past a cemetery one day, Aschenbach finds himself struck by an adolescent male with reddish hair and milky skin. He watches him for a brief while and then realizes that the young man is staring back with an unpleasant grimace. Aschenbach breaks his stare and immediately feels renewed vigor, deciding to travel at that instant. He chooses Venice as his destination (where Mann actually began writing this piece), and once there, he encounters what he terms the pure visage of Eros: Tadzio, a young Polish man of perfect, godlike beauty. Aschenbach marvels at his ivory skin and blond, curly hair, and he spends the remainder of his stay obsessively watching and following Tadzio. Slowly, he comes to believe that Tadzio is cognizant of his

desires and that the two take pleasure in brief exchanged glances. Aschenbach contends that human beings naturally feel respect and love for one another as long as they do not come to know each other so well that they can judge the other's motives. To that end, he appears content to watch Tadzio from afar, even as he takes great pains to improve his own appearance by dying his hair, choosing his ties carefully, and applying cologne. The work's most passionate scene alludes to and transforms Aschenbach's first encounter with the grimacing adolescent at the cemetery. One evening he unexpectedly happens upon his dear Tadzio (Eros) and believes that the young man has smiled directly at him, a smile that is so unexpected and enthralling, he becomes flush with emotion and must run away. He collapses from desire on a bench, sighing for the first time the words, "I love you."

The work ends quietly, as Aschenbach watches Tadzio swimming alone at dawn. He enters a dreamlike state and envisions Tadzio beckoning him to come forward; he collapses silently in his chair and passes away that evening. It remains unclear whether Tadzio was ever truly aware of Aschenbach. What is clear, however, is that Mann affords Aschenbach a deep, fully realized respect for his homoerotic feelings that he could not allow Tonio earlier and, perhaps, himself.

### Biography

Born in Lübeck, June 6. Attended elementary school (*Volksschule*) and high school (*Gymnasium*) in Lübeck; graduated from the *Gymnasium* with low grades and ceased formal education, 1894. Married Katja Pringsheim, 1905; three daughters and three sons. Visited Venice, 1911. Supported the German war effort, 1914; life spared by German Soviet ruler Ernst Toller at conclusion of World War I, 1919. Awarded Nobel Prize for Literature, 1929. Journeyed to Switzerland, 1933. Moved to Vienna, 1935. Lost German citizenship and became Czech citizen, 1936. Lectured at Princeton, 1939. Moved with family to California, 1941; became American citizen, 1944. Son Klaus committed suicide, 1949. Lectured in both East and West Germany, 1949. Returned to Switzerland, 1952. Died of arteriosclerosis in Kilchberg, Switzerland, August 12.

WALTER RANKIN

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## MANNOURY D'ECTOT, MARQUISE DE

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Nineteenth-century French novelist

**Works**

There is no longer any debate among scholars about Mannoury d'Ectot's authorship of *Les Cousines de la colonelle* [*The Cousins of the Colonel's Wife*] and *Le Roman de Violette* [*The Novel of Violette*]. The circumstances of publication suggest that she may also be the author of *Mémoires secrets d'un tailleur pour dames* [*Secret Memoirs of a Ladies' Dressmaker*]. All three works appear to have been published in Belgium during the period 1880–85. Her works, like those of other women authors of erotic novels, were frequently attributed by rumor to well-known men, including Théophile Gautier, the elder Dumas, and Maupassant.

*Les Cousines de la colonelle* (ca. 1880) tells of the sexual development of two sisters who follow divergent paths. One, by accepting a proposal of marriage from a much older man, enters into a situation that occurs regularly in French novels of the late nineteenth century: the wife is young and innocent, while the husband, already worn out by pleasure, is of precarious virility. But the emphasis in Mannoury d'Ectot's novel is not on

dark secrets of debauchery hidden in the man's past. The novel does not indulge at length in the prurient mixture of psychosexuality and moral indignation that is the standard fare of the time. Rather, the emphasis is on the quality of the young woman's pleasure and the expedients which allow her a degree of satisfaction in conjugal sex. Her sister follows a more adventurous path, agreeing to live with her lover, a Polish count, until such time as he can be free of a promise made to an aging aunt. The social risks taken in this case are great, but they are managed with a degree of support from her sister and from her guardian. The novel's tone is never outrageous, as these young women find their pleasure in realistic, pragmatic ways.

*Le Roman de Violette* (1883) is an interesting thematic hybrid. It has many elements in common with those classical stories of erotic training that abounded in Italian and French in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: a girl is initiated into erotic womanhood by being taught the art of pleasure. Before 1700, the teacher was usually a woman, but male characters often played the role in later texts. *Le Roman de Violette* recycles and renovates this basic story by having a young woman, Violette, come under



## MANSOUR, JOYCE

the protection of a man, the narrator-hero, who takes it as his delightful obligation to provide the erotic training. He has a rival for the role, the beautiful lesbian Odette. Odette herself is well aware of the traditional role assigned to women as practical educators in amorous positions and techniques. She sees it as a lesbian prerogative, if only to prepare the way for later heterosexual lovemaking. But her efforts to reestablish the classical role are not so much thwarted as carefully managed, since the hero, Christian, is always one step ahead of her. After deflowering Violette himself, he arranges to hide in order to observe the two women, then intervenes in order to bring Odette to climactic pleasure by stealth. This is in itself a sign of Christian's great skill and sensitivity, since Odette, now widowed, was married in her youth to a much older man who treated her brutally and has become a confirmed man-hater. Christian has one very general advantage as a teacher: he is a professor of medicine. Having medical knowledge about sexuality was not a part of classical initiation stories, but sexual pathology was a prominent concern in France in the last decades of the nineteenth century. *Le Roman de Violette* thus brings together two kinds of teaching: practical instruction in lovemaking, and theoretical lectures about the supposed norms of human sexuality combined with the requirements of sexual hygiene.

*Mémoires secrets d'un tailleur pour dames* has little in common with these two novels. It is a collection of worldly vignettes with no strong thematic coherence, and indeed some contradictions in narrative point of view. The tone is decidedly more frivolous and more smug than in the

two novels. There are allusions in sophisticated language to farcical and obscene events. The stories are often male centered, and there must be considerable doubt, on internal evidence, about the text's authorship.

### Biography

Relatively little is known about the life of the Marquise de Mannoury. She appears to have been the granddaughter of a French inventor, Nicolas Le Blanc, whose work went unrewarded by Napoleon III's regime. She married a man much older than she, the Marquis d'Ectot, and was left a widow at a relatively early age. There is no evidence that she regarded her widowed state as an affliction, entertaining artists such as Verlaine and Maupassant at her country estate or at her salon in Paris. She may, however, have fallen victim to men who profited unduly by her generosity, and was reduced in the 1870s to running a matrimonial agency. It is likely that her publication of erotic novels was motivated in part by financial need.

PETER CRYLE

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## MANSOUR, JOYCE

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1928–1986

French Surrealist writer and poet

Joyce Mansour, widely accepted as the most prominent French woman Surrealist writer, created a magnificent opus of passionate, aggressive,

and highly erotic works that questioned bourgeois principles and the patriarchal order through her disruption of preexisting concepts, values, and rules of language. She claimed that writing "came" to her—it was not thought out or developed in any conscious way, but was a

natural and inevitable process. Her poetry does not conform to traditional or standardized rules of meter, rhyme, or versification, but instead follows natural impulses.

Greatly influenced by the Marquis de Sade, Mansour's work consequently draws on the ideas of one of history's most notorious erotic writers. Erotic expression was a feature of Surrealist writing in general, but the singular blend of eroticism and humor in Mansour's work is particularly reminiscent of de Sade. Mansour's work displays other qualities typical of Surrealist writing, including a criticism of organized religion, a subversive attack on the patriarchal order and bourgeois values, the devaluation of reason and logic vis-à-vis the valuation of all things wild and natural, and the Surrealist preoccupation with the *femme-enfant* (woman-child). Although not affiliated to the French women's movement, Mansour's work is nonetheless also consistent with many facets of French feminism: the abjection of the female body apparent in her work is comparable to that theorized by Julia Kristeva in 1980, and the way in which she uses irony to comment on the physical and emotional oppression and repression of women is similar to that of many French women writers in the late twentieth century: "La rage la souffrance la jouissance et le crime / Tous enterrés sous le masque de la sérénité féminine" [Madness suffering pleasure crime / All buried beneath the mask of women's serenity] (*Faire signe au machiniste*). Also in accordance with feminist ideals is Mansour's utopian vision of a world in which women would be emancipated. This runs parallel to her argument for the emancipation of the working class and of Nature, suggesting that all these liberations are connected.

Hailed by André Breton as "l'enfant du Conte Oriental" (the child of the Eastern story), Mansour's work is heavily imbued with a sense of her Egyptian origins. Critics have seen in her work references to Hathor, the Egyptian goddess of love, as Mansour rejects the Westernized representation of a male deity who, from a feminist/feminine perspective, perpetuates guilt and division: "Oublie-moi mon Dieu / Que je me souviennne" [Forget me my Lord / That I may remember myself] (*Cris*). Instead, Mansour celebrates a female genealogy with origins outside of Western culture. Her Egyptian heritage, upbringing in England, and position in the

French literary canon lends a unique multicultural aspect to her œuvre that enhances its sense of universality. The themes and ideas in her work are consistent, and certain terms are repeated and echoed throughout (death, silence, tomb, penis, vagina, anus, urine, fecal, excrement). These are indicative of the common themes in Mansour's work (sex, death, abjection) and reinforce the sense that all of her texts combine to form an opus greater than any individual piece. An overall simplicity and the consistency of themes and ideas render her writing accessible, while the Surrealist preoccupations evident in her work still challenge her readers to question existing perceptions of reality: "L'œil doux de la cuisinière / Cuit dans une soupe épaisse" [The sweet eye of the cook / Simmers in a thick broth] (*Déchirures*).

Mansour's work is aggressively erotic, full of black humor and caustic irony. She uses violent and often vampiric sexual imagery and writes with an unsettling frankness of sex, body parts, illness, and death. The linking of sex and death is an important leitmotif of her work, indicating the importance of the "id" (*Ça*), the deepest level of the unconscious, dominated by Eros and Thanatos: "Malgré moi ma charogne fantasme avec ton vieux sexe débusqué / Qui dort" [In spite of myself, my corpse fantasizes about your old sleeping flushed out / penis] ("Rhabdomancies" in *Rapaces*). Many of her references to corporeality depict the body as either dismembered or orgasmic, demonstrating both the oppression of the female body and its ultimate potential for redemption through *jouissance*.

Mansour plays with language, engaging in a "fiery deconstruction" (Bishop, xvi) of words and meanings to subvert traditional rules of grammar and the patriarchal/colonial order they represent. Her verse has been described by David Kelley and Jean Khalfa as "a feminine version of André Breton's (largely masculine) appeal for sexual liberation," and Bishop sees in her writing a "virile liberty," evident in the way in which Mansour challenges preconceptions about women's place and role: "Les vices des hommes / sont mon domaine / Leurs plaies mes doux gâteaux / J'aime mâcher leurs viles pensées / Car leur laideur fait ma beauté" [The vices of men / are my estate / Their wounds my sweet cakes / I like to chew on their vile thoughts / For from their ugliness comes my beauty] (*Cris*). Thus, Mansour's writing can be not

only viewed in the context of Surrealism, but also theorized in terms of *écriture féministe/féminine*: like many other French women writers in the latter half of the twentieth century, she uses a “masculine” language and “masculine” devices to subvert the old order from a position of submission. However, as Hubert Nyssen suggests, it is too simplistic to “reduce Joyce Mansour to an erotic and rebellious Surrealist oracle” (“réduire Joyce Mansour à une espèce d’égérie du surréalisme, érotomane et révoltée”), as there is more to her work than a homogeneous “surrealist” or “feminist” label might suggest. For example, her outrageous metaphors are juxtaposed with a relentless lucidity: “Ne mangez pas les fleurs rouges de l’été / Car leur sève est le sang des enfants crucifiés” [Do not eat the red flowers of summer / For their sap is the blood of crucified children] (*Cris*), and her social consciousness is blended with a wicked sense of humor: “Vous qui voulez maigrir rappelez-vous que: *femme qui roule n’amasse pas mousse*” [Women who want to lose weight, remember: *a rolling woman gathers no moss*] (“Rubrique lubrique”).

Mansour is an important erotic writer because of her unfettered and uncensored depiction of the human body, in its abject state as well as in its glory. The claim that Mansour is one of the few genuine expressions of the Surrealist voice situates her work within a theoretical framework as well as a philosophical context: she “writes the body” both consciously and unconsciously, opening up the female form to new possibilities through language and reasserting the feminine by using an eroticized, aggressive writing style more traditionally associated with the “masculine.” Mansour’s individual and provocative work assures her place not only within the Surrealist movement, but also within the French literary canon.

### Biography

Born Joyce Patricia Adès in Bowden, England, into a Jewish-Egyptian family. Educated in England, Switzerland, and Egypt. Spent most of her early life in Cairo, where she first became interested in the Surrealist movement. Moved to Paris in 1953, and published there her first collection of poetry (*Cris*, 1953). This attracted the attention of the Surrealists, notably André Breton, and she joined the Surrealist group in

Paris in 1954, one of the few women accepted into the Surrealist movement. She is considered one of the most authentic expressions of the Surrealist voice. Greatly influenced by Breton, she later dedicated four of her works to him. After the disintegration of the Paris Surrealist group in 1969, she was one of a majority of adherents who regrouped around the *Bulletin de liaison surréaliste*. Wrote mainly poetry (16 collections), although her bibliography also includes four works of prose, one play, and several journal articles, as well as three poems published posthumously. Wrote primarily in French, but interspersed this with occasional poems or stanzas of poems in English. Many of her literary works were illustrated by prominent Surrealist artists, and several have appeared in English translation. Wrote typically Surrealist “automatic” writings, as well as more controlled works. Died in Paris of breast cancer.

HELEN VASSALLO

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## MAO XIANG

Chinese poet  
1611–1693

### *Yingmeian Yi Yu*

*Yingmeian Yi Yu* [*Reminiscences of the Plum-Shadow Hermitage*] is a biographical account written by the Ming scholar Mao Xiang, after the death of his favorite concubine, Dong Xiaowan, which was popular because of its lyrical, romantic portrayal of love, longing, and loss. It is interesting as a moment in Chinese literary history in part because of its portrayal and perpetuation of the literary ideal of the sick and suffering woman. The ephemeral figure of Dong Xiaowan, often ill and subject to attacks of fever at the slightest emotion, foreshadows the type of very young, fragile, and delicate woman that during the Qing period would become the ideal of feminine beauty. *Yingmeian Yi Yu* is also well known for its concise and beautiful literary style.

Mao Xiang writes that Dong Xiaowan was exceedingly attractive, and though she was once a singer in the pleasure quarters, he writes that once she became his concubine, their affection

was never tainted with lasciviousness. Thus, when she inevitably falls ill, it is from the disease of maidens, of passion repressed and not expressed. There no sexual description in Mao's account. In fact, much of his memoir deals with their frequent separation, and particularly her suffering, from hunger, illness, robbers, weather, and so forth while they are apart or while she is trying to reach him. Whatever eros lies in the memoir is derived from this account of female devotion and suffering.

Mao describes Dong Xiaowan as an ideal companion and mentions frequently how much his friends admired her. After becoming his concubine in 1642, she took part in her husband's literary work, copying out texts for him and keeping his books and manuscripts in order. She had a natural gift for poetry and painting, and they would pass entire evenings together talking about the works of the famous Tang poets. She had a great talent for memorizing poetry and amused herself by culling from old literature references to women's dress, personal adornment, dancing, and singing, which she then compiled into a brief treatise entitled *Lianyan* [*The Elegance of the Dowry*].

The memoir moves back and forth in time, with Mao stopping the narration to comment on his present circumstances. He says of her study, where she would have books piled up all around her, and where she would often fall asleep with volumes of poetry by her pillow or under her bedclothes, that it is now locked up and covered with dust, and that he could not bear to enter. He writes that he will do his best to sustain his grief and try to collate her work and have it published.

He details her many habits, what she ate and how, her penchant for placing a lamp in front of a flower so it would cast a shadow on a curtain. He talks about her clever way of learning how to make culinary delicacies and how she could hold her liquor better than he could.

Mao Xiang's romance with Dong Xiaowan happened during a period of great historical turmoil. The Ming dynasty was overthrown by the Manchus in 1644, causing many to lose their households and fortunes. Mao writes that there were rumors that the local garrison had mutinied, and everyone fled their town for the country. As invading forces continued to push south into China, many, including Mao and his family, tried to stay ahead of them. Mao writes of how thoughtful Dong was in preparing for their travels, always displaying her loyalty and resourcefulness. He recounts their fleeing before the invading troops and bandits and the grief it caused them. Such a life on the run took a terrible toll on both Mao and his concubine. At one point, during a severe winter, they had to hide in an empty house in a desolate city. They could not go on because Mao had fallen seriously ill, and Dong Xiaowan tended to him tirelessly.

They were together for nine years. She had always been of delicate health, and when she was twenty-six, she died, presumably of consumption. Tradition has it that Dong Xiaowan did not die in her prime, as Mao Xiang would have liked her to be remembered, but rather was forcibly carried away by the new Qing emperor or one of his relatives and admitted to the palace as imperial consort. This theory, however, is likely fictional, since we have many couplets and verses composed by Mao's friends on the occasion of her death that are available in their respective literary works. Mao Xiang himself lived to an old age, but he could never forget her. The reminiscences he wrote of Dong Xiaowan, in a highly polished literary style, rank among the masterpieces of Qing literature. In addition to being an account and testament to their love, *Yingmeian Yi Yu* is also an important historical document that records personal experiences of the turbulent period during the change of dynasties.

### Biography

Mao Xiang was born into a wealthy family in the late Ming dynasty. His family was so well known that in his youth, Mao Xiang was considered one of the "four famous aristocrats," a designation approximately equivalent to "most eligible bachelor."

DOUGLAS WILE

### Editions and Translations

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# MARA

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1933–?  
French novelist

## *Journal d'une femme soumise*

*The Diary of a Submissive Woman* is not structured as fiction: it is a seemingly genuine, irregularly dated diary kept between 1958 and 1973. Virtually nothing has been written about this work since the only edition was published by Flammarion in 1979. The pseudonym “Mara” appears to be less a literary persona than an expression of the author’s genuine—and successful—attempt to remain anonymous. This is in keeping with Mara’s general fascination with the concept of anonymity, a fascination which she explores in some detail in *Journal d'une femme soumise* and pushes even further in *Journal ordinaire*, her subsequent book. *Journal d'une femme soumise* contains a postface by Michèle Causse, in which Causse essentially draws attention to the many literary and theoretical influences on Mara’s text, while noting the relevance of the *Journal* for contemporary feminists.

Like much writing not intended for publication, *Journal d'une femme soumise* is written in an extremely disjointed and elliptical style. There is often little or no apparent link between entries, and no background information is given regarding characters or events. The author’s passion for and extensive knowledge of literature is obvious throughout the *Journal*, and Mara’s personal observations are frequently juxtaposed with references to Baudelaire, Breton, Alphonse Daudet, de Sade, Marguerite Duras, Foucault, Rimbaud, Virginia Woolf, and numerous others. Mara’s strongest influence, however, is clearly Georges Bataille. The linking of death with eroticism, the quest to understand existence through transgression and excess, and the questioning of language as conveyor of ultraviolence are all clearly Bataillan themes. Mara incorporates Bataille’s ideas deliberately, stating that she wants to write the female equivalent of “Dirty,” the lascivious heroine of Bataille’s *Le bleu du*

*ciel*. For Mara, however, this is more than a literary exercise: she claims to live these phenomena as well as write them.

*Journal d'une femme soumise* does not have a distinguishable plot. Rather, the description of “real” events is positioned alongside artistic, emotional, and intellectual impressions, which are in turn punctuated with historical facts. The leitmotif of Mara’s diary is her relationship with her husband, N., a man whose near constant physical and psychological absence causes his wife intermittent outbursts of agony and anger. Mara is N.’s willing slave, and she submits herself to numerous acts of degradation at his hands and at the hands of strangers and friends. As N. becomes Mara’s pimp, she tries simultaneously to please him through total obedience and to surpass his violent desires with her own sexual excesses. This fundamental ambivalence toward the nature of submission is a forceful undercurrent in the *Journal*. Even as Mara is traded among men as property, is beaten, performs fellatio on large numbers of men in public places, and allows herself to be ejaculated, urinated, and defecated on, her lucidity and ironizing disrespect with regard to her “master(s)” express a paradoxical and masochistic power. Mara’s journal is thus a concise playing out of the primordial contradiction that defines masochistic strength, which is by definition precarious and exhausting. More precisely, the narrator is never completely able to decide whether the strength she sees in her deliberate submission—i.e., that of rising above and defeating the violence being inflicted (and the person inflicting it) by welcoming and submitting to it—is communicable and therefore real. More alarmingly, she describes herself as someone who exists only as others see her, an entity that is transparent until seen, and the fear that her strength may pass unnoticed even by the man to whom she submits poses a serious metaphysical problem. Mara blames such issues for her unhappiness, and fears she will go insane or be deemed insane and institutionalized by N. During her worst

## MARA

periods of self-doubt and deprecation, she does in fact write her entries from a psychiatric clinic.

Mara's goal of total submission requires that she allow herself to be violently degraded and mistreated. In prostitution, she finds the ultimate expression of anonymity and obedience. She calls her special breed of "nymphomania" an attempt to shatter her individuality, become invisible (because interchangeable), and thus become what she deems "absolutely a woman." De Sade's influence is extremely apparent here and elsewhere in the *Journal*, as Mara's definition of feminine strength demands absolute submission to and satisfaction of men's physical desires. Despite her underlying condescension toward these "dominant" men, the narrator is incessantly and profoundly afraid that her submission is more a display of cowardice than of strength.

Despite the frank manner in which *Journal d'une femme soumise* addresses the psychology of sadomasochism, the book is anything but a titillating series of sexual adventures. In fact, any sex acts which are described are vastly overshadowed by the reasons behind and reactions to such behavior. This is particularly relevant given Mara's literary goal—to embody the chaotic voice of Bataille's female protagonists, to be "sovereign" (the term is Bataille's), and to obtain through excess a knowledge which is distinctly other compared with the trials of everyday life. In a particularly Bataillan turn, Mara uses the realm of eroticism to confront and meditate on death. Death and eroticism are irrevocably linked for both authors: each views sexual excess as a way of welcoming and describing death. Mara even calls her writing the "autopsy of a suicide." While death-obsessed eroticism is a consciously Bataillan phenomenon, its expression through complete submission and humiliation adds an important twist. Even more notable is the fact that Mara claims to be expressing a uniquely feminine worldview. In a move that takes Bataille's *érotisme* to a more violently personal level, Mara makes herself a willing and conscious human sacrifice in an attempt to welcome the sacred silence of extreme violence and eroticism into her life (and death).

Although not crafted as fiction, *Journal d'une femme soumise* is an extremely self-conscious and

auto-representative text. As Mara admittedly prefers literature to life, she defines her diary as the effort to turn her life into a fiction and to structure her existence. She tries to write her life and then examines the effects of this process. She refers to her desire to "vomit" words, and her writing is reminiscent of the bulimia to which she alludes on several occasions. Mara sees literature as the ultimate space of transgression and defines her own writing as an act of violence, robbing dictionaries of their words in order to refurbish language with its original transgressive power. For this reason she forces herself to record in writing even her most violent experiences of humiliation.

*Journal d'une femme soumise* is a brutally honest discussion of the complicated concepts of submission, domination, death, and eroticism, and it provides a paradoxical and lucid expression of what it can mean to be a woman dealing with these issues. Mara's desire to surpass domination through submission poses serious questions in the domains of literature, sexuality, and feminism, and the form of the nonfictional journal provides a particularly self-reflexive outlet. *Journal d'une femme soumise* is especially interesting given the turn its author will take in *Journal ordinaire*: namely, toward purely lesbian sexual relationships and even greater submission and anonymity.

### Biography

The identity of the author known as Mara is not known. When *Journal d'une femme soumise* was published in 1979, Mara claimed to be a woman approaching the age of 40, living in Paris with her husband and two children. The book's title is taken from a journal entry, and there is no indication that it was chosen by the author. Mara did not publish anything (under this name) during the years the journal was kept, but she did publish another text, *Journal ordinaire*, in 1984.

PATRICIA BERNEY

### Complete Works

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# MARGUERITE DE NAVARRE

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1492–1549

French short story writer, dramatist, and poet

Marguerite's religious writings are not free of erotic motifs, some quite extravagant, though they belong to a religious tradition dating back to the Song of Solomon and express in her case an ardent, devout, and total submission to the power of divine grace. In the *Heptaméron*, as is traditional in the early-modern short story, love, both marital and extramarital, forms a major theme, hence Marguerite's onetime reputation for licentiousness. However, she is particularly original in considering desire, cuckoldry, and illicit affairs more in their psychological consequences and moral dimensions than as mere comic motifs. Eros is also set in contrast with courtly love, Platonic love, and *agape* (spiritual) love, all of which feature in different ways in the stories proper. But Marguerite also orchestrates many of the storytellers' discussions and activities, for a further novel feature of the collection is the way in which these ten characters (who are variously married, widowed, celibate, and/or in love with other group members) both debate and enact different love themes which their tales introduce and which stretch from absolute dedication to God down to fetishism, incest, necrophilia, and rape.

The violence and perversion of these latter topics help emphasize two connected topics: the corruption rife among contemporary clerics and the aggression inherent in male sexuality, themes sufficiently prevalent in the *Heptaméron* to be safely identifiable as preoccupations of the author herself. It is, moreover, notable that she does not present the battle of the sexes at all one-sidedly; hence, for instance, her men attack women's sexual discretion as mere hypocrisy and cruelty. Nor is the status of marriage presented without ambiguity, as Oisille, eldest and most respected of the narrators, imputes reservations concerning marital love to St. Paul, and Marguerite herself chooses to depict marriages which are in most cases failing and whose partners are scarcely ever happy.

Marriage in the sixteenth century was not exclusively based on physical attraction, especially among the wealthy and powerful, hence the prevalent cultural theme of loves, be they adulterous or chaste, defied conjugality. Again, however, Marguerite is not simplistic in her treatment of this subject. One of the happiest marriages described (nouvelle no. 30) is between the (unknowingly) incestuous couple of a brother and a bastard sister whom her husband had (again unwittingly) sired via his own mother. Meanwhile, Parlamente (the character most often identified with Marguerite herself) sees the selfless love of the adoring suitor as outdated, while Dagoucin, a celibate possibly in love with Parlamente, tells a tale (no. 9) in which just such a *parfaite amour* ends only in death.

The reason for this reticence may well once more be religious. Human love, however perfect, can draw one away from God, a message discernible in St John's First Epistle, which Oisille reads to the company in the prologue to the sixth day. Hence courtly love, as displayed in the overlong but deeply significant tenth nouvelle, is corrupted, nay even parodied, in the life of its hero, Amadour. Marguerite's Platonism, which most scholars regard as relatively superficial, is also mitigated by this preoccupation. Unlike the Florentine neo-Platonist Ficino, for whom physical desire could lead to God via a process of sublimation and idealization, Marguerite presents access to sacred love more as the result of catastrophe or disillusionment with profane love, as in the life of Floride, whom Amadour loves devotedly for years but then attempts to rape.

However, it remains vital for an appreciation of Marguerite's work to realize to what extent these and other messages remain implicit and thus debatable. Rather than through dogmatic systems and didactic allegories, her approach operates via allusiveness, dissimulation, and fragmentation, which, speaking generally, scholars have linked both to Renaissance aesthetics and to female susceptibility.



## MARLOWE, CHRISTOPHER

### Biography

Born in Angoulême, April 11, daughter of Charles d'Orléans (d. 1496) and Louise de Savoie (d. 1531), who secured her an education which included classical and modern languages. Married Charles, duc d'Alençon, in 1509 and joined the royal court on the accession of her brother (1515), whom she tended during his captivity in Madrid (1525). Widowed in the same year, she then married Henri d'Albret, king of Navarre (1527), by whom she had a daughter, Jeanne (b. 1528), the eventual mother of King Henry IV of France. Having been strongly influenced in the 1520s by the reformist zeal of Bishop Guillaume Briçonnet and his vicar-general, Jacques Lefèvre d'Étaples, Marguerite gave significant support to religious dissidents and may for some years have exerted a moderating effect on Francis's religious policy. However her sway over him declined in the later 1530s, whilst her restrained and pietistic religiosity was outflanked by the Calvinist reform, which she never espoused. Semiretirement to her courts of Pau and Nérac in the remote southwest led to an increase in her literary composition. As the writer of highest social rank in French history, she wrote plays and devotional poetry, some of it condemned by the Catholic censors; but her masterpiece is the *Heptaméron*, a collection of

72 short stories written in imitation of Boccaccio's *Decameron* and intended similarly to number 100. Despite this plan, the book remained incomplete on her death (1549), which came two years after the accession of her nephew Henry II.

JOHN PARKIN

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# MARLOWE, CHRISTOPHER

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1564–1593

English poet and playwright

### *Hero and Leander*

Christopher Marlowe's *Hero and Leander* ranks as a singular achievement in 16th-century English verse. Published in 1598, five years after Marlowe's early death, it was immediately recognized as a remarkable work. The two Sestiads composed by Marlowe were completed by George Chapman, who also added a dedication

and provided a synopsis of each Sestiad. Within the next half century, there would follow no less than seven editions. Initially thought to be the final work written by Marlowe, some modern scholars have proposed that the poem represents work done during Marlowe's years at Cambridge, though the debate is hardly over.

*Hero and Leander* has been classified as an "epyllion," after the short narrative verse used by classical authors, most notably Catullus' poem 63. The influence certainly is classical in tone and theme as well as structure. Marlowe

infuses his poem with a rich sensuality not seen even in the sensual 16th century. The narrative of the poem recounts the story of two lovers separated by a stretch of sea. In attempting to cross the sea, Leander drowns, and upon the discovery of his body, Hero dramatically takes her own life by throwing herself from her tower. Unfortunately, Marlowe's poem is unfinished. Though Chapman's completed version is not incompetent, it cannot compare to Marlowe's brilliance.

Marlowe's narration begins with a description of Hero and then of Leander. The story had been told in a poem identified by Renaissance scholars as having been by Musaeus, considered the greatest of the Greek lyricists. In recent scholarship, the origins of the story have been shown to be anonymous. Marlowe's other source comes from Ovid's *Heroides*. Ovid's influence on Marlowe is considerable and predominates throughout this poem.

After the descriptive introductory sections, the narrative begins in earnest as a feast at Sestos brings Leander to town, where he spies Hero while she is making sacrifice to Venus. They meet and Leander begins the first of several speeches to persuade Hero to recant her vow of virginity to Venus. Hero resists with tears and platitudes, but Leander persists with all the rapacious force of Marlovian rhetoric. Won already, Hero recounts the story of Hermes and afterward faints. Leander revives her with a kiss. She returns to her room, having made plans to meet with Leander in the evening. The night is given to erotic play. The next day Leander returns home to Abydos. His desire increased by Hero's absence, he swims the Hellespont to see her again. Neptune sees Leander swimming and makes sexual advances to him but is rebuffed. Neptune takes the refusal in stride, but when Leander willfully ignores Neptune's speech in his haste to return to Sestos, Neptune plans revenge. Leander arrives at Sestos, and he and Hero return to her bed, where their love is consummated. Hero leaves their bed and goes for a walk. As she returns, Leander gazes on her nude body, and she feels embarrassment. The poem's narrative breaks off here.

The most striking aspect of the poem is not the narrative itself, but the rich sensuality of the lines and the apparent homoeroticism throughout. Though common in Greek and Roman poetry, the overtly frank assertion of homoerotic male desire is somewhat odd in the 16th century.

One can discern this by comparing Marlowe's description of Hero with his description of Leander. Hero's beauty is limited by a sense of woman's incompleteness. Indeed, a description is commonplace in erotic lyric of the time. The focus is more or less on her clothing and other fetishistic complements. With Leander, however, Marlowe presents us with the full glory of Greek masculine beauty. There are few lines in English poetry to match his description of Leander's neck, "Even as delicious meat is to the tast, / so was his necke in touching" (63-4). The description overflows into erotic ecstasy: "And whose immortall fingars did imprint, / That heavenly path, with many a curious dint, / That runs along his backe" (67-9). Further, there are references to Narcissus that seem to reinforce Leander's own ambiguous sexuality. What is most particular here are the numerous references to the Ganymede myth. Marlowe demonstrated a singular fascination with Ganymede, even devoting the first scene of his play *Dido, Queen of Carthage* to an erotic tryst between Ganymede and Jupiter. This interest in the homoerotic openness of the classical world is continued in *Hero and Leander*.

Aside from the homoerotic content of the poem, it is truly the language of the poem that is so refreshing and powerfully erotic. Marlowe is the first writer in English to beat the Ancients at their own game. The language is light and delicate and flows with graceful fluidity, yet explores the psychology of sexual intimacy. Hero's embrace upon realizing Leander's gaze marks such a moment. This poem contains one of the only lines known to have been borrowed by Shakespeare from one of his contemporaries and remains very well known today, "Who ever lov'd, that lov'd not at first sight?" (176). The language has a visceral quality. Marlowe's description of Hero and Leander's erotic hand play takes the reader into the heart of the sensual feel of seduction to an unprecedented degree in English poetry.

Except for his translations of Ovid, this poem constitutes Marlowe's only extensive contribution to lyric poetry and one in which he could have been justifiably proud. The erotic in Marlowe is an overwhelming force that draws us to itself in an unrelenting and cruel, perhaps even violent, manner. The description of Venus' temple with its depictions of rapes and the Dionysian atmosphere of erotic license serve to illustrate the true power of erotic desire when unleashed.

MARTIN DU GARD, ROGER

### Biography

Born 1564 in Canterbury, England. Killed in a quarrel in Deptford, England. His first significant play, *Tamburlaine*, was published in 1590. Known principally for his plays and influence on early Shakespeare, Marlowe also wrote poetry and translations from classical authors, especially Ovid. He apparently served in the Elizabethan secret service under Walsingham, for which service the Privy Council ordered the conferring of his MA from Cambridge despite his long absences from university.

GRANT HAMBY

### Editions

“Hero and Leander.” In *Complete Works of Christopher Marlowe*. Vol. 1. Edited by Roma Gill. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987.

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# MARTIN DU GARD, ROGER

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1881–1958

French novelist and dramatist

Roger Martin du Gard’s work should not really be included among so-called erotic literature. Political and social preoccupations take pride of place in his work. However, from his first writings (perhaps under Naturalist influence), he showed a concern with problems connected with sex, and this is why his most representative novels explore a certain eroticism. This erotic character is also influenced by the environment in which his work developed. Martin du Gard lived among a circle, headed by André Gide, in which homosexuality was prevalent, and we think that he inclined more closely to this tendency than appears at first sight. His proven discretion made him take refuge in literature, where he found a way to show his deepest desires and his phantoms about sex and eroticism. These composed an essential subject in his work and remained a defining force all his life,

as is proved by his letters, journal, and private papers.

In his most representative work, *Les Thibault*, eroticism is represented in some of the relations between two brothers, Jacques and Antoine. Jacques’ first flirtation with the German Lisbeth or his feelings for Gise, Mlle de Waize’s favorite, show clearly this tendency. Gise is the erotic dream of his early adolescence, a dream which is completed by prohibition. The phantom of incest turns up because the young lady is considered almost his sister. They never have sexual intercourse, but the dream and the girl’s animal sensuality fill Jacques’ mind with erotic thoughts and obsessions that are explicit in the story *La Sorellina* and are a sort of catharsis for him. When he returns after his flight at the end of his studies, Lisbeth represents his sexual desires, which are mingled with a certain tenderness. The young German lady likes to think of herself as a leader, and her maternal instinct plays an important role in their relationship. However, neither

of these experiences satisfy Jacques. Only Jenny quenches his thirst for the absolute.

The character which best represents eroticism is Rachel, lover of the elder brother, Antoine, who changes his life and leaves an indelible mark on his mind. Because of her Jewish origins and sexual freedom, Rachel symbolizes what is forbidden. Nothing is taboo in her life; lesbian relationships, incest, interracial sex are all embraced. All that is important to her are her personal erotic fulfillment and a happy sex life, untroubled by religious or social complexes. Rachel is born from the writer's erotic mind and represents his extension of femininity to apotheosis. Her flaming head of hair resembles the mane of a lion, an appearance which is emphasized by the pink color of her room. According to Martin du Gard, pink is the color of eroticism. Antoine, a physician, is seduced when Rachel appears by the sickbed of the niece of his father's secretary. While Antoine is trying to save the little girl, Rachel's presence there both disturbs and elates him. After that, the outcome is inevitable. The reward for his medical victory is the possession of Rachel, who shows him what love and sex are. Previously he was used to only hygienic experiences to maintain balanced health. From this moment on, the young doctor lives the most wonderful period of his life and is led by Rachel to destroy all the sexual taboos that conditioned his past behavior. He will have joyous memories of her. Her body, the verses of the *Song of Songs* that show his feelings, and the perfume of the amber from her necklace follow him throughout his life and become deeply identified with his concept of love. His later relationship with Anne de Bataincourt, despite the exciting anxiety it creates, can't be compared to his experience with Rachel. Without a doubt, Rachel represents the erotic ideal of Martin du Gard.

There are other little elements with erotic meanings that are not as powerful as Rachel—in particular Mme de Fontanin's feelings for her husband: even though he is unfaithful to her and abandons her during the worst moments of her life, nevertheless his perfume of cinnamon and verbena trouble her, and she is unable to avoid the fascination that he exercises on her. Jérôme fascinates Rinette too, and his personality permeates the whole novel, so he represents Don Juan's myth. Incest features once again, committed this time by two brothers. The determinism of

the story cannot erase the memory of the impulse that made the brother and sister, Jacques and Gise, love and enjoy their feelings for each other.

In his latest work, *Maumort*, the writer's old phantoms appear with energy. A great part of the novel deals with the first sexual experiences of the youthful Guy (perhaps a portrait of André Gide), which is observed by Maumort (Martin du Gard?). "La Baignade" is a passage of this story where the eroticism arises. Eros and Thanatos come together again in the writer's work. In the second part, the relationship between Maumort and a young girl from Martinique recall the links between Antoine and Rachel, but less powerfully.

### Biography

Roger Martin du Gard was born in 1881 in Neuilly-sur-Seine, outside Paris. In 1906 he graduated from the École des Chartes. His first success as a writer was the novel *Jean Barois*, published in 1913. Martin du Gard spent most of World War I at the front lines. After the war, he devoted most of his time to writing *Les Thibault*. The twelve volumes of the series were published between 1922 and 1940. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature for *Les Thibault* in 1937. In 1940 Martin du Gard fled to Nice, where he spent most of World War II. He was at work on a large novel, *Le Lieutenant-Colonel de Maumort*, when he died in Bellême on August 23.

ANGELS SANTA

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## MARTORELL, JOANOT

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1410/11–1465

Spanish novelist

Joanot Martorell is the author of *Tirant lo Blanc*, a complex chivalry novel that mixes history and fiction. What makes this novel important in the context of the medieval narrative is its dose of rationality and verosimilitude. The physical and moral qualities of the hero Tirant are described in great detail, so Tirant becomes a realistic and rounded character. Martorell accurately reports the amorous adventures of Tirant in order to describe the knight's proper behavior, and often establishes comparisons between the abilities of Tirant in the battlefield and his abilities in the "siege" and "conquest" of ladies. War and love, therefore, become the two axes of the novel. Eroticism affects the whole work, but it is especially important in the chapters that take place in the court of Constantinople.

Chapters 115–296 are set in the Greek empire, and they contain most of the erotic adventures of the novel. The Empire of Constantinople is about to be attacked by the Turks, and the emperor asks for the help of Tirant, who accepts the challenge. In Constantinople he meets Carmesina, the princess, and they fall in love. The result is that Tirant feels distressed, which concerns the emperor. Just before an expedition to Cyprus, the princess asks Tirant what worries him. He replies that he is deeply in love with a lady. Carmesina wants to know her name, and Tirant gives her a mirror. Tirant goes on to win several important battles against the Turks. Later on Viuda Reposada, former wet-nurse of Carmesina, falls in love with Tirant and organizes several tricks to make the lovers fall out. Carmesina falls into her traps and rejects Tirant,

and as a result he is distressed. Thanks to Plaerdemavida he breaks into Carmesina's chambers and slips into her bedroom, but he is discovered, and during his escape he jumps from the window, causing him to break his leg. While he is recovering, he and Carmesina they start to exchange love letters. At the same time, the empress falls in love with the knight Hipòlit, who hides for two weeks in her room. Viuda Reposada tries again to separate Tirant and Carmesina by trying to convince him that Carmesina has sexual relations with a gardener. In Chapters 271–2 Tirant and Carmesina get married in secret, but the marriage cannot be consummated, since it would cause a scandal. This leads to several erotic encounters. In the end, all of these tribulations are overcome, and in the final part of the novel the two formalize their marriage.

Martorell deals with love in several forms—for instance, courtly love and its rituals, as well as passionate, direct love that includes lesbianism and erotic fantasies such as fetishism and voyeurism. The writer analyzes a range of topics such as the importance of pleasure, the torture of love, and the idealization of desire. Moreover, he dwells on the language of passion, its codes and double meanings. Sex is described in both metaphorical terms and direct language.

*Tirant lo blanc* contains many explicit passages in which vital and passionate desire is depicted. These adopt a refined level of eroticism and are often about humorous encounters. In the most famous passage, Plaerdemavida takes Tirant to Carmesina's bed and makes him lie down beside the princess. When Tirant has lain down, the maiden tells him to be still and not to move. Then she places Tirant's hand on the

princess's breasts, and he touches her nipples and her belly. The princess complains, and Plaerdemavida says: "You've just come out of the bath, and your skin is so smooth and nice that it makes me feel good just to touch it." The princess replies: "Touch all you like, but don't put your hand so far down." They spend more than an hour at this play, and he does not cease touching her. But the princess begins to wake up, and she asks Plaerdemavida: "What are you doing? Have you gone mad, trying to do what is against your nature?"

The novel places human relationships in an intermediate position between moral virtue and the pursuit of pleasure, although pleasure usually prevails. It is also remarkable that there is no concept of sin in the novel; this has been considered very modern in relation to other chivalric novels. The affair between the knight Hipòlit and the empress is a good example of this, since their adulterous relationship is awarded with marriage and the social ascension of the knight.

The novel is full of jovial situations based on the fears and social constrictions of Tirant and Carmesina. When they finally get married, the wedding night is ironically described as a battle that Tirant wins in less than one hour. Carmesina begs for mercy, but Martorell, using metaphorical language, tells us that Tirant "went in the castle by the force of arms." Tirant, a very brave knight who is also adept at all kinds of diplomatic problems, is in fact extremely shy and lacks confidence when it comes to declaring his love. On the other hand, Carmesina is always concerned about the social gap existing between them, and what is more, she is constrained by religious concerns.

The love between Tirant and Carmesina and other characters is intercalated with Tirant's battles and military campaigns in order to sharpen the attention of the reader. The relationship between the two main characters is both gentle and shameless and has a subtle, spiritual, and refined side, yet it is also tinged by provocation and sensuality. The characters of *Tirant lo Blanc* show different discourses in relation to love. According to Plaerdemavida, it has to be divided in two categories: courtly love, based on fidelity, characteristic of nobles; and gross desire. Estefania divides love into three categories: virtuous (the dame has to love the knight who carries out heroic deeds), profitable (she loves in relation to

the benefits she obtains), and depraved (which only takes into account sexual satisfaction). In the novel there are examples of all these kinds of love, and Martorell offers a wide catalogue of erotic situations: petting, adultery, anal sex, fetishism, carnivalesque scenes, relationships with or without sex, lesbianism, and voyeurism.

### Biography

Born in Valencia, Spain. Member of a decadent noble family, had several duels, and was imprisoned for numerous crimes. Martorell lived in England, 1438–39, and often traveled to Naples during the 1440s–50s. In 1452, he became assistant to the Catalan king Alphonse the Magnanimous. In 1460, he started to write *Tirant lo Blanc*, which was first published in Valencia in 1490 and was reprinted in Barcelona in 1497. Martorell probably died in Valencia.

JORDI CORNELLÀ-DETRELL

See also **Catalan**

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## MASTURBATION

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# MASTURBATION

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Masturbation is one of life's great pleasures, and references to it appear everywhere in all cultures and all societies. Mostly, however, the descriptions of the act are not put in erotic terms, but simply reported, sometimes facetiously. Most of the reports are about males, and the male semen was regarded as especially important. In ancient Egypt, creation itself is associated with masturbation of Atum (Bullough, 62). References to masturbation are common in classical literature, especially in the writings of Martial (died about 104 CE). It was the Romans in fact who gave us the word *masturbation*. Often in the past, the term was said to be derived from a combination of the word *manus* (hand) and *stupro*, meaning to defile. This derivation almost immediately puts a sinful and negative connotation on masturbation, with which the Romans would not have agreed. An equally possible and more likely source is a combination of the word *manus* with the verb *turbo*, meaning to agitate or disturb, which both is descriptive and removes the stigma from such action. Martial implies that it was the custom to masturbate with the left hand, and he calls his left hand a "Ganymede" to serve him (Martial, *Epigrams*, II, 43).

In the Qur'an masturbatory discharges by men are regarded in the same way as a discharge during intercourse, and the male involved (even if they were wet dreams) had to undergo ritual purification, which required that he wash himself all over. Women had to make the same kind of ablutions after their menses. Though the *hadith* (the sayings of Muhammad) hold that those

who masturbate are cursed, no such language exists in the Qur'an. In fact, many Islamic commentators justify the practice as a way of relieving lust. The learned Abu Hanifa (c. 700–767) permitted the use of silken cloth to rub the penis in case of emergency. Some commentators have held that to masturbate is a commendable way of honoring beauty in a woman who should not be approached but whose sighting allows the male to have all kinds of erotic fantasies.

In Hinduism, especially the antinomian cults associated with Krishna, masturbation was widely accepted. The ancient Hindu literature describes many devices (*apadravya*) to take the place of the penis (in case of women) or of the vulva (in case of men). One such instrument for men was the *viyoni* (literally "without *yoni*"; *yoni* = vagina), which was made of wood and cloth and shaped like a female, with a *yoni*-like opening. The *Kritrima linga*, or artificial phallus, was used by both men and women. Dildos were made from radishes or other tubers, from eggplants and bananas, and also from candle wax, baked clay, wood, bone, or metal. Many writers on eros urged men to use such devices to stimulate their female partners before intercourse.

Less permissive of masturbation were the ancient Chinese, who believed that such activities would result in the loss of vital essence, and it was condoned only in special circumstances. Probably, however, the most hostile were the Christians, who under the influence of St. Augustine regarded even foreplay as sinful. Augustine stipulated that sexual activity should be engaged in only for the purpose of procreation, with the

proper instrument, the penis, and the proper receptacle, the vagina, and with the female on the bottom and the male on the top.

In spite of this Christian hostility, medical writers in the West were far more accepting of masturbation, going so far as to regard it as essential for women in some cases in order to expel accumulated secretions. All of this changed in the eighteenth century, when the concept of homeostasis became the dominant medical doctrine, and both the voluntary and involuntary loss of semen, or of orgasmic expulsions in women, was regarded as harmful to health. The major advocate of this view came to be the physician Samuel Auguste David Tissot, and his influence dominated medical ideas through the end of the nineteenth century. Despite this, however, people continued to masturbate.

In fact the psychiatrist Wilhelm Stekel (1868–1940) claimed that everyone masturbated, consciously or unconsciously, although his definition of masturbation included mannerisms involving the tongue, scratching, finger-boring of the nose, and various tics. Masturbation, according to Stekel and most other writers who dared to openly discuss the topic, was usually accompanied by fantasies of one kind or another. One early study of these fantasies was published by Lukianowicz in 1960, who reported on visual masturbatory experiences as reported to him by 188 patients, 126 of whom were male and 62 female. He classified these erotic fantasies into two basic groups, heterosexual and homosexual, but with subgroups such as transvestism, fetishism, masochism, sadism, zoophilia, etc. He found the heterosexual imaginary partner to be the most common of fantasized love objects. Among fantasy themes were kleptomania, gambling, and pyromania. These fantasies occurred very early in the life of the individual and were as much remembered by those who had been child masturbators as they were currently part of the fantasies being reported.

Despite the fact that we know that fantasies and erotic daydreaming are common, it is difficult to find much descriptive literature. For example, we know that Gustave Flaubert (1821–80) found release for his sexual tensions through masturbation, but we know little of what he fantasized. One major testament to the place that fantasy literature plays in masturbation is provided by the oil millionaire Roy Melisander

Johnson of Ardmore, Oklahoma. He collected erotic works to read as he masturbated, and in the process gathered together one of the world's largest collections of erotica. Fortunately or unfortunately, he wanted more than he could find, since once he had read a book or saw an illustration, he was no longer aroused. His solution was to commission original erotic works through literary agents. He received two new manuscripts a week, one from an agent in New York City, another from an agent in California. For each of these Johnson paid \$200, to be split between the agent and the writer. Gershon Legman, who was writing regularly for him, recruited, among others, Anaïs Nin to do so. On Legman's advice she kept carbon copies of the material she sent him, and after Johnson's death, she published the best of them as *The Delta of Venus* (1977) and *Little Birds* (1979). Nin also recruited some of her friends to write for Johnson, two of whom she later identified in her diaries as Virginia Admiral and Caresse Crosby. Interestingly, Johnson's wife, who knew of his collection, would not let him keep the material in the house. Instead he kept them in his office in old green filing cabinets. After his death in the 1960s, she sold off the collection, which served as the source of many of the printed erotic books hitting the market at the end of that decade.

We also know that when some groups of males get together, masturbation serves as an erotic athletic event, to see who can go the longest or ejaculate the most. Interestingly, one instance of such erotic competition has been recorded in a Scottish sex club of the eighteenth century, known as the Beggars Benison (Stevenson). Members apparently had to publicly masturbate to be admitted, and then at club meetings they often masturbated to sensuous lectures or demonstrations usually dealing with females. It was not just in the eighteenth century that such practices occurred. Following football games in the high school attended by one of my informants in the 1940s, the players on the winning team had ejaculation contests in the showers afterward.

As American obscenity laws relaxed, X-rated movie theaters opened, in which many individuals masturbated to porno movies; and X-rated bookstores, which also sold videotapes, opened special rooms for patrons to masturbate in. Prometheus Books published eight volumes



## MATSUURA RIEKO

of guides to X-rated movies during the 1980s and 1990s, until the market collapsed due to the availability of both information and product on the Internet. In fact, the Internet became so vital a source of erotica that some observers have gone so far as to claim that its rapid success was due to its pornographic websites. Whether this is true or not, the Web has become the great dispenser of erotica and pornography. Those who need visual fantasies to masturbate by can get any type they want. Sex therapists and marriage counselors have often advised both sexually blocked individuals and couples to watch porno films and visit Internet porno sites and learn from them, especially about the importance of what can be called masturbatory foreplay in the couple relationship.

Perhaps inevitably, masturbation became a fictional theme. The number-one best seller in 1969 was Philip Roth's *Portnoy's Complaint*, which the publishers called "the most talked about novel of our time." It certainly broke down the barriers to openly discussing masturbation in fiction, and other writers, while not trying to compete with Roth, have included masturbation since then. Perhaps encouraged by the success of Roth's book, nonfiction accounts of the joys of masturbation also appeared, most notably by

Betty Dodson, whose *Sex for One*, also published as *Selflove and Orgasms*, and *Liberating Masturbation*, appeared first in 1974. She includes sections on romantic images, erotic images, sex art, and genital imagery, as well as masturbatory stories. Even in nonfiction accounts, the eroticism of masturbation is emphasized.

VERN L. BULLOUGH

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## MATSUURA RIEKO

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1958–  
Japanese novelist and essayist

Yoko, the heroine of *Natural Woman*, is a writer of very morbid mangas, as is her female lover, Hanayo. Matsuura Rieko translates the language of manga into a very precise and lively style. This novel is a *bildungsroman*, a coming-of-age tale, tinged with melancholy. Though it has been read as cocktail pop-pulp, or as belonging to a new pornographic pulp genre and lesbo-feminist literature, Matsuura's style and the story itself are based on delicate sensations alternating with extreme sex. Her style is measured

and sober, with a sad tonality, even in the hard sex scenes.

Her themes are first of all lesbianism with a zest for sadomasochism, as a game of master/slave in *Sebastien* and in *Natural Woman*. She writes about sexual relations between lesbian partners, trying to find out whether this is a specific sexuality or not. Mixing the feminine sex drive and the masculine feelings derived from the male supplementary organ will help her exploration through a monstrous organic reality. It can be the octopus met by Yoko and Yuriko in the kitchen of a hotel, or the "Flower Show," an erotic freak show in which all the sexual

components are abnormal. Kazumi has a toe penis, Sachie has a vagina dentata, and Tamotsu has two penises, his and that of Shin, his conjoined brother inside of him.

We can link these novels to the Japanese economic boom of the 1980s, when women began to work as much as men, creating turmoil in feminine identity, which was no longer defined in relation to men. Matsuura Rieko may be describing a new female type: neither feminist nor conservative; a hybrid metamorphosis. She also describes a sociological fact: that there is a lack of interest among many young Japanese adults in normal careers or behavior. They are called *moratorium ningen*, "those who wait," or *Kurisutaruzoku*, the "crystal generation," after Tanaka Yasuo's famous 1981 novel of that name. Young Japanese girls experiment in social drifting from school toward violence and prostitution. Matsuura glorifies the margins of society in terms of sexual difference, as do other young Japanese writers. Her work is closely in touch with this behavioral change. For example, Kitahara Minori has created the "Love Piece Club" in Tokyo where women can improve their sex lives with items usually bought by men, and she has created, from Matsuura's novel, a vibrator which can be placed on the groin.

The aim of Matsuura's novels and essays is not only to affirm a lesbian identity. She contributes to the deconstruction of national identity in current Japanese literature. She emphasizes the variety of the notions of sex and gender beyond chromosomal definition. Kazumi, in *Big-Toe Penis*, for instance, is a hybrid girl. She imagines a new human being who is androgyne. Conventions and roles can no longer be thought of as before, and sexual roles especially have to be redefined. It is this phenomenon which is described in her novels.

During her odyssey of sex, Kazumi in her early twenties and her brand-new toe penis lack any kind of mastery, but her way of thinking is extremely fluid, and she is emblematic of a new generation which hesitates between the "Lover Ship" (the name of a love encounter club) and the "Flower show" (erotic showbiz, but also therapy for abnormality, discover of human identity in love sufferance). Finally, what is developed is "skinship"—the physical contact, modeled on the mother/child relationship. It is not surprising in a country where these contacts are said to be deficient, and for a society in

which the language is gendered and separates men and women.

Using the trick of Kazumi's big-toe penis enables Matsuura to try to understand masculine pleasure (penetration and masturbation) in all of its phallocratic power, from the feminine point of view, as well as the dysfunctions of male sexuality, especially impotence. It is the end of passive feminine sexuality. The heroine, who relates her adventures to a female writer called M., seeks a sexual and affective happiness which is linked to skinship rather than to mere penetration, active or passive. The ideal sexual act is finally defined as "making love with love" by the transsexual Masami.

In conclusion, sentimental love is back inside free sexuality. Without love, there is no happy sex, whatever that sex can be. Companionship and the importance of family are stressed, as well as the couple, but they cannot be compared to the existing ones. Love is reevaluated through point of view of abnormality and rediscovered as an illimited new emotional field.

### Biography

Born in Matsuyama; lives and works at the moment in Tokyo. In 1978, Matsuura received the *Bungakukaishinjichô* (new young writer's prize) for *Sôgi no hi* [*The Funeral Party*]. Since then, she has published an anthology of short stories, three novels, and several essays. *Sebastien* (1987) is often related to the cult of Mishima and she is considered a direct descendant of that writer. She is praised by her contemporaries, such as Nakagami Kenji. *Big-Toe Penis* (1993) was in a few days a best-seller. She had been a cult writer; suddenly, she came to the attention of the mass media. This novel won the *Joryubungakushô* (prize for feminine literature). Since then, she has been regarded as a feminist writer. And indeed, *Natural Woman*, her next novel, dealt with the theme of feminine homosexuality. She almost won the Akutagawa Prize.

MARC KOBER

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## MATZNEFF, GABRIEL

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# MATZNEFF, GABRIEL

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1936–

French novelist, essayist, diarist, poet, columnist, and critic

Gabriel Matzneff is no doubt the most controversial living French writer, simultaneously glorified as a literary genius by scores of intelligentsia and villified as a violent sex offender by child protection agencies, parent organizations, and government lobbies on both sides of the political divide. Yet despite the defiant candor with which he relentlessly narrates his sexual adventures, he has never been put into prison, his works have never been censored, and some of the most prestigious French publishers are queuing to reprint his intimate diaries. For obvious reasons, perhaps, his work has not been translated into English, yet in his homeland he remains the undisputable, if not undisputed, *enfant terrible* of letters.

Although Matzneff himself has divided his literary output into novels, diaries, essays, and poetry, the contents of these works are remarkably similar. Almost invariably, they are stories of lust-driven adults who desperately seek to

make the acquaintances of, seduce, and love fourteen- and fifteen-year-old boys and girls. Countering the odium associated with the term "pedophilia," Matzneff describes the devouring passion of his protagonists (under whose thinly disguised names and characters he situates his own experiences) as the practice of "philopedia," a mixture of religion (worship) and eroticism (sexual pleasure), with which the aging man can satiate his hunger for eternal youth. In *La passion Francesca*, which details his passionate involvement with a fifteen-year-old girl, Matzneff puts it as follows: "This is how I shall suck your heart and your brains, much like drinking Coca-Cola with a straw. You will never break up with me. I give you too much pleasure. If you break up with me, I will drive you crazy. You are in my power and in order to escape it, your heart will have to bleed liters and liters of blood." The "philopedic" narrator clearly appears as a cruel and selfish predator here, yet in the end (and perhaps inevitably) he also knows that he will be slaughtered on the altar of the young girl's sexual appetite. Time and again, the narrator discovers that his

beloved has betrayed him with another (younger) man or that she is not who he thought she was—madly jealous instead of happily indulgent, loudly demanding instead of quietly obsequious. And so he is forced to break off the relationship, yet only in order to woo a new, purer nymph into the realm of his desire, ad infinitum.

If Matzneff designates the acts of his character(s) as “philopedic,” he never really endeavors—like André Gide in *Corydon*, for example—to plumb their psychological motives. Matzneff is adamant that they are part and parcel of an irreducible *ars vivendi*, a “way of life” or, as he calls it, “une diététique.” Combined with the aforementioned religious dimension of “philopedia,” this principle endows his work with moralistic overtones, yet at the same time Matzneff is rarely inclined to teach or preach, which may explain why he has managed to escape censorship. Rather than elevating his narration to the level of an ethical or philosophical doctrine and developing its exoteric qualities, Matzneff elaborates his discourse in an ultra-intimistic fashion, sharing with his readership thoughts and feelings that few people would want to admit to themselves, and simultaneously recording (the admittedly scandalous) events of his love life in a form that commits them to posterity. Matzneff challenges our erotic codes, but the main challenge for himself as a writer seems to be to capture in writing all the unspoken (and often unspeakable) fragments of an idiosyncratic erotic experience.

Insofar as the fictionalized truth of Matzneff’s writings brings to mind the devious acts and assertions of Humbert Humbert, their style is also reminiscent of the outstanding stylistic qualities of Nabokov’s *Lolita*. Matzneff is renowned for saying that he has only ever been faithful to the French language and that his writing is primarily an exercise in style, which could also mean that unlike the many boys and girls with whom he has shared his bed, the French language has never let him down. Hence, whatever the reader may experience in the content of his works, their style is extraordinarily persuasive and seductive, so that even if the reader is disgusted by the story line, its purified aesthetics may still exert a strong power of attraction.

## Biography

Gabriel Matzneff was born August 12 in Neuilly-sur-Seine of Russian parents who had emigrated to France after the 1917 Russian revolution. The Franco-Russian community in which he grew up conditioned his lifelong allegiance to the Orthodox Church. Educated at the École Tannenberg and the Lycée Carnot, he read classics at the Sorbonne during the 1950s. In 1957 he wrote to Henri de Montherlant, which signals the beginning of a lifelong friendship between the two men. Matzneff started his military service in 1959, which he performed with so much skill and enthusiasm that his brothers-in-arms dubbed him “Gab la Rafale” (Burst-Gab). After he tried to commit suicide, he was discharged from the military and spent two months in a psychiatric hospital. During the early 1960s he devoted most of his time to traveling, writing, and pursuing his passion for (pre)adolescent boys and girls. In 1962 he started writing a weekly column for *Combat*, which gradually earned him a reputation as a new literary stylist. His first collection of essays, *Le défi*, was published in 1965, followed a year later by his first novel, *L’archimandrite*. In 1974, his essay *Les Moins de seize ans* caused a scandal because of its uninhibited celebration of cross-generational sexual relationships. With the publication during the 1970s and 80s of his intimate diaries, containing detailed autobiographical accounts of an endless series of erotic encounters with minors, Matzneff became a thorn in the eye of French law enforcers. In December 1982 his apartment was raided and he was accused of being a member of a notorious pedophile ring, yet three years later he was cleared of all charges. His image tarnished, he lost his acclaimed column in *Le Monde*, but it didn’t deter him from his literary and sexual activities. During the 1990s he continued to seduce, write, and publish in the same vein, shamelessly rendering public his most intimate moments of love and hate with (pre)adolescent girls, whilst also appearing on the catwalk for fashion designer Yohji Yamamoto. Matzneff’s latest book is a collection of essays entitled *Yogourt et Yoga* (2004), and critics are eagerly awaiting the publication of his post-1987 notebooks.

DANY NOBUS

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## MAUPASSANT, GUY DE

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1850–1893

French novelist and author of short stories

In the short stories on which his literary reputation is principally based, Maupassant reveals a pessimistic vision of mankind marked by Schopenhauer's denunciation of love as a mask for the reproductive instinct, of woman as nature's trap to ensure the continuance of the species. In over half of this oeuvre, sexuality is the driving force, with results that can be comic (an ignorant young bride mistakes orgasm as the onset of rabies) or disastrous (when infidelity, repression, or jealousy drive to murder). The prostitute often serves as a figure whose honesty shows up hypocrisy, subverts respectability, or reveals the fragility of social distinctions. Pleasure is totally separate from marriage: indeed it is the social constraints on desire that lead to unhappiness and crime.

Maupassant attacked in his journalism the inability to talk frankly and explicitly about the plain fact of coupling as something natural, useful, and innocent, but the stories inevitably resort to allusion and euphemism. On occasion his directness led to censorship difficulties. The poem “Au bord de l'eau” [At the Water's Edge] links sensual eroticism with a realistic setting in nature: when it was published in a review in

1880, Maupassant was charged with outrage to public morality, though the case was dismissed. His first novel, *Une Vie* [A Woman's Life] (1883) was briefly banned from sale in railway book-stalls for its direct evocation of the marital disillusionments of the sexually ignorant and romantic heroine.

Such works attempted to confront certain realities while remaining within the boundaries of what could be published openly. Maupassant's erotic work represents, however, an exaggerated protest against hypocrisy, and an antidote both to sentimental idealizing and to the lyrical disguising of natural instincts, through a blunt insistence on physical reality.

In his journalism Maupassant called for bold and passionate poems celebrating sex, without crude words, lewd jokes, or innuendo. His known erotic poems were written between 1874 and 1878. Three were published in Belgium in 1881; of several others written, some have been lost, and three are in private collections. “Désirs de faune” [A Faun's Desires] fits his prescription, balancing a lyrical evocation of sex with intensity and realism. “Ma Source” [My Spring] less successfully celebrates cunnilingus with an incongruous series of overconventional poetic images coupled with sacrilegious overtones: moss, spring, the rock struck by Moses; it closes

with the poet carrying away the woman's odor on his mustache like a censer. Two others are provocatively anti-poetic, exaggerated, and demythificatory. "La Femme à barbe" [The Bearded Lady] describes a sexual encounter with down-to-earth directness. The woman startles the poet by aggressively acting out a male role; there is no pretense of emotional feeling: he is motivated by curiosity, she by the desire for "a good screw." The story "69" desentimentalizes that act even further: the woman in the story is old, ugly, and dirty, the language violent and crude.

During the same period that he wrote these poems, Maupassant devised, together with four boating friends, the one-act play *A la feuille de rose, maison turque* (the untranslatable title suggests a Turkish establishment called "At the Rose Leaf," but is also a slang expression for anilingus). He organized private stagings in 1875 and 1877; the audience for the second included Zola, Flaubert, and Maupassant's father. All the roles were played by the group of male friends; the women characters had gaping vaginas painted on their costumes, the men had giant phalluses made of draught excluders. The manager, Miché ("Pimp"), has dressed the three prostitutes in his Parisian brothel in Turkish costumes to attract customers; unfortunately, only one, Raphaële (played by Maupassant), is presentable. One plot line is provided by the arrival of Monsieur Beauflanquet ("Well-endowed"), the mayor of Conville, and his wife, lured to this "hotel" by Léon, who wishes to have intercourse with the wife. This plot is interrupted by a series of clients, all of whom select Raphaële, to the mounting distress of the servant Crête-de-Coq ("Coxcomb," but also a genital growth), the lover of Raphaële and an ex-seminarist. The clients, all acted by the same man, are a series of comic stereotypes: a cesspool emptier whose stammering produces a series of crude puns, a hunchback, an army captain who refuses protection on the grounds that "you don't sheath a sabre when charging" (the servant points out that he will be discharging), a boastful Marseillais who claims to have killed a woman with his member but who fails to reach orgasm, a military sapper, an Englishman who thinks it is a museum and copulates with the "waxwork" Raphaële. The farcical plot is enlivened by juvenile jokes and conversations at cross-purposes: Mme Beauflanquet innocently

misreads the sexual terms, such as "pussy" and "doggie-style," used by the whores: her "knowledge" astonishes them. The preposterous climax involves a complex exchange of sexual partners in the dark between M. and Mme Beauflanquet and Raphaële and Léon. After a standard recognition scene echoing *The Marriage of Figaro*, the Beauflanquets return to the provinces; Miché, desperate for money, offers to satisfy the cesspool worker himself when the whores refuse; and the servant, spurned by Raphaële, is reduced, as in the seminary, to masturbation.

The playlet represents a series of denigrating male jokes for men (the women in the audience were not amused). The crude realities of sex and money aggressively de-poeticize sentimental illusions; it is not just a "realistic" corrective to idealism, but also an exuberantly gross farcical exaggeration. The (mimed) sexual acts are increasingly performed on stage, before the other characters as well as the audience, blatantly immodest and veering to the scatological: the sapper, unable to afford Raphaële, dunks his penis in her urine in compensation. The customers want only sex, but most cannot pay or cannot perform adequately; the whores embody eager availability and lesbianism. It mocks the establishment (the army and religion) and exposes bourgeois hypocrisy: Mme Beauflanquet, the frustrated wife, yields to Léon and then to Raphaële's lesbian advances; her boring husband is ready to make love to the entire harem. The play is a demystifying jape, but one carried off with verve.

### Biography

Born at Château de Miromesnil, commune of Tourville-sur-Arques, Normandy, August 5. Educated at Lycée Napoléon, Paris, 1859–60; as boarder at the Institution ecclésiastique, Yvetot, 1863–68; then at Rouen Lycée 1868–69. Attended Faculté de Droit, Paris 1869–70. Mobilized July 1870 and served in the Supply Corps during the Franco-Prussian War. Civil servant in the Ministry for the Navy and the Colonies 1872–78, then Ministry of Education 1878–82 (on extended leave from 1880). The success of his story "Boule de Suif" in 1880 opened up collaboration with major Parisian newspapers, notably the *Gaulois* (1880–88) and *Gil Blas* (1881–91) for both short fiction and

## MEAKER, MARIJANE (ANN ALDRICH AND VIN PACKER)

journalism; he also published six novels. Already suffering from ill health, Maupassant visited spas in Switzerland and France (1877, 1883, 1888, 1890). Returning frequently to Normandy, he also traveled in mainland France and to the Channel Islands (1879), Corsica (1880), North Africa (1881, 1888, 1890), and England (1886). From 1891 general paralysis affected his mental capacities; after attempting suicide in January 1892 he was interned in Dr Blanche's clinic in Passy. Died of tertiary syphilis, July 6.

PETER COGMAN

### Selected Works

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“Mars et Vénus,” 1903.  
“Désirs de faune,” 1927.  
“Eglogue bien amoureuse,” 1939.  
*A la feuille de rose, maison turque*, 1946.

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## MEAKER, MARIJANE (ANN ALDRICH AND VIN PACKER)

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1927–  
American novelist

It was at the Fawcett publishing house, where she worked as a secretary, that Meaker began, in 1952, to write and publish novels under the first of several pseudonyms she has used throughout her career. When asked about the pseudonyms under which she wrote for Fawcett, Meaker said, “Because I couldn’t get an agent, I became my own, using various disguises as my clients” (Lovisi, 18). Although she is now best known for her work writing young adult novels as M.E. Kerr, in the postwar period she wrote a number of very popular mass-market paperbacks for Fawcett as Vin Packer and Ann Aldrich. The Vin Packer novels came primarily under two categories, so-called JD, or juvenile delinquent,

novels and novels featuring lesbian characters which are prized by collectors of lesbian pulp fiction. As Ann Aldrich, Meaker wrote both fiction and nonfiction solely on the lesbian theme.

The Vin Packer and Ann Aldrich books were written for Fawcett’s Gold Medal line of paperback originals. The first of these was *Spring Fire*, a novel about lesbian love published in 1952. *Spring Fire* was an instant success. This may be partly due to the fact that it was included on the list of books investigated by the House Select Committee on Current Pornographic Materials in 1952. The novel was introduced into the record as evidence of “books [which] extol by their approbatory language accounts of homosexuality, lesbianism and other sexual aberrations” (US Congress, 14). *Spring Fire* went through five reprintings between 1952 and 1965.

Following the success of *Spring Fire* Meaker wrote JD and lesbian novels as Vin Packer throughout the 1950s. These two themes came together in 1958 in *The Evil Friendship*, a novel based on the Australian Parker-Hulme case of 1954, in which two lesbian lovers were tried for murder. Meaker has said that she and her editor often followed cases in the press and then chose to base novels on them (Lovisi). Two Vin Packer novels (*Dark Don't Catch Me*, 1956, and *3-Day Terror*, 1957) were based on interracial sex and the violence it provoked toward black men in the segregated South. The plots were drawn from the case of Emmet Till and other newspaper reports of the period. *Dark Don't Catch Me* and *3-Day Terror* fall into a category of postwar mass-market fiction which exploited the threatening concept of interracial sex in America. It is clear from comments made by the House Committee on Current Pornographic Materials in 1952 that interracial sex was commonly classed as a perversion. As such it was exploited by paperback houses and no doubt consumed, like lesbian pulp, by those seeking to articulate dissident sexualities.

Meaker began writing under the name Ann Aldrich, a pseudonym specifically attached to a lesbian persona, in 1955. The first of the Ann Aldrich paperbacks was *We Walk Alone (Through Lesbos' Lonely Groves)*. This book takes the form of a nonfiction exposé of the imaginary lesbian underworld of the 1950s. Chapter titles include "Who Is She?" "How Did She Get That Way?" "Gay Paris," "Can a Lesbian Be Cured?" and "A Word to Parents." These titles exemplify the complicated pose of being both an agent of voyeuristic pleasure and a socially concerned commentator taken by Aldrich and other writers of lesbian pulp paperbacks. The cover of *We Walk Alone* contains commentary by one "Dr. Richard Hoffman, world famous psychiatrist," who describes Aldrich as "herself a member of the sisterhood."

Following the success of *We Walk Alone*, the Aldrich persona was exploited in four other titles between 1955 and 1963. The most notable of these is *Carol in a Thousand Cities*, an edited collection including European and American literature and medical commentary. Selections in *Carol* include everything from Carol Morgan (Patricia Highsmith)'s contemporary lesbian writing to an essay by Sigmund Freud and extracts from Colette and Guy de Maupassant.

At least five of Meaker's Fawcett Gold Medal titles were published in British editions during the 1960s. *Take a Lesbian to Lunch*, another Aldrich paperback which might be viewed as part of this period, was not published until 1971.

The novels of Vin Packer and Ann Aldrich are often mentioned in life-history accounts by women who lived as lesbians in the postwar era. Meaker's novels are not often remembered with the fondness attached to the works of Ann Bannon and Valerie Taylor. Rather, Ann Aldrich came to exemplify a self-deprecating tone which lesbians sought to distance themselves from in the wake of the feminist and gay liberation movements. She is most often cited as an example of the repression under which lesbian sexuality formed itself in the 1950s and 60s. In her essay "Cruising the Libraries," Lee Lynch mentions *The Evil Friendship* and *Take a Lesbian to Lunch*, describing the characters as "more miserable than Sartre's, and despised as well" (Lynch, 40). Despite this later view of Aldrich as a negative role model, it is clear that many lesbians, including lesbian writers, formed their own ideas and aspirations through the process of reading her novels. Their bold and sensational treatments and massive distribution through Fawcett made them a ready vehicle for lesbian identification, whether women worked with or against their objectifying tone.

Into the 21st century, Marijane Meaker is well known as the writer of young adult novels and teacher of writing M.E. Kerr. Her young adult titles often continue her lifelong preoccupation with sexuality and sexual identity.

### Biography

Marijane Meaker was born in Auburn, New York, May 27. She was raised in upstate New York and attended Stuart Hall boarding school in Virginia from 1943, then attended the University of Missouri from 1946 to 1949 as an English literature major. She moved to New York City in 1949 and sold her first story to *Ladies' Home Journal* in 1951. She worked for some time as a journalist and then as a secretary at the Fawcett publishing house.

MEREDITH MILLER

### Selected Works

(All Greenwich, CT: Fawcett)



## MECHAIN, GWERFUL

### *As Vin Packer*

*Spring Fire*, 1952.  
*Look Back to Love*, 1953.  
*Come Destroy Me*, 1954.  
*Dark Don't Catch Me*, 1956.  
*3-Day Terror*, 1957.  
*The Evil Friendship*, 1958.  
*The Twisted Ones*, 1959.  
*Something in the Shadows*, 1961.

### *As Ann Aldrich*

*We Walk Alone (Through Lesbos' Lonely Groves)*, 1955.  
*We, Too, Must Love*, 1958.  
*Alone at Night*, 1963.  
*We Two Won't Last*, 1963.  
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# MECHAIN, GWERFUL

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c. 1462–1500  
Medieval Welsh poet

### "The Female Genitals"

"The Female Genitals" ("Cywydd y Cedor"; cedor is translatable as "cunt") is an attack on those practitioners of Welsh bardic poetry who readily describe a woman's beauty but fail to make reference to the "clear excellence" of that most important aspect of the female anatomy—the vagina itself. The poem begins with an assault on "Every foolish drunken poet" who has ever "declaimed fruitless praise" upon a woman's hair, face, breasts, arms, and hands. Although the speaker credits these poets with good taste in offering their accolades to the hair ("gown of fine love") or breasts ("lovely shape / the smoothness"), the failure to address adequately a woman's sexuality by avoiding the lower body is seen as an affront to the woman's own desires and needs, a snub to her very womanhood. The condemned male poets and their unsatisfactory verse are dismissed with a speed similar to that with which they disregard the

female genitalia. After opening with an outcry against other poets, the speaker continues not by a prolongation of the attack on these bards, but by using the remainder of the poem as an ideal opportunity to offer the praise of the female genitals so distinctly lacking in their work.

The poem explores in graphic detail the nature and desires of womanhood that the speaker sees as symbolized by the vagina. The "middle" which is left "without praise" is both "the place where children are conceived, / and the warm quim, clear excellence, / tender and fat, bright fervent broken circle." These lines associate female sexuality on one level with a purely reproductive purpose but counter this by the elaborate description of the "quim below the smock," which means that the reader is left in no doubt that this part of the body is also perceived to be the seat of desire, pleasure, and delight. Particularly interesting is the way in which the possibility that the sex of the speaker is male (Mechain was a woman) is revealed to us through this description of the female genitals. They are described as the place "where I loved, in perfect health, / the quim below the smock," and from this point in the poem the speaker

begins her own process of eulogizing (in stark contrast to her fellow bards) about the beauty and attractiveness of the quim.

The speaker cleverly manipulates the poetic language of the bards in the comparisons she makes between the vagina and the natural world, so that the “cunt there by the swelling arse” is also “a valley longer than a spoon or a hand, / a ditch to hold a penis two hands long.” The genitals later become a “sour grove,” a “very proud forest,” and “a girl’s thick grove” (in the original Welsh, the meaning is subtly ambiguous because *llwyn* can mean both “grove” and “pubic hair”). But the speaker also falls into the trap of generalizing, to the extent that the object of the speaker’s desire—which seemed at first to be specific (“where I loved”)—becomes merely a “cunt.” The speaker also de-eroticizes the subject of the poem through an ironic reversal of her complaint about other poets. In the other bards’ writing, the speaker feels that there is no emphasis on the genitals themselves; in her own poem, the woman is only the genitals.

The daring of Gwerful Mechain’s inclusion of references to the church is of interest because this emphasizes the God-given naturalness of female sexuality. These references eroticize the female genitals so as to tempt the men of the cloth. The speaker writes that even “the bright saints, men of the church, / when they get the chance ... don’t fail ... to give it a good feel,” and this fact is brought into the poem as a justification for the attack on other poets—if even churchmen cannot resist the female genitals, why should poets hold back their own praise? Indeed, as the poem draws to a close, the speaker declares that it is “for this reason, thorough rebuke / all you proud poets / let songs to the quim circulate / without fail to gain reward.” The poem concludes with a final call for all to praise the female genitals—“lovely bush, God save it.”

The poem’s eroticism resides largely in the speaker’s open assertion of female sexual desire (as displayed in the luxuriant descriptions of the “cunt”) and the subversion of the bardic tradition in descriptions of such lust. Unwilling to fall into line with the traditional poetry of praise, Gwerful Mechain’s frank portrayal of female sexuality in “The Female Genitals” continues to mark her out as one of the more interesting, and still controversial, figures of medieval Welsh poetry.

### Biography

Little is known of Gwerful Mechain’s life apart from the fact that she came from Mechain in Powys (mid-Wales). As a poet she was active in the late fifteenth century (ca.1480–1500), and a relatively large amount of her work survives. Most famous for her salacious verse and her erotic poems (such as “The Female Genitals” and “To Jealous Wives,” although her authorship of the first is supposed rather than certain), she also wrote many religious pieces and one of her best poems concerns the passion of Christ. She has been described by Ceridwen Lloyd-Morgan as “the most important and prolific woman poet of the Middle Ages.”

MARK LLEWELLYN

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# MELÉNDEZ VALDÉS, JUAN

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1754–1817

Spanish lawyer and poet

*Los besos de amor*

Outstanding in Meléndez's poetic output are the pastoral anacreontics which in theme and tone are close to the *Besos de amor*, a group of 23 erotic poems which remained unpublished in the poet's lifetime. Though not printed until 1894, the *Besos* must have circulated in manuscript because they were banned by the Inquisition in 1801, being listed in the 1805 *Suplemento* to the Spanish Index of prohibited books. Described there as anonymous translations of the sixteenth-century, neo-Latin *Basia* of Joannes Secundus (Jan Nicolaus Everaerts), the researches of John Polt have attributed some of Meléndez's *Besos* to other neo-Latin authors, while the remainder could well be original.

The eroticism of the *Besos de amor*, as the title suggests, is principally focused on kissing and the sensual play involved in touching, caressing, and contemplating the loved one. The poems present the thoughts of the unnamed male lover to his female love, who bears various conventional pastoral names: Amarilis, Amarílida, and Filis (all once), Nise (twice), Galatea (four times), and, predominantly, Nisa (twelve times). The tone is refined, with constant use of euphemistic phrases to refer to aspects of the physical relationship. The concentration on the kiss gathers power as the reader advances through the 23 poems. The sensuality seems designed to evoke images of the physicality of kissing but nevertheless achieves erotic intensity because of the cumulative effect of the series of compositions. The poems vary in length from 12 to 95 lines, but most have less than 40. Having examined the vocabulary used by Meléndez, Mario Di Pinto has highlighted the repetition of "dulce" [sweet] and its derivatives, used 45 times. The style of the poems owes much to the anacreontic tradition. Line length is generally short and frequently heptasyllabic, though some poems alternate

heptasyllables with hendecasyllables (Odas 12 and 13). The characteristically Spanish light assonantal rhyme is generally preferred, though a few poems have full consonantal rhyme (Odas 12, 13, 21).

The love play is mutual both in its passion and in its emphasis. Oda 3, with antecedents in two poems by Secundus, has Nise as protagonist, initiating the action by kissing her lover and taking him in her arms. Her behavior is termed "lasciva" ("lascivious," perhaps "passionate," used 18 times in all in the collection), and the effect of her kisses leads his hand to caress her "nevado vientre" (snowy stomach). She sighs, moves, speaks haltingly, asks him to stop, but kisses again with a bite, mouthing desire as she moves. Oda 5, which translates an epigram by Muret, is powerfully succinct, centering on eyes and kisses. The passion ascends through three levels resulting from three actions; her look, their kissing, and his being taken to her bed. Yet kisses are at the heart of these poems. Oda 2 evokes the first kiss the implied author gave Nise. Oda 6 climaxes with the combination of Nisa caressing her lover's neck while she kisses him lasciviously, gazing at him and smiling. In Oda 11 the lover wants to kiss Nisa's eyes and hair, and when his flesh is pierced by her nails he kisses her more and tightly embraces her body. Oda 14 extends his kisses over Nisa's cheeks, eyes, lips, neck, and breasts.

Kisses are counted as part of the lovers' ritual in Odas 8, 11, 16, and 21. Oda 20, with antecedents in two *Basia* by Secundus, concerns "besos lascivos" [passionate kisses], compared to the sweetness of honey and the pecking of doves, hovering between sensuality and eroticism. Her trembling tongue and sighing lips in the closing lines make his soul wither (*fallece*, literally "die") with delight. Oda 18, a mere 24 lines, is one of the most intensely erotic compositions in the group. It seems to contain a wish rather than recount a concrete occasion. The poet imagines Filis regaling him with kisses, caresses, and love on her soft bed. She entwines herself around his

neck with their mouths joined; her eyes respond as his hand seeks her body and she gives off a gentle murmur, and as passion takes hold she gently sighs. In the final two quatrains her sighing animates him as her tongue bites him; her arms enfold him and her desire increases his urgency; the climax comes, not like death (“muerte”), but transmitting life.

The other poem expressing heightened passion is Oda 13, an erotic fantasy in which the poet dreams of Amarílida. Though comparisons have been made with works by Bonnefons and Propertius, it appears to be an original composition by Meléndez and is ambitious in its length, which contrasts with the surrounding texts of the collection. It is more overtly rhetorical in its reiterated exclamations of wonder and joy which initially look back to the previous night of passion, but then recount a dream the previous day. In some respects it is a summation of most of the elements which appear less comprehensively in other poems; its greater extension allows this fullness, though with its mixture of seven and eleven syllable lines, in strict rhyme, it is less light and concise, less given to suggestion and more to explanation. The first scene of the dream is his gazing at her body, contemplating her arms, her breasts, her waist, before expressing his wish to enjoy her beauty. The poem may be entirely original, revealing Meléndez’s mastery of this poetic subgenre.

### Biography

Born in Extremadura at Ribera del Fresno on March 11. Meléndez studied law and humanities at Salamanca University, where he taught briefly before entering government service as a lawyer in the provincial capitals of Zaragoza and Valladolid, and later Madrid. An active liberal intellectual, he was memorably painted by Goya, but his principal claim to fame is a substantial body of poetry. His compositions are predominantly philosophical, including a significant reworking of Alexander Pope’s “Essay on

Man,” as well as more socially committed political satires, praise of enlightened figures, and nature poems. He died in Montpellier, France, on May 24.

PHILIP DEACON

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## MELTZER, DAVID

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1937–

American novelist and poet

David Meltzer's *The Agency Trilogy* is an outstanding example of how poets influenced erotic writing in the 20th century. In these three novels—*The Agency*, *The Agent*, and *How Many Blocks in the Pile?*—Meltzer conveys his poetic vision in a spare, allusive style, using techniques and elements of science fiction. Meltzer's metaphor for the way we conduct our sex lives is extended according to emotional logic. His trilogy was first published as separate volumes by Essex House in California in 1968, and appeared together in a second edition from Richard Kasak Books in 1994.

The Agency in the novel by that name is a well-organized, self-sufficient sexual underground. In *The Agency* a young man is picked up by sexual agents and spends the rest of the novel being indoctrinated with The Agency's tyrannical precepts. Brainwashed, he becomes an agent himself, ready to propagate the fantasy of The Agency. In *The Agent* the satirical possibilities implied in *The Agency* are applied more broadly. Meltzer's deliberately ambiguous portrayal of two agents who may or may not be working for the same agency is often reminiscent of scenes from the movie *Dr. Strangelove*. But his employment of multiple first-person narrative, voices sliding in and out of focus, confirms that his intention is to address his theme of power and sex in the indirect, allusive manner of poetry.

*How Many Blocks in the Pile?* only hints at the existence of The Agency. In the concluding volume of his trilogy, Meltzer creates an exaggerated portrait of its customers, a married couple who respond to sexual advertisements. The Agency, according to Meltzer is "both cause and effect of dehumanized sex and its relationship to American society."

The poet's notion that erotic writing expresses the secret sexual life of America is abundantly

illustrated by *The Agency Trilogy*, but in his next novel, *Orf* (1968), he not only plumbs the national psyche on a deeper, mythical level, he achieves a fusion of poetic approach and erotic subject matter that beautifully demonstrates how the lessons and concerns of poetry can influence modern erotic writing. The title character Orf is a rock singer, a contemporary incarnation of the poet Orpheus. Orf's agent Schlink is a repulsive character who exploits singers, but he is not a caricature; he personifies Meltzer's theme of exploitation. The poet allows him his own human meaning—in fact, he is the book's strongest character.

Orf rises to national prominence at a concert in which he is literally ripped to pieces by his "Sacred Harlots." Of course the story of *Orf* is a retelling of the myth of Orpheus; the rock singer is a closer equivalent to the mythical figure than the modern poet, if only because of the violent nature of the audience's response to him. Meltzer seems to be saying that in America we use sex and dreams (the rock singer creates the background music for our dreams—and nightmares) to affirm the fact of our existence in an exploitative world.

Meltzer followed *Orf* with his most ambitious project, *The Brain-Plant Tetralogy* (1969), consisting of *Lovely*, *Healer*, *Out*, and *Glue Factory*. In classical Greek drama, a tetralogy is a group of four dramatic pieces, either four tragedies or three tragedies and a satire. Meltzer's *Brain-Plant* novels are not tragedies in the classical sense, but satire is a prominent feature in each of them.

The *Tetralogy* demands study as a whole, before it is possible to grasp the meaning of any one of the four novels. The complexity of Meltzer's design, his fantastic inventiveness, and his large cast of characters are such that it is best to approach a critical reading with a few guidelines. Meltzer's novels are designed according to the imperatives of poetry, not logical prose fiction; his tone is often satirical, but his novels are

not satires; and finally, his theme is the exploitation of people through sex, power, and dreams.

The theme of *Star* (1970) is once again exploitation; in this case the users are Hollywood studio bosses, and the used are both the movie stars who people celluloid dreams and the audiences to whom they play. *Star* is after *The Martyr* (1969), Meltzer's most accessible novel. He seems to know as much about the film world as he does about rock music; his satire is controlled and effective, his characters three-dimensional, and his narrative straightforward. His most recent erotic novel, *Under* (1994), is a return to his signature themes.

Meltzer proves in his eleven erotic novels that he was correct to call them "fierce moral tracts." Although his work is crowded with vividly erotic scenes, their effect is more often frightening than arousing. In novels written like poems, eroticism is the physical exploitation of one person by another and is assaultive and outrageous, never loving or tender, never a path to transcendence. In a sense, his erotic work is an indictment of sexuality, challenging and chilling.

### Biography

Born in Rochester, New York. He graduated from Los Angeles City College in 1955 and studied at the University of California, Los Angeles, 1955–56. His first book, *Poems*, was published in 1957. His selected poems, *Arrows*, appeared in 1993. He has written eleven erotic novels, criticism, and a biography of the artist Wallace Berman, and edited many anthologies and magazines. He teaches at the New College of California in San Francisco.

MICHAEL PERKINS

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*The Agent*. 1968.  
*How Many Blocks in the Pile?*  
*Orf*. 1968.  
*The Martyr*. 1969.  
*Lovely*. 1969.  
*Healer*. 1969.  
*Out*. 1969.  
*Glue Factory*. 1969.  
*Under*. 1994.

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## MÉMOIRES DU BARON JACQUES, LES

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*Les mémoires du Baron Jacques* is a novel told as a first-person account of the life of a rich, young aristocrat, written by Alphonse Gallais under the pseudonym "A. S. Lagail" sometime in the first ten to fifteen years of the 20th century. In October 1913, the book was banned for immorality by a Parisian court. It begins when the four-year-old Jacques is introduced to oral sex by his widowed mother. The sexual initiation lasts until Jacques turns ten and his mother dies while making love with her son. After five years of mourning, Jacques moves from his castle in Tours to Paris, where he settles in a stately mansion. Part diary, part poetry, part apocryphal autobiography, the bulk of the book relates Jacques's sexual exploits during his adult life.

Jacques vows never to have intercourse with women, creatures he accuses of being physically

ugly and prone to venereal diseases and declares his passion for men and sodomy (the only notable female character is a lesbian who betrays one of Jacques's male partners). His mother stands out as the one exception to this blanket misogyny. Jacques even recovers her bones so that he can use them for masturbation and foreplay.

Sadism and necrophilia are another major theme. Aside from his posthumous relation with his mother, Jacques regularly has sex with dead, or dying, children, adults, and animals. In one episode, a twelve year old suffocates as he performs oral sex on Jacques. Other children are sacrificed during weekly black masses Jacques organizes for his friends. In one such orgy, one adult kills himself, after which other participants masturbate themselves with, then eat his body parts. Animals ranging from chickens to dogs

and a calf, among others, also figure prominently, as Jacques experiments with new sexual practices. Graphic episodes succeed themselves at a brisk pace, with Jacques and his friends ejaculating up to ten times in a few hours. Their priapic tendencies seem to consume most of their lives, for brief references to Jacques's literary works are the only evidence of nonsexual activities.

The characters' indolence illustrates one last, important subtext of the work: social criticism. Contrary to many other erotic writers, Gallais did not write the work to arouse, but to shock and disgust. Subtitled "the diabolical debaucheries of the decadent aristocracy," *Les mémoires du Baron Jacques* criticizes the rich for going to the worst extremes, including murder, in their belief that no law has a right to prevent them from satisfying their degenerate cravings. Tipped by one of Jacques's disgruntled servants, the police finally raid one of his orgies, and Jacques dies shortly thereafter in the Parisian prison of Fresnes, "after delicate surgery on his rectum."

The book's parallels with real-life characters, not its style or literary merit, make it noteworthy. Early-twentieth-century readers familiar with Parisian life would have had no problem identifying Baron Jacques d'Adelsward-Fersen as the real-life aristocrat whose sexual depravities Gallais purported to describe in his work. Adelsward, born in 1880, came from a line of Swedish aristocrats who had settled in France during the Revolution and enriched themselves in the steel industry. Spending most of his early life in Paris, Adelsward started a successful literary career as a novelist and a poet. The title of a poem in *Les mémoires du Baron Jacques*, "Notre-Dame des verges fortes" [Our Lady of the Sturdy Cocks] is a parody of the title of one of Adelsward's novels, *Notre-Dame des mers mortes* [*Our Lady of the Dead Seas*] (1902). Several characters in Gallais's book also have their real-life counterpart in Adelsward's circle of friends, including writers Pierre Loti and Jean Lorrain.

As in Gallais's book, one of Adelsward's valets told the police that his employer was holding private parties in which teenage men drawn from neighboring high schools took part. The ensuing trial, involving boys and adults drawn from the highest circles of Parisian society, attracted tremendous popular and media attention, and many surmised that the parties were of the orgiastic, satanic kind described in Gallais's

portrayal of the Baron's black masses. Court records are still not available, but it seems that the parties were actually more subdued affairs in which scantily clad young men participated in *tableaux vivants* inspired by classic antiquity, as Adelsward recited poetry (a homosexual and a pederast, Adelsward may have had sex with these young men as well). Arrested and condemned for public indecency, Adelsward spent six months in jail at Fresnes and was forced to break up his wedding plans with a wealthy aristocratic lady. He unsuccessfully tried to kill himself, then to enroll in the Foreign Legion.

Contrary to the literary Baron, the real Adelsward survived his judicial ordeal and spent the rest of his life in Capri, Naples, and Nice, and traveling around the Mediterranean and Asia. He wrote numerous other novels and poems, sharing his bed with a succession of male lovers and boys. An opium and cocaine addict, he died in Naples on November 5, 1923, of a drug overdose. Roger Peyrefitte later offered a dramatized version of Adelsward's life, more historically accurate than the apocryphal *Mémoires du Baron Jacques*, in *L'Exilé de Capri* (1959).

Little is known about the life of Alphonse Gallais. Even his birth and death dates are uncertain. He was a French pornographer of the fin-de-siècle. Also writing under the name "Grimaudin d'Echara," Gallais composed a variety of erotic short stories, novels, and songs, along with songs and essays dealing with radicalism and occult sciences. The author Lagail claims that *Les Mémoires du Baron Jacques* was first published in 1904 in Priapeville by the "Librairie Galante" publishing house, which may refer to the publisher Jean Fort, in Paris.

PHILIPPE R. GIRARD

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## MENDÈS, CATULLE

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1841–1909

French novelist and short story writer

Catulle Mendès made his first mark on the Parisian literary scene by means of two reviews which he founded in the 1860s and which served as a link between the Romantic and Symbolist generations: *La Revue fantaisiste* (1861) and *Le Parnasse contemporain* (1866, 1871, 1876). In addition to his work as a poet, editor, and critic, the versatile Mendès also enjoyed subsequent success as a prolific author of novels and short story collections, many of which might be

described as semi-erotic in intention. These will provide the main focus for the present article. Although academic commentators, perhaps unjustly, have tended to dismiss these later works as trivial and superficial, Mendès must be seen as one of the key architects of fin-de-siècle decadence. He also enjoyed some success as a playwright and librettist.

Mendès's first collection of short stories—*Histoires d'amour* (1868)—set the tone for what would follow. The longest story in the book is a dramatic study of precocious adolescent sexuality caused by prolonged illness; another concerns



an adroit scheme hatched by an aging society belle to win a younger lover; while a third features a young dandy who attracts a string of mistresses by affecting such a sense of ennui that it is feared he is constantly on the point of self-destruction. Although Mendès would further refine the writing style, the majority of his short fiction might broadly be seen as the modern (i.e., post-1871) embodiment of the long French tradition of *gauloiserie*. In essence, these are light-hearted stories of sexual misunderstandings and accounts of the clever strategies employed by more experienced lovers to overcome the resistance of the naive or inhibited. In all, Mendès would pen nearly fifty such collections, their very titles clearly signposting the curious blend of elegant sophistication (note the references to bathing or dressing, makeup, and fashion) and decadent symbolism (note the references to religious practices or institutions together with the occasional suggestion of sexual aberration) in which their greatest appeal resides: *Monstres parisiens* (1883), *Jupe courte* (1884), *Le boudoir de verre* (1884), *Pour lire au bain* (1884), *Pour lire au couvent* (1887), *Robe montante* (1887), *Le confessional* (1890), *La messe rose* (1892), *Arc-en-ciel et sourcils rouges* (1897), etc.

The sheer number of titles in this vein issued by Mendès (who was by no means the only author of such works) would tend to suggest that, as in America slightly later, leisure time in France was becoming increasingly bound up with the erotic. This is especially true of those wealthy enough to buy books such as Mendès's *Les îles d'amour* (1886) and *Lila et Colette* (1885). The former consists of twelve short texts, each accompanied by an engraving, and was published in a luxurious edition of 1,040 numbered copies; the latter, which contains ten short stories, in addition to its sumptuous design, has a cover illustration which was hand-painted. Though many collections were more modest in appearance, there is no doubt that these works were aimed mainly at the carriage trade.

Perhaps the most amusing story ("L'Expérience") to be found in *Lila et Colette* concerns a bet made by the two eponymous heroines (one blonde, the other brunette) with the handsome Valentin. If, after spending the night with one of the women in a darkened room, he can correctly identify his lover, he will have the right to make love to both in broad daylight (if he fails, of

course, he will never sleep with either again). Valentin, after having undergone this experiment, is confused as to whether he has spent the night with Lila or Colette, and it is only after he returns from a long walk that he manages to figure out the solution to the problem—they were both in the room at the same time and periodically changed places. By modern standards this may seem somewhat ridiculous, but such risqué little narratives obviously struck a chord with well-heeled purchasers in late-nineteenth-century Paris.

Interestingly, both *Les îles d'amour* and *Lila et Colette* were reprinted (in abridged translations) several times in the United States in the 1930s and '40s by publishers known for producing cheap editions of classic literature, including gallantia, for department-store shoppers. Not surprisingly, given the censorship which prevailed in the United States between the world wars, "L'Expérience" was excluded from the various editions of *Lila and Colette* out of New York.

Generally speaking, Mendès's work as a novelist is more somber and pessimistic compared with his short stories. This is particularly true of the novels discussed by Mario Praz (*The Romantic Agony*), who, in a telling phrase, describes Mendès as the belated purveyor of the "more succulent morsels from the Baudelarian table," referring to Mendès's *Zo'har* (1886), *La Première maîtresse* (1887), and *Méphistophéla* (1890). The typical focus of these works includes not only incest and lesbianism, but also relationships in which the woman takes the virile role. This is particularly true of *La première maîtresse*, in which a much older woman seduces a youth hardly out of school, draining his energy (to the point at which he becomes a virtual invalid) by the insistency of her sexual desires. Although some form of vampirism is hinted at, this is presumably intended only as a metaphor for fellatio. Unlike Mendès's shorter fiction, where the tone is mostly polite and urbane, these novels are written in a distinctly overblown and frenzied manner. Similarly Gothic embellishments may be found in other novels by Mendès, such as *La vie et la mort d'un clown* (1879), which deals with the consequences of a wealthy woman's sexual obsession with a member of the criminal subclasses. One memorable passage concerns a jailer being raped by a lunatic during a thunderstorm—though it should be noted

again that what is exceptional about this scene is that it is a woman who takes the virile role.

Mendès himself would seem to have enjoyed an active erotic life. In 1866, he married Judith Gautier, daughter of the Romantic writer Théophile Gautier. The marriage was not a success. Subsequently, he lived with the composer Augusta Holmès (with whom he had two daughters, celebrated by a charming painting by Renoir entitled “Les Filles de Catulle Mendès”), Marguerite Moréno, and Jane Mette. If his shorter fiction is typified by Gallic lightness and wit, his longer fiction explores the dark side of the fin-de-siècle imagination, with its fears of virile women and hereditary insanity. In recent years, various works by Mendès have been reprinted in French (though none of his novels are available in English and there is still no standard biography), and it seems that his writing is slowly receiving more recognition in his native country.

### Biography

Catulle Mendès was born in Bordeaux on May 22, of Jewish extraction. He founded the *Revue fantaisiste*, contributed to the *Parnasse contemporain*, and wrote many volumes of verse, including *Philoméla* and *La grive des vignes*. When he died, his body was discovered in the railway tunnel of Saint Germain. It is thought that he had left Paris by the midnight train the day before and that he'd opened the door in the night, thinking the momentarily stopped train was in the station.

TERRY HALE

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## MESOPOTAMIAN, SUMERIAN, AND AKKADIAN

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Mesopotamian literary works form but a small percentage of textual sources written on clay tablets in a style known as cuneiform (“wedge shaped”), which was produced by the imprint of

a sharp stylus on the damp surface of a tablet. The writing system is composed of word signs, syllabic signs, and vowel signs, all of which can convey different phonetic and/or semantic values. Such

multiple readings are the result of using this system to render two distinct languages, Sumerian (not part of any known language groups) and the Semitic Akkadian. The understanding of Sumerian literary texts is hampered by the facts that the writing did not attempt to accurately record all parts of speech and that an oral exegesis most likely accompanied the reading of such compositions in antiquity. Poetic texts and especially erotic passages employ a range of euphemisms and metaphors which are not always obvious to the Western, contemporary scholar. Extant translations of Mesopotamian, especially Sumerian, erotic literature therefore differ widely from one another, with scholars disagreeing fundamentally not only over some minor literary allusion but over the intent and erotic content generally. Akkadian texts are comparatively more straightforward to understand, although badly preserved tablets leave gaps in the texts (see *Gilgamesh Epic*).

### Sumerian Erotic Myths

Most of the available copies of Sumerian erotic literature come from the archives of the ancient city of Nippur, a well-known center of cuneiform learning. They were written in the Old Babylonian period (c. 2000–1600 BCE), although some were composed at an earlier date, most likely the time of the Third Dynasty of Ur (c. 2200–2000 BCE). The understanding of such texts is hampered by the fact that Sumerian does not differentiate gender in either verbs or nouns. There was no discernible ancient category for erotic compositions, and modern commentators have variously grouped them into love songs, bridal songs, courtly love poetry, sacred marriage songs, etc. A number of love songs have the Sumerian subtitle *balbal.e*, which points to a particular musical accompaniment, but not all of the known *balbal.es* have erotic contents.

Despite uncertainties as to the categorization of these texts, one can differentiate two major groupings on the basis of the main protagonists and literary form: (1) erotic myths, consisting of narrative texts some several hundred lines long which feature male deities and deal with impregnation and fertilization, and (2) love songs, which, like song in general, are shorter compositions with a refrain and a lack of narrative structure. They deal primarily with a female protagonist (and her bridegroom/lover) and

celebrate female sexuality without privileging conception.

The most important sexually active male protagonist in Sumerian literature is the god Enki, a deity whose center of worship was Eridu, in present-day Iraq. He was the god who presided over the “sweet water ocean” (source of groundwater and rivers), the primary supplier of water and fertility in the rainless alluvial plains of southern Mesopotamia. In Sumerian the word for “water” is synonymous with the word for “sperm,” and hence Enki’s sperm is said to have filled the Tigris and Euphrates with their life-giving waters, as described in the myth “Enki and the World Order.” The same theme occurs in the myth known as “Enki and Ninhursaga,” which best exemplifies the genre. Enki presents a city to his bride Ninsikila, who complains that it lacks the most essential commodity, fresh water. In the presence of a goddess called Nintur, the god fills the ditches with semen and “has his phallus glut the reeds with an overflow of sperm.” From this perhaps masturbatory action he proceeds to full intercourse by commanding the goddess Damgalnunna (his official wife in the Sumerian pantheon) to lie down in the marshes. She conceives and gives birth to another goddess after a gestation period of nine days. Then follows a section which is repeated verbatim four times, except for the change of the female deity’s name. The daughter grows up and ventures into the marshes, where Enki hangs out, and, seeing her, he desires her, and promptly possesses the girl. She likewise conceives and gives birth to another daughter, and so on. Eventually the mother-goddess Ninhursaga warns her granddaughters to demand more from the lusty Enki than presents of “cucumbers, apples and grapes” and advises the young Uttu to resist his advances until he improves his rather mechanical lovemaking. So, Enki now strokes Uttu’s thighs and massages her first. Ninhursaga removes Enki’s sperm and uses it to grow eight plants. When Enki sees the grown plants, he is filled with desire to consume them, is cursed for his gluttony by Ninhursaga, and becomes pregnant, which makes him very ill. Ninhursaga places him in her vagina to give birth on his behalf and four gods and four goddesses emerge from her womb, who heal the ailing parts of Enki.

The text abounds with puns and allusions, but the primary references are to Enki’s ever-lustful member as the source of water, and

hence fertility, and the locale of the marshes, which have strong erotic connotations in many other Mesopotamian sources, including potency incantations. The impregnation of the girl is equated with her being “watered by the sperm” of the male—in cosmogonic myths, Sky makes love to Earth in order to trigger the differentiation of the universe, depicted as a series of divine generations. The circumstances of the impregnation of the goddess Ninlil by her husband-to-be Enlil in the myth “Enlil and Ninlil” is essentially similar to the scenario described in the “Enki and Ninhursaga” myth but with much attention to the sociocultural restrictions on sexuality. Both gods are described as “young,” and the myth charts the maturation from adolescent and irresponsible lovemaking to social approval as a married couple.

### Sumerian Love Poetry

In contrast to these narratives, which focus on impregnation and the fertilizing properties of the phallus, there are compositions which give voice to a uniquely female expression of eroticism. The main protagonist here is the goddess Inanna, whose main cult center was at Uruk (present-day Iraq). Royal inscriptions from the Early Dynastic period (c. 2800–c. 2250 BCE) refer to Inanna’s role as the loving “spouse” of the EN, the holder of the highest office at Uruk. Inanna was the patron of libidinous love in all its manifestations and not a mother-goddess; prayers and hymns, as well as myths and other narratives, emphasize her sex appeal and sexual appetite, as well as her ambition for power. In a syncretistic merging with the Semitic deity Esh-tar, equated with the planet Venus, she also acquired masculine traits, such as a love for battle.

The erotic texts concerning Inanna comprise several scenarios which relate to the different stages of female sexual development. Firstly, they concern the nubile Inanna who rejoices over her breasts and pubic hair as the outward signs of her ability to consummate marriage (e.g., Alster, “Sumerian”: 152). Some texts describe the premarital courtship and trysts between Inanna and her lover, Dumuzi the Shepherd (see Jacobsen: 8–12). She meets the young man in the garden, which becomes a metaphor for her own body: “Into the garden of apple trees he brought joy, for the shepherd the apples in the garden are loaded(?) with attractiveness” (Alster,

“Manchester”: 1–7). In most of these texts, Inanna speaks in the first person, describing the caresses of her lover, although other voices, such as those of her female companions, or at times that of the lover, can also be heard. They call each other “brother” and “sister,” and the language abounds with allusions and metaphors, which have been variously interpreted. While some of these texts could be taken as traditional wedding songs, with their references to gifts being brought by the groom and banquets held at the brides’s house—even the exhortatory refrain “plough my vulva, man of my heart”—others are located in a more exclusively cultic context and mention specific amulet stones and the terminology of priestly titles (see Alster, “Sumerian”: 151; Alster, “Manchester”: 23; Jacobsen: 6, 21). It has long been proposed that some form of ritualized sexual performance was linked to rites of increase and fertility (notably Kramer). There are no references as to which personages were involved and where and at what times such rites took place. As a literary topic the sexual union between Inanna (and other city goddesses) and the representative of the urban community or, later, the king of the country, had currency especially during the time of the Third Dynasty of Ur and the Isin/Larsa period (c. 2200–1800 BCE). In a royal hymn for King Shulgi, for instance (who reigned c. 2094–47), Inanna declares that since the king, called Dumuzi in this context, “the one lying down by the holy Inanna,” had laid his “hands on my pure vulva,” she will decree “a good fate” for him (Klein: 153). A similar theme is pursued in the hymns to the Isin ruler Iddin-Dagan (reigned c. 1953–35), where it is stated that Inanna “demands the bed that rejoices the heart,” “the bed that makes embrace delicious” (Kramer: 501, see also Reisman).

Sumerian erotic poetry dwells on female sexual enjoyment and concentrates attention on the vulva. Several texts extol the “sweetness” and the moisture of the vulva. It is compared to “the heavenly barge of the moon,” “a fallow plot in the desert, a field of ducks, full of ducks, well-watered hilly land” (Alster, “Two Sumerian”: 21), “sweet like beer” (Alster, “Sumerian”: 134), as well as a garden, where lettuce grows (Alster, “Two Sumerian”: 21). Possible metaphors for the clitoris include “barley-corn,” “a fruit-tree bearing fruit at the top,” “the dubdub-bird in its hole,” and the “holy pin”; see Leick: 119–23, 129). Lovemaking (“that which is honey-sweet”)

takes place on “the honey-flowing bed” (Alster, “Two Sumerian”: 22), the male lover is told to “squeeze it there for me,” to “pound and pound it in there for me! as (one would) flour into the old dry measuring cup” (ibid.). The lover, referred to as the “honey-man,” does “sweet things” and “waters the lettuce” (Jacobsen: 94); he is equated with sensations he brings, his limbs “are honey,” and they “make honey flow,” as the woman enjoys his “sweet sex appeal,” a rather unsatisfactory translation for the complex notion of the Sumerian word *hi.li*, which also means “voluptuousness, attractiveness, libido.” The tone of such poems or songs is languorous and seductive, the voice of an experienced woman or courtesan who seeks her pleasure on a perfumed bed. Some poems set in dialogue form have proved particularly difficult to interpret because of the richly allusive language and ambiguity of grammatical gender (see Jacobsen: 97 and Alster, “Sumerian”: 3, as well as the discussion in Leick: 126–28 and 153–56).

### Akkadian Erotic Literature

The smaller number of Akkadian erotic compositions compared with the Sumerian is likely to have been due to the vagaries of survival of sources; according to a library tablet, 400 titles of songs in Sumerian and Akkadian were recorded, which included such titles as “I smile at the lusty shepherd,” “I’ll let you stay the night, young man,” and “Tonight, this evening,” but only one of these has so far been recovered (Black). There are Babylonian hymns to Ishtar which largely echo the Sumerian epithets for Inanna (“She of joy, clothed with love,” “adorned with seduction, grace, and sex appeal”; Thureau-Dangin). One poem from the Old Babylonian period is equally influenced by Sumerian examples:

In your delicious lap, the one for lovemaking, your passion is sweet, growing luxuriantly is your “fruit.” My bed of incense is ballukku perfumed. Oh by the crown of our heads, the rings of our ears, the hills of our shoulders, the voluptuousness of our breast, the bracelet of our wrists, the belt of our waist, reach out (and) with your left hand touch our vulva, fondle our breasts, enter, I have opened (my) thighs. (Goodnick-Westenholz)

An apparently new genre are love dialogues between divine couples such as Nabu and his wife Tashmetum, which were probably sung to

the statues of the gods during the daily(?) rituals in their temple (Livingstone: 35f). The language of these songs is less earthy and more metaphorical than in the poem quoted above, and abounds with descriptions of jewelry and ornaments; the divine pair are said to delight in each other in “the garden,” and there are allusions to “twittering birds” and the “plucking of fruit.” The most direct references to sexual activity can be found in the Babylonian potency and love-magic texts, although they cannot be counted as literature in the strict sense (see Biggs). However, there was no such distinction in antiquity, and there are frequent crossovers between omen literature, incantations, spells, and cultic songs with what we perceive as “secular” literature (for the sexual omen texts, see Guinan). The treatment for impotence, diagnosed as the “hand of Ishtar,” consisted of a ritual which included spells with graphic descriptions of animals copulating. In severe cases one could tie a she-goat in heat to a bed and have her mounted by a billy.

Other passages recall hymns to Ishtar and her libidinous powers. Love spells for women wanting to seduce particular men and eliminate a rival also include references to sexuality in animals (“the dog is lying down, the boar is lying down. You, lie down again and again on my thighs”; see Scurlock: 108). Such texts address the psychologically distressing aspects of erotic passion: insecurities about male performance and (female) jealousy. They deal with slander and gossip and doubts about a lover’s faithfulness:

... ([S]o that) she may not love you, may Ishtar, the queen, strike [her] with blindness; may she, like me, be afflicted with sleeplessness; may she be weary, [and toss around] all night. ... I shall attain victory ... over my gossiping women, and I shall [return] happily to my lover. (Held).

A late Babylonian text deals with female rivalry and jealousy as affecting the great god Marduk, his wife Sarpanitum, and his “slippery girl” Ishtar. The injured wife hurls abuse at her rival, who she says “was preferred to me, so I hear, to make love with” and infers that her husband’s lover is but “a little thing one can have for money” and casts spells on her: “Into your vulva, in which you set such great store, I shall make a (guard) dog enter and will tie shut the door.” It mentions the “reek of armpits,” exhorts the women of Babylon not “to give her a rag to

wipe your vulva, to wipe your vagina” (see Edzard; Lambert). Akkadian myths also include erotic episodes. In “Nergal and Ereshkigal,” the goddess of the Underworld, Ereshkigal, pines for a male companion and manages to seduce Nergal on a rare visit to her realm. Despite being warned by the wise god Ea not to “do what comes naturally to men and women,” Nergal embraces Ereshkigal, who appears before him in a transparent gown (see Dalley: 163–81). The Descent of Ishtar to the Underworld describes the consequences of Ishtar’s (temporary) death as the cessation of all copulation, amongst animals and human beings. Ea’s solution was to create a being of ambiguous gender (a castrato? a transsexual?), who tricks Ereshkigal, mistress of the Underworld, into rendering up the corpse of Ishtar to be revived by the Waters of Life. Ereshkigal curses the transsexual “with the Shining Face” by condemning him to a life of destitution in the “shade of the city walls” (Dalley: 154–64). A similar imprecation is uttered by Enkidu against the prostitute in the Gilgamesh epic.

GWENDOLYN LEICK

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# METAMORPHOSIS

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The erotic possibilities of metamorphosis—the change from one physical shape or state to another—have fascinated authors from the earliest times. Ancient stories of metamorphosis stem from the belief that borders between the divine, human, and animal worlds are permeable and fluid. Classical writers, most notably Ovid in his *Metamorphoses* (c. 2 CE) used this idea to examine the relationship between eroticism and marginal states of being, with changing bodies as metaphors for culturally specific desires and fantasies. Christianity's new sexual ideologies brought different literary inflections to metamorphosis. Following the New Testament story of Christ's temptation (Matthew 4:2–3), early Christian and medieval saints' lives are full of eroticized battles between celibate saints and shape-shifting devils who take on various seductive forms to lure the saints into sexual transgression. These human–demon metamorphoses fed into a rich suite of oral literature, from folktales such as *The Frog Prince* and *Beauty and the Beast* to (it might be argued) the stories of erotic shape-shifting preserved in the confessions of women accused of witchcraft. In due course Gothic fiction, with its fascination for boundaries and the links between the supernatural and the erotic, was drawn to metamorphosis, especially in Victorian times. R. L. Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) and other tales of humans changing into animals or animal–human hybrids express the bestial and archaic desires that are never far below the surface of acculturated man. Sheridan Le Fanu's *Carmilla* (1869), Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Grey* (1891), and Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897) are all centered on eroticized bodies metamorphosing between death and life. Sexual comedy has always been a part of literary metamorphoses, too. Shakespeare drew on Apuleius' second-century CE Latin novel of human–animal metamorphosis, *The Golden Ass*, for the love story of Titania and Bottom in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (c. 1595). In the twentieth century, feminist authors in the postmodern

Gothic and magic realist genres reworked metamorphosis stories to interrogate male sexual fantasies about women humorously and ironically.

Myth cycles and hymn cycles preserve the oldest erotic fantasies of metamorphosis, usually based on gods moving between human and animal forms. One Egyptian story relates how the goddess Isis changed from human shape into a bird of prey so that she could alight on the phallus of her dead husband Osiris and be impregnated by him. This was a central episode of a cosmogonic myth, even though the image of a bird-goddess hovering over an aroused corpse may now seem deeply uncanny. Ancient Greek literature, the product of a more patriarchal culture, tends to embed metamorphosis in narratives of sexual pursuit and flight. This was a trope of Greek erotic writing in every genre, because fear of rape was believed to make women more sexually attractive. Typically, Greek metamorphosis stories involve gods pursuing human women (or occasionally vice versa) and the pursued changing shape in order to evade being caught and sexually mastered. Perhaps the most familiar is the story of Daphne, who turns into a laurel tree to avoid being raped by Apollo. In other narratives, metamorphosis is a divine punishment for inappropriate sexual conduct and is connected with other powerful erotic fantasies—voyeurism and sadism. All three are central to the myth of Actaeon, who while out hunting saw the virgin goddess Artemis naked. She changed him into a stag and watched as he was torn apart by his own hounds.

In the first century CE, the myths of Daphne and Actaeon were among many others retold by the Latin poet Ovid in his *Metamorphoses*. Here he drew on the rich pool of Greek mythology to explore the erotic potential of metamorphosis for a sophisticated Roman audience. Many of the metamorphoses Ovid recounts are more sexually aggressive than their Greek originals, since Roman culture relished images of eroticized violence. Stories like that of Tereus and Philomela (*Metamorphoses* 6.411 ff) have disturbingly

misogynistic undertones to modern readers. Tereus abducts Philomela and hides her in a cabin in a forest, where he rapes her and cuts out her tongue so that she can never accuse him. But Philomela takes revenge on Tereus by killing his children and serving them to him at a feast, eventually being changed into a nightingale because she no longer deserves to be human. Ovid cleverly ties together Philomela's brutal forest rape, her awful revenge, and ultimate metamorphosis to explore the idea of the beast in man, with all of its sexual implications.

Translations of the *Metamorphoses* were among the first printed books—William Caxton produced a prose version as early as 1480—and they provided Western writers with a fertile resource of erotic narratives, metaphors, and images. Shakespeare, for instance, makes a version of the Philomela myth central to the erotic machinery of *Titus Andronicus* (1594), and the story of Actaeon figures in *Twelfth Night* (1601). This story particularly appealed to Elizabethan poets and dramatists because it reflected the cultural conceit of the queen's own carefully preserved virginity. But perhaps the story from Ovid most frequently retold in explicitly erotic terms is that of Pygmalion (*Metamorphoses* 10.240ff). Where this differs from other metamorphosis stories is that the change is of physical *state* rather than physical *form*, so that there is a transition from inanimate to animate object of desire. According to Ovid, Pygmalion was a sculptor who fell in love with the statue of a beautiful woman he had carved himself. He dressed it up like a mannequin, and watched it obsessively. Eventually Venus took pity on Pygmalion's passion for the statue and made it come to life. This statue-into-woman metamorphosis has been interpreted as a patriarchal sexual fantasy of woman as passive object of male desire. The eroticism of this dynamic underpins the numerous fantasies of male-created female bodies—mummies, marionettes, or automata—that come to life and interact sexually with humans.

One example is Bram Stoker's *The Jewel of Seven Stars* (1903), a narrative of sexual danger featuring a female mummy revealed by male archaeologists. Angela Carter subverted these conventions in her short story *The Loves of Lady Purple* (1974), a feminist reworking of *Pygmalion*. Here Lady Purple, a puppet who performs in a peep show, comes to life, destroys her creator, and becomes a prostitute. Cynthia Ozick's novella *Puttermesser and Xanthippe* (1982) inflects this basic story differently by introducing the traditional Jewish figure of the golem, a dummy animated by occult knowledge to become the servant of its creator. The heroine, Puttermesser, creates a female golem who helps her become the first woman mayor of New York, but the golem develops into a grotesque parody of the monstrously feminine. Her unleashed sexuality soon wrecks Puttermesser's career.

DOMINIC MONTSERRAT

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## MEUSNIER DE QUERLON, ANGE GABRIEL

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1702–1780

French novelist, critic, journalist, and essayist

### *La tourière des Carmélites*

*The Doorkeeper of the Carmelites, serving as a sequel to “P. des C.” [Portier des Chartreux]* was anonymously published in 1745 and attributed to Meusnier de Querlon by the Marquis de Paulmy. This novel was intended to be the female answer to the adventures of Saturnin, the famous title character in *Le Portier des Chartreux: Histoire de Dom Bougre* (bugger), which was a resounding success in 1741.

Like the *portier* Dom Bugger, Sister Agnès is a doorkeeper (*tourière*), of a community of the Carmelite order, which she has entered at the age of forty-five. By so doing, she has come full circle, having been born in the convent as a result of a clandestine amour of her mother, the prioress, with one of her numerous lovers. Agnès could not but follow in her mother’s footsteps, multiplying in her turn the adventures, which have made her pregnant several times. Nicknamed “Sainte Nitouche” because of her innocent looks, as a young woman she trained in the school of *filles du monde* and entered a career of prostitution. On the backdrop of the Parisian demimonde, she experienced all kinds of adventures, from moments of glory to moments of violence to moments of humiliation, having to change her name and residence when the heat was on, finding herself in prison for syphilis, and trying successively lesbian tribadism, Jesuitism, and Jansenism before opening her own house of pleasure. She meets La Duchapt, a Parisian fashion designer who really existed and was well known in the eighteenth century, who tells her her story. The novel thus presents an account of the tribulations of picaresque heroes, whose lives are precarious lives and fates uncertain. The burlesque scenes are lessons of social philosophy.

Anticlerical satire denudes the hypocrisy of priests. The institutions of power all seem to be schools of vice and sources of injustice and humiliation.

Written with less rigor and imagination than *P. des C.* and less ambitious in claiming a philosophy of pleasure, *La Tourière des Carmélites* nevertheless ups the ante by showing us Agnès making love with her father, a line Dom Bougre (though “released from prejudice”) had refused to cross when invited to the bed of his mother, sister Monique. The ban on incest was henceforth defeated. Having thus taken up where the *Portier* had left off inchoately, *La Tourière des Carmélites* opened the way for the descendants of the Dom Bougre to redress this omission, as in *Mémoires de Suzon, D.B., portier des chartreux* (1778) and *L’Histoire de Marguerite, fille de Suzon, nièce de D.B.* (1784). The network expands. The Dom’s sister and niece spread the fine words that libertinism should be a family affair, and who could doubt it?

### The Greek Novels

Meusnier de Querlon is known for his work in the genre of French eighteenth-century writing that focused on the courtesan of classical antiquity. The trend began with the historical *Les Belles Grecques ou l’histoire des plus fameuses courtisanes de Grèce* [Lovely Greek Women, or the History of the Most Famous Greek Courtesans], published by Catherine Bedacier in 1712. Novels then took over in their turn. After the adventures of Boret’s *Cythéride* (“a gallant history translated from the Greek”) (1743) and of Lycoris (in 1754), and the publication of Godart de Beauchamps’s *Hipparchia, histoire galante, traduite du grec, divisée en trois parties* (1748) (another “gallant history”), Meusnier de Querlon joined the vogue (which crosses that of the girl novels; see *Fougeret de Monbron*) and published *La courtisane philosophe ou l’apologie*

du P\*\*\* (reprinted as *Psaphion ou la courtisane de Smyrne*) [Psaphion, or the Courtesan of Smyrna] (1748). The ancient inspiration also nourishes a part of the *Impostures innocentes*, which in 1761 will gather the collection of light works of Meusnier de Querlon, among which are *Cinname, histoire grecque*.

In *Psaphion ou la courtisane de Smyrne*, Cynare, the most famous courtesan of Ionia, takes care of Psaphion's education: singing, dance, language courses taught by a sophist, reading of the "tender poems" of Sappho and of "soft elegies" of Antimachus—nothing is missing for making the young girl a perfect courtesan. The slave Sussion makes her acquainted with the "amorous ecstasy," before Psaphion imposes herself onto the career as the equal of Aspasia. They nickname her, at the age of sixteen, the "Venus of Smyrna." The story tells of the encounters, debauchery, orgiastic parties, and the successive lovers (vigorous older, dissipated young people) enjoyed by Psaphion, whose main merit is that she knows how "to spiritualize pleasures."

The tale of Cinname is that of a competition between the painter Pausanias and the sculptor Charès: whoever makes the most beautiful image will take away the most beautiful girl of Athens. Charès plans to sculpt the likeness of the fair Cinname. He bribes one of her servants so that while he looks at Cinname behind a divider during her bath, the servant should make her mistress strike the most voluptuous of postures. Apprised of the hidden beauties of his model, Charès takes away the palm leaf before being assassinated. Cinname stays a widow and pure at the end of the story.

In a language loaded with gallant phrases, Meusnier de Querlon re-creates a world devoted to pleasure but crowned by Aphrodite's flowers. Erudition and eroticism meet to extol an image of voluptuosity "à l'antique," as

opposed to the brutal and cynical energy of the obscene novels. Charles Nodier will thus evoke the effeteness and mannered graces of Meusnier de Querlon, who was a giant to those who would celebrate Greek voluptuousness after him, as, for instance, Pierre Louis would do.

Designating his story an "erotic fragment" (relative to amour, in the context of Greek literature), Meusnier de Querlon anticipates the familiar meaning that the word "eroticism" will take (in opposition to "pornography") in the second half of the twentieth century.

### Biography

Born in Nantes, Meusnier de Querlon was a lawyer in Paris in 1723. Recognized for his erudition, he was attached to the guard of the manuscripts of the Royal Library, whose erudite editions he multiplied as a translator of Greek and Latin. He was also active in early journalism, working with several newspapers, most notably the *Affiches de province*. Devoid of livelihood toward the end of his life, he was given charge of the library of the financier Nicolas Beaujon as a means of support.

PATRICK WALD LASOWSKI

### Editions

*La tourière des Carmélites, servant de pendant au "P. des C."* Constantinople: The mufti's printer, 1745.

*Sainte Nitouche, ou l'histoire galante de la tourrière* [sic] *des carmélites: Followed by the history of La Duchapt, published for the first time in full in the author's autograph* [sic] *manuscript, in order to serve as a sequel to the Portier des Chartreux.* London, 1830.

*La courtisane philosophe.* Cologne, 1748. Reprinted the same year under the title of *Psaphion ou la courtisane de Smirne* [sic], erotic fragment translated from Greek by Mnaseas on a manuscript of Lord B\*\*\*, where *Les Hommes de Prométhée* by Thomson has been attached; London [Paris].

# THE MIDNIGHT RAMBLER: OR, THE ADVENTURES OF TWO NOBLE NIGHT-WALKERS

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Eighteenth-century English novel

The anonymous *The Midnight Rambler* is a racy tale in the tradition of eighteenth-century libertinism. Related in 26 pages, the book sold inexpensively for sixpence. The omniscient narrator tells the story of two women, Lady Betty and Mrs. Sprightly, who go out on a “midnight ramble” to trace the ribald escapades of their profligate husbands. Their journey is used to describe the happenings of a night on the town and as a device to make comments on contemporary events.

Taking up the gossip of the day, the story concerns characters referred to as “Persons of Rank and Distinction.” Thus the narrator questions, “Who does not know of *Dorimant*, the Son and Heir apparent of a noble *British Peer*?” He explains that due to the extravagance of *Dorimant*’s ancestors, the family estate had been depleted. His father therefore married off his son to a lady of a “very large Fortune” and set them up with an annuity of 2,000 pounds per annum, while procuring him a post with a large salary entailing little work. Already debauched since his early days, *Dorimant* took off in pursuit of his own pleasures, much to the consternation of his wife, “Lady *Betty* who, as she had been educated in the strictest Principals of Virtue, could not refrain viewing *Dorimant*’s dissolute Course of Life, with the utmost Horror and Detestation.” He spent his evenings in riotous mirth and licentiousness about the taverns of the town and was frequently found in the arms of a courtesan from a bagnio (a bathhouse doubling as a brothel, in much the way that modern massage parlors are said to do). His wife strove hard to reclaim him from the bottle and his mistresses, but finding her admonitions in vain, she assumed the indifference of a lady of quality.

After this introduction to the history of the couple, the story itself takes off.

Ned Sprightly, a close friend of *Dorimant* who lives in the same neighborhood, rarely goes to bed before approach of day and then usually intoxicated with liquor. His wife, the daughter of a country baronet, also takes to the distractions of the metropolis, enjoying the masquerades, balls, assemblies, and town life. Mrs. Sprightly and Lady Betty become friends and combine in a plot to uncover their husband’s nightly rambles, to find out what they are doing and whose company they are keeping. They make plans over a breakfast of a “Dish of Chocolate.” Lady Betty has already ascertained from her drunken husband where they are to go—the Bedford-Arms in Covent Garden Piazza, then on to the Covent Garden playhouse. That night, after fortifying their spirits with a bottle of champagne, the two ladies secretly follow their husbands. They take with them a companion, their milliner, Mrs. Flimm, since she is acquainted with the streets and knows the ways of the town. They spy their husbands in a balcony box with two Town-Misses who frequent the coffeehouses and bagnios. But the night’s rambles take a turn as *Dorimant* and Sprightly make their way to Temple-Bar tavern, and the three women are unable to pursue them because of the rain and lack of coaches in which to follow. The women become entangled in a fight with four streetwalkers they encounter along the Strand and call the night watchman for help. He is in the pay of the whores, but luckily three gallants who have come out of the Crown and Anchor to investigate the commotion leap to their aid. The ladies dine with these gentlemen, a captain of the Foot Guards and two independent gentlemen of small fortunes, and then go on in pursuit of their husbands accompanied by Mrs. Flimm.

They drive on to Temple-Bar, where they expect to find Dorimant and Sprightly, but an accident with their coach, in which a wheel flies off, means they have to trudge on by foot. On the way home, they come across a constable who mistakes them for streetwalkers. Mrs. Flimm has the forbearance to bribe him so he will take them to his own house where they will be safe. From there, they can send for someone who might vouch for their characters. The constable keeps an alehouse and has a wine license, so they refresh themselves as they wait, while Mrs. Flimm sends for a laceman of her acquaintance, who reprimands the constable for causing the ladies such trouble. Making their way home, the two drunken husbands demand that the coach stop to let them get in. Too drunk to recognize the women, the men fall to kissing them. Not until they arrive home do they discover, to their surprise, that it is their own wives whom they have accosted. The husbands promise to mend their ways.

The tale is written as a “Warning to the Female Sex, not to trust themselves abroad on any

Frolicks.” The women’s encounters and adventures are depicted in an atmospheric setting of the town at night, evoking danger, darkness, and difficulties of vision. The moon, rather than street lamps, light their way, highlighting the problems of walking out in the ill-lit alleys and secluded passages of London, which were frequented by robbers and whores.

The four main participants are stock characters—two rakes and their irate wives—who do not have clearly defined individual characteristics. A general sense of confusion is conveyed, as if feeling one’s way through the jumbled events of a drunken evening in the dark streets. The characters are less important than the overall story line, which fits with a genre of tales of nights on the town, with their ensuing escapades.

JULIE PEAKMAN

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## MILLER, HENRY

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1891–1980  
American novelist

Henry Miller’s improbable journey from college dropout to telegram currier for Western Union to struggling writer to banned novelist with a reputation for pornography to an American icon and Nobel Prize nominee is the stuff of literary legend, the quintessential myth of the ribald Romantic artist having leeches into the twentieth century. That journey was finally the subject matter of his quasi-autobiographical novels, what longtime friend Lawrence Durrell called “a single, endless autobiography.” While Norman Mailer hailed him as the “Grand Speliologist of the Vagina,” Miller saw himself as an advocate of human freedom rather than as champion of the libertine life. His principal

preoccupation, like that of all Romantic writers, from Jean-Jacques Rousseau onward, was “the struggle of the human being to emancipate himself, that is, to liberate himself from the prison of his own making.” The heroes he revered were those who did not “impose their authority on man; on the contrary, they sought to destroy authority. Their aim and purpose was to open up life, to make man hungry for life, to exalt life—and to refer all questions back to life” (*The Books of My Life*, 1952).

#### The Tropics

While the *Tropics* were published in Paris in 1934 and 1939, they remained banned as obscene and pornographic in the United States and the United Kingdom until 1964. A breakthrough

might have come in 1958 when Miller was elected to membership in the American Institute of Arts and Letters, the citation calling him “the veteran author of many books whose originality and richness of technique are matched by the variety and daring of his subject matter.” That daring was of course his sexual explicitness in an age of puritan repression. Miller’s American publisher, New Directions Press, quickly issued *The Henry Miller Reader*, edited and with an introduction by Lawrence Durrell. The *Reader* included nothing that might have tested American censorship laws, however, and Durrell opened his introduction by calling attention to an irony: “It would be invidious to make extravagant claims for the genius of an author the better part of whose best work is unavailable to his countrymen.” Miller would need another champion in the United States to make the *Tropics* freely available to his countrymen and to launch him into the pantheon of American writers. This champion appeared as neophyte publisher and anti-censorship crusader Barney Rosset of the fledgling Grove Press.

Rosset bought his first copy of *Tropic of Cancer* from legendary bookseller Frances Steloff of the Gotham Book Mart in New York City shortly after he matriculated at Swarthmore College in 1940. The only edition then available (and that illegally) was the Paris edition published by Jack Kahane’s Obelisk Press. Even Kahane was cautious, however, asking Miller first to write a literary study of D.H. Lawrence to establish his literary legitimacy (finally published as *The World of Lawrence: A Passionate Appreciation* in 1979). For Rosset the appeal of Miller was political not erotic. “I was so naive,” he noted of his undergraduate reading: “I didn’t even know *Tropic of Cancer* was banned in this country. ... I loved it. I’ve never felt *Tropic of Cancer* was at all sexy, but I found it exciting because it was anti-American and anti-conformity. ... I came out of [reading Miller] with a loathing for the United States, and I left school. I read it, and it made that big an impression on me. ... I ran away.” It would take another 21 years before Rosset had the opportunity to share that experience with his and Miller’s countrymen.

While Rosset may not have deemed Miller “at all sexy,” certainly a puritanical America did, since Miller’s work, at its very core, celebrates the human body performing its most private, intimate activities. In the chapter “A Saturday Afternoon” from *Black Spring*, Miller assaults

propriety that denies the honest consideration of the body: “No more peeping through keyholes! No more masturbating in the dark! ... *Unscrew the doors from their jambs!* I want a world where the vagina is represented by a crude, honest slit. ... I’m sick of looking at cunts tickled up, disguised, deformed, idealized.” Miller’s work is thus foremost an assault on propriety and authority, a rejection of “creeds and principles. I have nothing to do with the creaking machinery of humanity—I belong to the earth.” The earth itself is often represented as a female body in all its glorious eroticism:

The earth is ... a great sprawling female with velvet torso that swells and heaves with ocean billows; she squirms beneath a diadem of sweat and anguish. Naked and sexed she rolls among the clouds in the violet light of the stars. All of her, from her generous breasts to her gleaming thighs, blazes with furious ardor. (*Tropic of Cancer*)

By April of 1959 Rosset was determined to risk all and publish Miller’s most audacious work in the United States, and he traveled to Big Sur, California, to make his first offer to Miller, a \$10,000 advance and an agreement that Grove would assume the cost of all litigation involving the book. The following year he upped the ante, proposing a \$10,000 overt payment and \$40,000 against royalties. Miller refused a second time, with surprising rationale: “Part of my reluctance to wage open combat with our American authorities arises from the fact that I see no evidence of genuine revolt in the people themselves. We have no real radicals, no body of men who have the desire, the courage and the power to initiate a fundamental change in our outlook or in our way of life.” Miller feared that if he triumphed it would be as “the king of smut.” Rosset had no such reservations, shunning neither “open combat with our American authorities” nor the label “king of smut.” Miller finally acquiesced once he realized that Rosset was capable of just such “genuine revolt.”

The road to publication of Miller’s *Tropics* was paved on July 21, 1959, by Judge Frederick van Pelt Bryan’s ruling that *Lady Chatterley’s Lover* was a serious work of literature and not, as Postmaster-General Arthur E. Summerfield had claimed, “smutty filth.” The decision was upheld on March 25, 1960, and the US attorney general decided not to bring the case before the

Supreme Court. The *Lady Chatterley* decision enjoined the US Postal Service “from denying the mails to this book or to the circular announcing its availability.” Thus the *Tropics* too would be allowed through the mails once they were published. The legal battles over them would be in defense of individual booksellers prosecuted by local district attorneys. Such prosecution as a means of censorship had been established in the United States as early as 1930 when a bookseller in Massachusetts was convicted of selling a “lewd and obscene” book, Theodore Dreiser’s *An American Tragedy*. To allay the fears of booksellers in 1961, Rosset offered to defend any of them who were prosecuted for selling the books. The result was that Grove fought over 60 separate, local legal cases before the US Supreme Court ruled on June 22, 1964, that the *Tropics* were entitled to constitutional protection under the first amendment.

Part of the legal strategy that finally succeeded was to establish the literary value of the book by soliciting a critical appraisal from Karl Shapiro. In his introduction, Shapiro compared *Tropic of Cancer* to James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (a book itself banned in the United States from 1922 to 1933). Shapiro called Miller’s achievement “miraculous; he is screamingly funny without making fun of sex.” With the publication of the *Tropics*, Miller’s international reputation would grow for a decade, and for three years (1975–78) he was nominated for the Nobel Prize. Norman Mailer compiled a massive anthology of Miller’s work called *Genius and Lust* (1976), which was perhaps the anthology that *The Henry Miller Reader* should have been in 1959. The genius that Durrell could not claim for Miller, Mailer could.

Within the next decade the spirit of the erotic revolution that Miller (and Rosset) championed would face another, more formidable challenge. Despite being among the first writers to recognize and celebrate what he called “female writing” (or what would later come to be called *écriture féminine*) in the work of Anaïs Nin, whose writing, he noted, “rearranges the world in terms of female honesty,” Miller became a target of rising feminism. The writer who battled Anglo-Saxon Puritanism, who criticized American materialism, who attacked middle-class values, who, in fact, led the sexual and moral revolution we loosely call “the Sixties,” was again under attack, but now from the intellectual and political left,

not the moralistic right. The assault was led by Kate Millet, whose *Sexual Politics* (1969) singled out Sigmund Freud, D. H. Lawrence, Norman Mailer, and Henry Miller as writers who dehumanized and so degraded women. For Millet “Miller’s ideal woman is a whore.” She found the emphasis in the novels not on the erotic, or on intimacy, or on the beauty of the nude body, for instance, but simply on fucking—or on the “disassociated adventures of cunt and prick.” Miller’s writing represented “[t]he complete de-personalization of woman into cunt,” and Miller was a writer “converting the female to a commodity.” Such an analysis has had so profound an effect on Miller’s reputation that when Erica Jong came to write her memoir/biography of Miller, *The Devil at Large* (1993), she felt it necessary to apologize for his work before celebrating its spirit, “Because of his sexism, his narcissism, his jibes at Jews. ... He treats women horribly and doesn’t seem to care.” She finally recovers from so scathing an initial critique to celebrate the life force of one of America’s most original and revolutionary writers.

### Biography

Henry Valentine Miller was born in Brooklyn, New York, on December 26. He grew up the son of a tailor, and much of his formal education served him as negative example. He briefly attended the City University of New York in the fall of 1909, and, as he wrote in *It Stands Still Like a Hummingbird* (1962), the required reading of Edmund Spenser’s *The Faerie Queene* turned him toward writing—of a very different sort: “To think that this huge epic is still considered indispensable reading in any college curriculum! ... Let me confess that today it seems even more insane to me than when I was a lad of eighteen. ... What a poor second to Pindar!” Miller went on to become less Pindar than a curious blend of Rabelais and Rimbaud.

In 1917 Miller married Beatrice Sylvas Wickens (a version of whom appears as Maude in *Sexus*), with whom he had a child, but an affair with his mother-in-law upset the first of what became five failed marriages. He soon left his family to live with June Mansfield Smith, a sometime dancer who encouraged his writing and who appears as Mona-Mara in the *Tropics* (1934, 1939), *Black Spring* (1936), and the trilogy *The Rosy Crucifixion* (1965), which includes

## MILLER, HENRY

*Sexus* (1949), *Plexus* (1953), and *Nexus* (1960) and deals with the years before the flight to Paris. In 1922 he had written his first and still unpublished book, *Clipped Wings*, and by 1930, his life having become little more than a long, rosy crucifixion, a penniless Miller headed to France for what would become a decade-long, picaresque romp. In Paris he needed the support of new friends like Alfred Perlés and the writer Anaïs Nin, who was instrumental in arranging for the publication of *Tropic of Cancer* with Jack Kahane, for which volume she wrote a laudatory preface. In an essay entitled “Un Etre Etoilique” (written for T. S. Eliot’s magazine, *The Criterion*, and collected in *Max and the White Phagocytes*, 1938), Miller returned the favor, placing Nin among the great confessional writers, like St. Augustine and Rousseau—and, by implication, like Miller himself. A portion of those confessions from 1931–2 was excerpted for the best-selling *Henry and June: The Unexpurgated Diary of Anaïs Nin* (1986; film version directed by Philip Kaufman, 1990). Miller himself treated that period in *Quiet Days in Clichy* (1956; film versions by Jens Jorgen Thorsen in 1970 and by Claude Chabrol in 1989) and most magnificently in the *Tropics* diptych, *Tropic of Cancer* (Paris, 1934; New York, 1961) and *Tropic of Capricorn* (Paris, 1939; New York, 1961). In the years since, Miller’s principal Paris address, 18 de la Villa Seurat, where much of the *Tropics* was written, has become a literary shrine.

With the prospect of war in Europe, Miller fled Paris in 1940 for Greece and Corfú at the invitation of Lawrence Durrell. The short stay resulted in *The Colossus of Maroussi* (1941) and a lifelong interest in Greece. Miller returned to the United States in 1940, traveling cross-country to take up residence in Big Sur, California, where he spent the next 20 years in semi-seclusion, writing, painting, and becoming an American mystic. The cross-country trip resulted in devastating critiques of American culture, *The Air-Conditioned Nightmare* (1945) and *Remember to Remember* (1947) in particular. The alternative was the harmony Miller finally found in Big Sur and celebrated in *Big Sur and the Oranges of Hieronymous Bosch* (1957)—and in his painting, the spirit of which is captured in the titles of two works: *To Paint Is to Love Again* (1960) and *The Paintings of Henry Miller: Paint as You Like and Die Happy* (1982). In 1960, after the breakup of his fifth marriage, Miller moved to Pacific

Palisades in southern California, where he devoted more time to painting than writing and where he died on June 7.

S.E. GONTARSKI

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## MILLET, CATHERINE, AND JACQUES HENRIC

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1948–  
 Contemporary art critic  
*La vie sexuelle de Catherine M.*

### Henric, Jacques

1938–  
 Essayist and novelist  
*Légendes de Catherine M.*

### *La Vie sexuelle de Catherine M.*

Catherine millet's autobiographical text entitled *La vie sexuelle de Catherine M.* was first

published in 2001 and is now a best seller, translated into more than thirty languages. It received the "Prix Sade," dedicated to freethinking, awarded to a book that surpasses the boundaries of censorship or political and moral oppression. Her husband, Jacques Henric, also published in 2001 an autobiography entitled *Légendes de Catherine M.*, complemented by essays and 50 photographs depicting his wife in the nude.

*La vie sexuelle* consists of four chapters, written in a simple, refined and oftentimes crude style, and portrays unashamed Millet's sexuality as uninhibited by cultural taboos. It relates, for



instance, many group-sex experiences. The first chapter, entitled “Le nombre” [Numbers], begins, not surprisingly, by highlighting the author’s fancy for numbers. During her childhood, the author spent much time partaking in numeric-based activities. Ironically, as an adolescent, in the weeks following the loss of her virginity, seeing no moral conflict, Catherine M. starts a long series of sexual encounters with multiple partners. Millet specifies that at present, she can count 49 men with a name, or in some cases with a basic identity, with whom she has had intercourse. It is impossible, however, for her to put a number “on those that blur into anonymity.” This notion of anonymity summarizes exactly the essence of her book. An emissary for a sexual network, it is impossible for Millet to know all of the players. The numerous identities of the men encountered in her sexual activities finish by merging into a long blur of flesh.

The two following chapters, entitled “L’Espace” [Space] and “L’Espace replié” [Confined Space], associate physical love with the conquest of space. The author reveals her need for travel, on geographical terms, in order to access, through a symbolic identity quest, some parts of herself. Millet relates her experiences in the outdoors as well as travel memoirs, then in closed spaces. In “L’Espace replié” Millet relates various sexual episodes where the relationship to pain (caused by headaches, for example) is perceived as another manner through which to disintegrate the Self, just as pleasure, displeasure, and abjection allow her to escape her body’s fleshiness and consequently attain a state of well-being. However, the withdrawal into pain does not provide any excitement, whereas an unknown gaze provides the reverse effect. The gaze of the “Other” assumes an important place of protection and security in Millet’s narrative.

Her husband, Jacques Henric, always prefers transitional spaces of passage when taking nude photographs of her. For example, Millet describes how, at the Port-Bou train station in Spain, she modeled for her husband wearing an unbuttoned dress despite the masses of people nearby. It is with this same scene that Jacques Henric begins *Légendes de Catherine M.* Over a span of 30 years, Henric took pictures of his wife’s body that, despite the years he claims, has not lost any beauty. These photographs, of which Henric emphasizes the banality and repetition, compose a family album with his wife as

the only member. None of those photographs should be considered pornographic, a genre that Henric admits having little use for, his interest tending toward the way in which space and the body interact. For the author, nudity empowers his wife, her sex becoming a source of energy. Throughout Henric’s narration, he specifies, on many occasions, how Catherine is the inspiration for his novels’s feminine characters. Between the photographs, the author retells, while also alluding to writers such as Georges Bataille, the story behind the snapshots. Despite the photographs, Henric’s narrative is less erotic than *La vie sexuelle de Catherine M.*

In Millet’s last chapter, “Détails” [Details], the author confesses that pleasure was never considered the motive behind her sexual experiences, further emphasizing that the precise descriptions of her body and her sexual acts in fact created a detachment from the Self; writing a book in the first person thus helps Millet see herself from a third-person perspective. Sexual orgasm procures for the author this same feeling: one of distancing one’s self from the body. Catherine Millet talks willingly about her sexuality, establishing nonetheless a distinction between love and sex. Millet only briefly alludes to her conjugal life, while still underlining that her sexual promiscuity diminished with the beginning of this relationship.

After having given her body away to many men, Millet’s body is then literally read in *La vie sexuelle de Catherine M.* and left at the disposition of the viewer in *Légendes de Catherine M.* In 2004, Jacques Henric’s *Comme si notre amour était une ordure* was even more explicit regarding his wife’s sexual life and the aftermath of their book’s publication. He also describes what he felt while viewing pornographic videos featuring his wife, Catherine. In its own way, this book attempts to reunite love and sexuality.

### Biography

Born in France, Catherine Millet (1948–) is editor and cofounder of the French art magazine *Art Press*. Well known in the art milieu, she has published several books of art criticism, including *L’Art contemporain* (1997). She is married to Parisian Jacques Henric (1938–), a French essayist, novelist, and collaborator on the *Art Press* project.

NATHALIE DUMAS

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## MILLOT, MICHEL, OR JEAN L'ANGE

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Mid-seventeenth-century French sex manual writer

***L'École des filles* (attributed)**

One aspect of the development of publishing in the seventeenth century was the appearance of numerous practical manuals on a variety of subjects, from horsemanship to fencing, gaming, agriculture and the like. The earliest books of this type often seemed more interested in quoting literary sources or humanistic knowledge than getting down to business. As the century progressed, however, more and more of these books offered relatively “practical” knowledge of their subject. Instead of quoting Vitruvius, a later book might actually explain how to build a building.

Ovid and Aretino notwithstanding, Millot's (or L'Ange's) *L'École des filles* of 1655 really offers the first practical sex manual published

in France and perhaps in the Occident. The author makes his intentions clear from the beginning:

Beautiful and curious ladies, here is the School of your wisdom and the collection of the principal things you will want to know to satisfy your husbands when you are married; it is the infallible secret to make yourselves loved by men, even if you are not beautiful.

There follows an Aretino-like dialogue (opinions are divided as to whether the *École des filles* was actually influenced by Aretino or is merely similar to it) between an experienced woman and a young, more naive girl—Suzanne and Fanchon. There follows a sort of anatomy lesson, with vocabulary like “cul, con, vit et couillons” (ass, cunt, dick, and balls). Fanchon is interested in a certain Monsieur Robinet, and Suzanne encourages her to overcome her shyness the next time he comes over. There follows

a lengthy and perhaps repetitious recital of sexual encounters—with varying positions, “mignardises” [delicacies], rosebuds and jasmine incense, and the like.

Michel Camus comments that *L'École des filles* is almost exactly contemporary with the very differently inspired *Carte du Tendre*, Madeleine de Scudery's anti-vulgarian précieuse. What the two texts have in common, as mid-seventeenth-century productions, is the way they move in an orderly, progressive fashion, expressing each in its own way this classicist aesthetic.

Indeed, the *École des filles* is curiously and methodically annotated, with over a hundred and fifty subject headings paralleling its explicit, sexy narrative—so that when Suzanne explains:

This is how it happens: sometimes the boy and the girl are alone in a bedroom or in a garden, it doesn't matter where, and they make small talk; most often it doesn't occur to them to give each other pleasure, because of some other concern they might have; and the boy would merely like to kiss her once before leaving, just to be polite. The girl, who knows about such things, as soon as she feels the boy's mouth press against her own, pushes the point of her tongue little by little into his mouth and rubs it against his lips so energetically that she puts the boy in the mood. He asks her to begin again. Then the girl can take another pleasure and, having looked all around to see if anyone is watching, she puts her tongue in the boy's mouth and kisses him, sliding her hand over his organ, which she takes hold of inside his fly

all the while, the subheadings are indicating soberly: “[23] “Great and different virtues of the hand of a girl to give pleasure to boys ... [24] First virtue. [25] Second virtue,” and so on.

In the later parts of their discourses, as the *argument* explains, the two women “investigate and examine everything which relates to love and its game, and do so with such rare and tickling and amusing and new questions, so subtle and so convincing, that they inspire love as they are read” (they get pretty philosophical: Descartes's method prescribed that his inventories should be complete and omit nothing). Actually, the last parts of *L'École des filles* introduce the well-known theory of Platonic love, the reunification of separated souls, the power of feminine beauty, and its resemblance to divine beauty. The author adapts this view to his own

ideas opposing conventional morality and favoring all-out sex.

Meanwhile the various editions of *L'École des filles* had a curious history of being found in the bedrooms of various womanizers and aristocratic daughters of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries—Louis XIV's sometime treasury minister Fouquet, various daughters and ladies in waiting of Louis XV, and the like.

### Biography

Not much is known about Michel Millot or Jean L'Ange (but see Lachèvre below). One or both of them presented the manuscript to a Paris printer—who accepted payment and then turned them over to the police. L'Ange was sentenced to five years in the galleys, a sentence later reduced. Millot, who benefited from higher social standing and apparently had friends in high places—possibly the ribald novelist Paul Scarron, or even Scarron's wife, Françoise D'Aubigné, later to marry Louis XIV—was simply burned in effigy with most of the copies of the book, and he himself was allowed to flee. Nowadays there is apparently no known copy of the first (1655) edition, with extant texts based on later publications.

HERBERT DE LEY

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# MINUT, GABRIEL DE

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1520–1587

Essayist, humanist

Gabriel de Minut is the author of two medical texts, the first published before 1584, possibly in Toulouse, of which only the title has survived: *Dialogue au soulagement des affligés. Interlocuteurs: Gabriel, malade patient, et Blaise, chirurgien agent*. The second was published in Lyon in 1587, *Morbi Gallos infestantis salubris curatio et sancta medicina, hoc est malorum, quoe intestinum crudeleque Gallorum bellum inflammant, remedium*. Gabriel wrote an unpublished musical treatise with Louis du Pin that discusses the influence of the musical score written by Antoine de Bertrand (c. 1530–1581) for the first book of the “Amours de Cassandre” of Pierre de Ronsard. There also exists in manuscript form a study on astrology by Minut (*Alphabet de l’astrologie judiciaire*).

## *De la beauté*

Gabriel de Minut wrote *De la beauté* [*On Beauty*] but was not able to publish it himself because of his death shortly after he composed the text in 42 nights. He had planned to dedicate it to the queen mother, Catherine de Medici. His sister, Charlotte de Minut, abbess of a Toulouse monastery, took it upon herself, after she found the manuscript among his papers, to write an epistle to the queen mother in order to get it published.

As *De la beauté* points out, Minut’s discourse is based on the tenet that “ce qui est naturellement beau, est aussi naturellement bon” [What is naturally beautiful is also naturally good]. He bases this statement on the scriptures, the Greek *χαλδὸν χάλαθδα*, and the Hebrew *בְּרֵךְ*. The author uses many examples from antiquity to illustrate and corroborate his discourse.

The text recalls first how in antiquity people revered beautiful creatures, so that a beautiful person was worthy of a kingdom. At the same time, it is said that ugly newborns were to be suffocated at birth. It also discusses Theban law as it affected the raising of children (branding

for Theban identification, forbidding marriage with foreigners, building of one’s tomb before one’s house, and killing ugly girls and sacrificing them to the Gods). Minut then offers the argument of the possible metamorphosis of an ugly girl into a beautiful one by changing the milk she drank. Minut recalls that in certain cultures, men allowed their wives to have sex with other men in order to procreate beautiful children, because it was believed then that a better seed would produce a better harvest. Minut condemns this practice. He then tells of women who affect the looks of their child-to-be by looking at the portrait of a beautiful person. This allows an indiscreet married woman to have the child of another man without being found unfaithful because the child will look very much like her husband. Thus it can happen that a common person may look very much like a monarch or a common man—Minut cites the example of Martin Guerre. At this point, Minut introduces a quick story dealing with Nero, leaving it to the reader’s discretion to believe it or not: the Roman emperor is reported to have had an anal incision performed on his servant Sporus as an alternative to having sex with the empress Sabine.

If children’s beauty does not match that of their parents, the reason may be that they were conceived, for instance, after a time when the parents had been sick. It is quite important to make sure that children are taught to behave properly in their youth so that they will not act lasciviously as adults. It is also suggested to parents that they should be aware of their children’s friendships if they wish to keep them away from corruption and vices. Bawdiness is to be put under check especially because humans can perform sexual acts all the time. Bathing in virtue is preferable to wallowing in vice, the author suggests.

A child, Minut advises repeatedly, should not drink the milk of anyone but his mother, to prevent inheriting someone else’s bad complexion or ill temper: this is used to explain Caligula’s bad temper, as it is recorded that on one occasion he

drank the blood of his nurse after she had been stabbed. Nursemaids should be avoided also because of alcoholism. A woman who is addicted to alcohol is also addicted to sex. According to Minut, the planets do not play a role in deciding the beauty or ugliness of a person. Rather, it is God's will that determines such choice.

Beauty can be a dangerous gift: Minut tells the story of one Democles, who decided to throw himself into a cauldron of boiling water rather than accept the advances of a certain Demetrius.

The last important discussion in *De la beauté* centers around three types of beauties in women. The first is the beauty of the body, which is qualified as being seditious or scandalous; the second is the beauty of the mind, which is qualified as soberly ribald; and the third is the beauty of the soul, which is qualified as a religious beauty, holy, chaste, and modest.

*De la beauté* is followed by a curiously titled text: *La Paulegraphie* [*The Paula-ography*], a detailed description of a cousin of Minut named Paule Viguier. Minut explains that he introduced the three types of beauty as a temple to the glory of *la belle Paule*, a woman without compare from pole to pole. Born around 1518, she was considered to be the epitome of beauty in her days and was ordered by the Toulouse municipal magistrates to appear on her balcony twice a day to avoid riots in the city. When King François I visited Toulouse in April 1533, he received the keys of the city from her hands. She was married twice and died in 1607. It is quite possible that Minut wrote *De la beauté* because, even late in life, he was enamored of his cousin—he is reported to have written poems to her two weeks before his death. Once Minut has lavished his praise upon Paule, he begins a detailed description of her, starting with her hair (a mixture of gold and silver), which is long enough to hide her naked body. He then describes her forehead as a true representation of her personality. Her sky-blue eyes perfectly fit the size of her face. Her eyebrows match so symmetrically well that one could think they were painted. Her straight nose has the shape that surpasses any other. Her lips and her cheeks are of the perfect color. The shape of her ears are an indication of her good, gentle, and generous spirit, just as her earlobes point to her lenient character, free of anger and dissent. Her chin and throat are of a perfect white marble hue. Based on the testimony he has received, Paule's

breasts are more beautiful than any others in shape, size, and skin tone. After a description of her arms and hands, her belly is described as small, round, white, and firm. Mentioning the area described as *la porte pour la sortie des enfants* [the gate through which children exit] allows Minut to discuss the chastity of *la belle Paule* as one who should not be touched or mentioned. The same goes for her thighs, although Minut assumes that they are perfect because the rest of her body is. The buttocks are described as small cushions. *La Paulegraphie* concludes with an *envoi* that summarizes the beauty and goodness of *la belle Paule*.

### Biography

Gabriel de Minut, baron de Castera, was born in southern France. He spent most of his life in the city of Toulouse, but it is doubtful that this was the place of his birth. His father, Jacques de Minut, died on November 6, 1536, after he had held the prestigious office of first president of the Parliament of Toulouse. At the age of 15, Gabriel started studying law, philosophy, medicine, and theology at the University of Paris. Later, he was the seneschal of Rouergue, an area east of Toulouse that would not become a part of France until 1607. He was attached to the staff of the queen mother and was an ordinary gentleman of the king's chamber. In *De la beauté*, Minut's major work, he digresses in chapter 15 to introduce briefly his ancestors in classical Rome as being one of its most important families, who are even mentioned by Cicero, while another ancestor is introduced as a captain of one of Pompey's legions. He is generally considered one of the most learned scholars of his time, as demonstrated by his best-known work, *De la beauté*.

CLAUDE FOUILLADE

### Selected Works

*De la beauté; discours divers pris sur deux fort belles façons de parler, desquelles l'hébreu et le grec usent, l'hébreu Tob, et le grec Kalon Kagaçon, voulant signifier ce qui est naturellement beau et aussi naturellement bon. Avec La Paule-graphie; ou, Description des beautés d'une dame tholosaine, nommée la belle Paule.* Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1969.

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# MIRBEAU, OCTAVE

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1848–1917  
French writer

## *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre*

According to the preface to *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1900), it is a genuine diary, written by Célestine R., a real chambermaid, who would have hardly asked Octave Mirbeau for help with editing—but this claim is transparently a literary device enabling the author to write in the first person. Célestine did not have a happy childhood in Brittany: her father died when she was very young, and her violent, alcoholic mother became a low-class prostitute. As a teenager, Célestine left her hometown of Audierne to go to Paris and earn a meager living as a chambermaid (interestingly, Mirbeau himself occasionally worked as a manservant in Paris in the late 1870s).

The diary starts in mid-September 1899 when Célestine arrives at the fictitious village of Mesnil-Roy in Normandy, about to start a new job working for the umpteenth time as a chambermaid—this time for the wealthy but reclusive Lanlaire family at their austere mansion called Le Prieuré. Célestine will keep her diary for several weeks, both chronicling her daily life and service at Le Prieuré and recounting over twenty incidents that happened to her with previous employers in Paris. Without any narrative chronology, all these stories, rich in anecdotes, portraits, and descriptions, intertwine two major themes: the chambermaid's dire life and her employers' decadence, with several minor themes in the background: the hypocrisy of Catholicism, the bourgeoisie's moral decay, nationalism, and social scandals. The perverse nature of the relationship between masters and servants lies at the heart of all the stories, usually with an element of sex, with the maid invited to sleep with a male member of the household (sometimes the father, sometimes the son or even the grandson, or the chief butler) and,

without much resistance, Célestine would accept, as a good working girl is expected to do. Calculating but always honest, Célestine explains and justifies her behavior, even when she knows that it was not ethical (for instance, with young Monsieur Georges, who is terribly ill and weak and ends up dying whilst having sex with her).

Whilst narrating all these past stories, Célestine languishes at Le Prieuré, failing to find much interest in local gossip and loathing Madame Lanlaire's despising attitude. Henpecked Monsieur Lanlaire (who regularly has sex with the insipid cook Marianne) and poison-tongued neighbor Rose (who proudly shares her employer's bed) are of little interest to Célestine, unlike the mysterious factotum Joseph, who has been working for the Lanlaire family for fifteen years. Initially repulsed by his monstrous ugliness, she gradually falls in love with him, even if he is probably a rapist and murderer (though this is never fully clarified), as well as a thief, eventually robbing the Lanlaire family of their silver. After some awkward courting, he offers Célestine marriage—she briefly hesitates then accepts, realizing that no man has ever excited her as much as Joseph. The last chapter of the book is almost an epilogue, written eight months later. Célestine briefly narrates how she is now married to Joseph; they have left Le Prieuré and are now happily settled in Cherbourg, where, ironically enough, they have their own domestics. They own a small café called "A l'Armée Française," which is rapidly becoming the favorite meeting point of all local anti-Semitic, militarist activists.

Written as a satire of Parisian society in the wake of the Dreyfus affair, this long novel ends up being an excellent sociological and historical documentary about the decadence and hypocrisy of the Parisian upper classes at the turn of the twentieth century and about the condition of chambermaids (and servants in general, be they cooks or footmen). It is a fine piece of social criticism (showing Mirbeau's talents as a radical journalist and cynical social commentator), yet it was dismissed by many critics of the time as

## MIRBEAU, OCTAVE

pornography and was initially banned in the United States: in 1901, the American anarchist Benjamin Tucker attempted to publish his own translation, but the US Postal Service, under the puritanical guidance of Anthony Comstock, put a stop to it on grounds of obscenity (Tucker later deleted some of the book's best passages and released an abridged edition). All these claims and the subsequent censorship are due to the fact that the book depicts a wide range of sexual acts, from fetishism (the first story, only three pages into the book, is that of an elderly gentleman with a fetish for women's leather boots, Monsieur Ravour, who dies in his bed with one of Célestine's boots in his mouth, having seemingly choked to death) to lesbianism (which Célestine discovered with her friend Cléclé when working in a convent run by exploitative nuns).

*Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* has inspired two of the best filmmakers of the twentieth century: Jean Renoir (1894–1979) and Luis Buñuel (1900–1983). Renoir's version, released in 1946 with Paulette Goddard and Burgess Meredith (who were both also coproducers), was highly praised, yet less so than Buñuel's 1964 version: with Jeanne Moreau as Célestine, Buñuel's film has become a classic (though it must be said that it took some distance from Mirbeau's original story line). Mirbeau is now becoming fashionable again, with all of his work coming back into print; his play *Les Affaires sont les affaires* [*Business Is Business*] (1904) made a triumphal return to the Paris stage in 1995, and his novels are again being translated and published in English, some for the first time. There is very little in terms of secondary literature about Mirbeau, though; the main specialist is French scholar Pierre Michel, who is the director of the Société Octave Mirbeau.

In terms of erotic imagery, the key element of *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* is the French maid as object of desire, with her strict uniform: a black dress with long sleeves, a white ribbon tie-back apron, and a lace headpiece, yet a French maid who is not a naive ingénue: Célestine is the French maid who knows how to manipulate men to her advantage. Almost a literary archetype, she is a key character of the *commedia dell'arte* of erotic literature.

### Biography

Octave Mirbeau was a political activist (an anarchist) and a man of letters in the broadest sense; he published widely, as a novelist, playwright, ghostwriter, art critic, and journalist. Yet, nowadays he is remembered mainly for two books: *Le Journal d'une femme de chambre* and *Le Jardin des supplices* [*Torture Garden*] (1899), a bildungsroman about Chinese tortures and sadomasochism that doubles as a political pamphlet denouncing murder and colonialism.

LOYKIE LOÏC LOMINÉ

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# MISHIMA, YUKIO

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1925–1970

Japanese novelist, dramatist, and essayist

The sexuality, eroticism, and fascination with the body that characterize much of Mishima's literary work are also clearly discernible in his life. He was a vocal critic of the consumerism that he believed had polluted Japan and led to the loss of traditional samurai virtues. Mishima felt that the Japanese "salaryman," the archetypal emblem of postwar masculinity, had become effeminate, and he invested a great deal of effort in bodybuilding in pursuit of his own perfect masculine body. He was later to write about the transformation of his body from that of an effete intellectual to a man of action in the homoerotically charged *Taiyō to tetsu* [*Sun and Steel*] (1968).

Mishima's exhibitionism was notorious; he appeared dressed in a *fundoshi* (traditional loincloth) in several photo albums extolling the beauty of the male form, including *Bara-kei* [*Ordeal by Roses*] (1963) and *Taidō* [*The Way of the Body*] (1967). He also starred in macho roles in a number of gangster movies. Despite marrying and fathering two children, as was expected of a man of his class, Mishima had strong homosexual inclinations. He was attracted to members of the working classes, particularly manual laborers, who feature as objects of desire in several of his novels.

Mishima was not conscripted during the Second World War because of ill health. However, he was nostalgic for the homosocial world of the soldier, and in 1967 he began training with Japan's Self-Defense Forces. In 1968, he founded a paramilitary group known as the Shield Society, which was pledged to protect the emperor and his interests. Mishima invested a great deal of energy training with these men and in designing their uniforms, and he seems to have been attempting to re-create something of the homoerotic ethos of the samurai era. Indeed, at this time he published *Hagakure nyūmon* [*The Way of the Samurai*] (1967), a commentary on a

little-known samurai text from the eighteenth century that extolled *nanshoku* (male homoeroticism) and praised the willingness of the samurai to die for his master. In a now-famous maxim, it is argued in *Hagakure* that "[t]he way of the samurai is death," and Mishima clearly saw his own suicide by *seppuku* (ritual disembowelment) as a continuation of this samurai practice. His own death was anticipated by two graphically depicted *seppuku* scenes in the short story *Yūkoku* [*Patriotism*] (1966) and in the novel *Homba* [*Runaway Horses*] (1969).

Mishima was well read in works of Western sexology, and he incorporated in his novels ideas from Freud and Magnus Hirschfeld, along with Eastern themes deriving from Hinduism and Buddhism. The compulsive nature of sexual desire lies at the heart of much of his fiction, where it proves to be a dark, destructive force that cuts through social convention, driving characters from high and low social strata alike to acts of violence and depravity. *Kamen no kokuhaku* [*Confessions of a Mask*] (1949) is a semi-autobiographical work in which Mishima writes of his discovery of masturbation, brought about by his coming across Guido Reni's painting of St. Sebastian pierced by arrows. In the novel he speaks of his incipient desire for the night-soil collector, whose job it was to clean out the latrines, and of his sadistic fantasies where "young Roman gladiators offered up their lives for my amusement" and a naked schoolmate was served up to him on a plate. Scenes of necrophilia were to recur throughout his later fiction.

Images of sex, death, and the body's animal functions are common. *Ai no kawaki* [*Thirst for Love*] (1950) describes the passion a rich young widow feels for a local farmhand. When she observes him cavorting at the local shrine festival clad only in a loincloth, she frenziedly scratches his back with her nails. Yet, when he responds to her advances, she panics and kills him with a scythe. *Gogo no eikō* [*The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea*] (1963) features



## MISHIMA, YUKIO

another widow, this time besotted with a sailor. In this story, the widow's thirteen-year-old son watches his mother making love to the sailor through a chink in the wall. For the son, the sailor's capitulation to desire for a woman makes him a fallen hero and he hatches a plan to poison and then mutilate him.

In the novels, sex is a demonic force that leads the possessed individual to transgress all rules of etiquette and personal decorum, leading to downfall. This theme is brilliantly explored in *Kinjiki* [*Forbidden Colors*] (1951). In this novel, Yuichi, "an amazingly beautiful young man" whose body "surpassed the sculptures of ancient Greece," brings disaster to the lives of all his lovers, both men and women. Mishima shows how the power of youthful physical beauty can defeat riches, breeding, or education. He shows sexual desire to be a great leveling force that brings all men and women, no matter how rich, well born, or erudite back down to the level of their primal animal natures. For Mishima beauty was something terrible, a force that could consume and annihilate the lover. This theme is dealt with metaphorically in *Kinkakuji* [*The Temple of the Golden Pavilion*] (1956), in which a young priest, driven mad by the beauty of the temple, burns it down.

Beauty does not last in Mishima's novels; most youthful lovers either kill themselves or are murdered. In his last work, the tetralogy *Sea of Fertility* (1965–1970), the original hero of the novel either kills himself (or, in the third volume, *herself*) or dies at the end of each novel and is reincarnated in the next. Honda, the hero's best friend from the first book, survives to reencounter his friend in each subsequent reincarnation; but while his friend lives and then dies at the peak of his/her beauty, Honda lives on to face an old age of senility and decrepitude. *Tennin gosui* [*The Decay of the Angel*] (1970), the title of the final volume, completed the night before Mishima's suicide, is a reference to the Buddhist belief that even the gods, when their store of merit is exhausted, fall from their lofty perches back into the world of human suffering. The obsession with the terrifying nature of beauty and distaste for its inevitable decline dealt with in many of Mishima's novels help explain what was to follow.

On November 25, 1970, Mishima and a group of followers from the Shield Society stormed the office of the commander-in-chief of the

Self-Defense Forces in an attempt to convince him to support Mishima's demand for constitutional reform that would allow Japan to rearm and restore the full rights of the emperor. When it became clear that the attempt had failed, Mishima committed ritual suicide by cutting open his belly, while his second in command, reputedly his lover, decapitated him with a samurai sword. Mishima's suicide struck most Japanese as a perversely anachronistic gesture, coming as it did on the eve of Japan's most spectacular period of growth and prosperity.

Today, Mishima remains a controversial and slightly embarrassing figure in Japan. Over thirty years after his suicide, the gruesome circumstances of his death that mirror so closely scenes described in his novels still make it difficult to disentangle Mishima's life from his art.

### Biography

Yukio Mishima is the pen name of Kimitake Hiraoka, who was born in Tokyo on January 14. His ancestors on his father's side were of peasant origin, although both his father and his grandfather were government officials; his mother's forebears were of upper-class samurai stock. Mishima was sent to the elite but austere Peers' School, where he showed precocious literary talent, publishing his first short story while still a student. He graduated first in his class in 1944, later attended the prestigious Law Department of Tokyo University, and served a brief stint in the finance ministry. Then he turned to writing full time. His first novel was not well received, but his second, *Confessions of a Mask*, was a critical success which launched him on a literary career that was to result in over thirty books, including novels, short stories, essays, and plays. This prolific career was brought to an abrupt and premature end with Mishima's suicide at the age of forty-five.

MARK McLELLAND

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## MISTRAL, GABRIELA

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1889–1957

Chilean poet, cultural ambassador, and educational reformer

Gabriela Mistral's writing career began in 1914 when *Sonetos de la muerte* [*Sonnets of Death*] received a commendation during the Juegos Florales de Santiago, one of Chile's most prestigious literary competitions. This was also the first occasion on which she employed the sobriquet Gabriela Mistral, a name derived from that of her two favorite poets: Gabriele D'Annunzio and Frédéric Mistral. She herself thought that her existence was marred by tragedy—the broken home of her own childhood, the suicide of her lover, and her failure to have children of her own. Out of such personal sadness, however, she wove the rich tapestry of her poetry, which is marked by its compassion, warmth, humanity, and love of children.

Treated with hostility in her own country, her talents were first recognized in neighboring Latin American states. Mistral's anti-establishment ideas and left-wing views—both inspired by Christian humanism—made her unpopular with her peers and other members of the teaching profession. This was especially true of the Santiago bourgeoisie, who considered her a *criolla*—an ignorant peasant woman. National newspapers such as *El Mercurio* and *El Diario Ilustrado* refused to publish her articles after she

attacked the regime of Gabriel Gonzalez Videla (1949–1952), not only for persecuting Pablo Neruda, the eminent poet and member of the Chilean Senate, but also for first labeling as Communists and then dismissing hundreds of public employees.

In 1922 she accepted the invitation of José Vasconcelos to become Mexico's guest of honor and take part in the plan to establish new secondary schools and libraries—put into effect by the Mexican government after the Revolution (1910–1917). Aged thirty-three, Mistral went into voluntary exile. Except for rare visits to her native country, she would spend the rest of her life outside Chile. Indeed, Chile's failure to recognize her talents as a poet is reflected in her publishing record. Mistral's only volume of poetry to appear in Chile before being brought out elsewhere was the 1954 collection *Lagar* [*Winepress*].

Although Mistral focuses mainly on spiritual rather than physical or erotic love, the language used to describe religious and spiritual passion is very much eroticized. Eroticism is never described as experienced in the flesh; it is all the same enhanced by religious experience, a tendency toward asceticism, unsatisfied maternal yearnings, and a natural communion with the land.

In her *Sonetos de la muerte*, the central theme is grief over the death of a lover. Physical love is

portrayed as an elusive goal, achievable only in death, which in turn symbolizes the safe haven where rest can be achieved. Spiritual love, a love that has the power to right all wrongs, is equated with poetry. In *Desolación*, *Tala*, and *Lagar* Mistral turns a mystic eye on basic elements such as water, light, and earth, as well as salt, maize, and bread, often in relation to indigenous rituals. Mistral's "Pan" [Bread] (from *Poesías completas* 1976: 350) is particularly charged with sexual imagery. The protagonist feels in ecstasy when the smell of freshly baked bread gets to her. The sensual experience continues as she opens it, penetrating the white, warm, soft bun with her fingers, anticipating the joy of pacifying her oral and tactile cravings. This is described in such a way that it clearly evokes carnal pleasure. Water becomes a particularly sensual topic, which Mistral associates with the washing off of sins and compares to a lover. In her poem "El agua" [Water], Mistral tells a little child that fear of water is worth experiencing in anticipation of the exhilarating pleasure the stream will give him. Water is also a source of oral pleasure, as it calms one's thirst. Furthermore, it symbolizes fertility, for it makes nature bloom. For Mistral, physical pleasure is also experienced when in contact with Latin American landscapes and its pre-Columbian cultures. In "América" (*Poesías completas* 1976: 359), maize, central to the culture and diet of the Aztecs, becomes irresistible gold that, when kissed, brings spirits to life. The corn plant becomes a symbol of virility, whose erect fruit seduces gods, humans, and birds alike.

The theme of love is ever-present in Mistral's metaphysical poems *Desolación*, *Tala* and *Lagar*. Nevertheless, unlike other female post-modern South American writers (such as Delira Agustini, 1886–1914; Juana de Ibarbourou, 1892–1928; and Alfonsina Storni, 1892–1979) Mistral is not concerned with love as an erotic force but with love as a spiritual entity: the love of God, nature, and one's fellow creatures.

During her formative years the Bible was Mistral's main source of moral instruction and poetic inspiration. This would be reflected in her work as a whole, which replicates her religious beliefs, the renunciation of carnal desire, and the insistence of continual self-purification. It is perhaps because of this that her *Cartas de amor* [Love Letters] created such controversy at the time, since they revealed an unknown side of

Mistral's persona. Her *Cartas* are addressed to the writer Manuel Magallanes Moure, a renowned writer and public figure at the time. They maintained an intense, though chaste, epistolary relationship; actually Mistral set eyes on Magallanes only once. Although her erotic desire is never addressed, Mistral's letters reveal her need for a perhaps more carnal relationship. Indeed, at times the letters fill the void of carnal love; Mistral confesses to Magallanes that sometimes after reading his letters she has to lie down, physically exhausted, her heart pounding after so much romance, his words so sweet that they actually touch her.

Mistral's correspondence is extremely frank, although inclined to safeguard the "mystery" of her sexuality. As it develops, the reader gains a privileged insight into Mistral's innermost feelings toward herself: she heroically and blatantly confesses being aware of her "rough looks" and lack of femininity. Because of that, she is determined to keep her love affair exclusively to the writing and the reading, to save her platonic lover from having to kiss her and caress and make love to an ugly woman. When Magallanes finally deserts her to marry a wealthy bride from Santiago, Mistral resolves to devote the rest of her life to the poor, the weak, and the downtrodden, to compensate for her lack of romantic attachment by dedicating herself to children, and thus exploiting her maternal drive in her role of devoted teacher.

### Biography

Lucila Godoy Alcayana, who wrote under the pen name Gabriela Mistral, was born in Vicuña, Chile, in April. Despite her hostility to the Chilean regime, she represented Chile at the League of Nations (1926), was consul at Naples (1932), Madrid, and Lisbon (both in 1933), and later became plenipotentiary minister responsible for promoting Spanish and American literature and culture. In 1945 she became the first Latin American to receive the Nobel Prize for Literature. Gabriela Mistral died in New York City.

CAROLINA MIRANDA

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*Ternura*. Madrid: Saturnino Calleja, 1924.  
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## MOGADOR, CÉLESTE

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1824–1909  
 French memoirist

### *Adieux au monde: Memoires*

*Adieux au monde*, which might more rightly be called *Adieux au demi-monde*, was written with the aid of Mogador's lover, her lawyer Desmarrest, and read aloud to the playwright Camille Doucet, the Girardins, and Alexandre Dumas père, who put it on a par with the confessions of Rousseau. He puffed the book in *Le Mousquetaire* and Girardin helped draw up new terms with the publisher. The book, which covered Mogador's picaresque career up to her meeting with Chabrillan, was published in five volumes in Paris in 1854; this edition was suppressed. It was republished in 1858 in four volumes, with information added about the romance of Céleste and "Robert," and again confiscated.

The reviews, which appeared while Mogador was in Australia, were severe. Villemessant in *Le Figaro* (April 25, 1854) suggested that certain books, like certain creatures, could turn lending libraries into brothels, and feared that "our

daughters and sisters" would learn from them that the shortest road to a social position was prison and prostitution. Although there was a flourishing market for ghostwritten autobiographies of loose women, few were prepared to welcome an ex-prostitute's account of her struggle to establish an identity and pursue personal happiness in a society that overeroticized women. For instance, Mogador's portrait of the poet Alfred de Musset, whom she had entertained in a brothel, gave great offense. He is portrayed as a drunken, petulant lout prone to such boorish behavior as squirting seltzer water at her during a dinner at the Rocher-Cancale.

Mogador displeased with her straightforward language, her candor about sex, her refusal to titillate, and her contempt for the publicity establishment which had launched her. She complained of the way in which men of letters, short of a better subject, chose to celebrate ugly, stupid tarts.

Journalists treat women like governments: they invent them; after having invented them, they cry them up and afterward try to unmake them. It used to be there were only one or two public dance halls; why are there ten nowadays? Because of the female

## MOGADOR, CÉLESTE

celebrities whom you enjoyed creating in your leisure hours. This tinsel glory has attracted envious women. Thousands of young women are dragged into the public dance halls, lured by this fraudulent renown. Young men go to see these competitions, these onslaughts of legs. (II, 286)

Mogador left some 15 notebooks of reminiscence dealing with the period 1859 to 1907. These passed into the possession of Françoise Moser, whose biography is still the most reliable. It is Moser who declared that although Mogador, in her published memoirs, “arranged” part of the truth and novelized another part, what she says deserves to be believed.

### Biography

Élisabeth-Céleste Vénard (Comtesse Lionel de Moreton de Chabrillan), illegitimate daughter of a suicidal laundress, was born near the Boulevard de Temple, Paris, December 27. Her father, a hatter, was affectionate but died when Céleste was six, leaving her feckless mother to drift from one abusive man to another. After a time in Lyon, where mother and daughter had fled to escape the violence of the current lover, the precocious and headstrong girl was apprenticed to an embroidery maker in Paris. Sexually molested at 15 by her mother’s latest boyfriend, Céleste ran away and, exhausted and expiring, was given shelter by a prostitute in a brothel on la Cité. A raid landed her in St.-Lazare women’s prison, where she received writing lessons; and, at 16, with her mother’s consent, she registered with the police as a prostitute. From a high-class bordello, she moved to an apartment provided by a rich admirer and became a fixture in the Parisian *demi-monde*.

Dance-hall managers would promote star dancers for publicity, and Céleste was put forward as a rival to Reine Pomaré at the Bal Mabille. She was given the name Mogador when on September 26, 1844, as she was stormed by would-be partners, her sponsor declared, “I’d have less trouble defending [the North African town of] Mogador than my dancer.” Also called the Queen of the Prado, she was a tall, handsome brunette, with arched eyebrows, mildly pockmarked skin and the “bold proportions of Michelangelic caryatids” (*Larousse du XIXème siècle*). At masked balls, she would turn up the sleeves of her stevedore’s smock to show off her exquisite arms. From the dance hall, Mogador

moved to the circus, but her career as a bareback rider at the Hippodrome ended when she broke her leg in a chariot race.

Mogador the courtesan, rather than giving her body to the best-paying customer, gave “her soul, her body and her trust to the most loving.” This turned out to be Count Paul-Josselin-Lionel de Chabrillan (b. 1818), former attaché to the French legation in Copenhagen, who set her up in a mansion and went bankrupt in his inept attempts to make a fortune by gambling and stock speculation. When he sailed for Australia to try his luck in the gold fields, Mogador tried to cope with his debts by acting under the name Céleste at the Folies-Dramatique (1850), the Variétés (1851–52), and the Théâtre du Luxembourg (1852), where as Cristal in *La Revue* of 1852 she performed a new dance, the “Impériale.” She also reluctantly wrote her memoirs (in which Lionel appears as Robert), without telling him. When Céleste and the count married in London, on January 27, 1854, she tried, without success, to prevent the book’s publication. Chabrillan had been appointed consul in Melbourne and hoped they could begin afresh; but Mogador’s memoirs preceded her to the Antipodes and she was shunned by good society. After a controversial time in office, Chabrillan died in Melbourne, December 29, 1858.

Céleste returned to France, ruined, and was ill for six months. She then set out to improve her literacy through self-education. Her in-laws tried to remove her titled name, but neither their offers of compensation (an annual pension of 12,000 francs for life) nor their lawsuits could force her to give it up. Evidently resolved to be rehabilitated and with the encouragement of Dumas, she churned out sensational novels (*Sapho*, 1858; *Miss Pewel*, 1859; *Est-il fou?* 1860) and in 1862 took over the management of the Petit Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, where, under the pseudonym Mme Lionel, she presented her own plays *Bonheur au vaincu*, *En Australie*, and *En garde*, before turning it over to the actor Montrouge for 15,000 francs. He renamed it the Folies Marigny. Her oeuvre consists of 33 plays and operetta libretti, and a certain number of poems and songs. For a while she managed the Nouveautés and even performed in a music hall in 1865, before returning to writing. Critics commended her valiant struggle to overcome her past but suspected that her notoriety as Mogador

would overshadow her literary efforts. The least unreadable of her fictional works are *Les Voleurs d'or* (1864), later dramatized, and *Mémoires d'une honnête fille* (1865). In 1877, drawing on her Australian diaries, she issued a sequel to her memoirs, *Un Deuil au bout du monde*. She died in the asylum of La Providence, Montmartre, February 7.

LAURENCE SENELICK

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*Mémoires de Céleste Mogador*. 4 vols., with additions. Paris: Librairie nouvelle, 1858; 2 vols., 1876.  
*Mémoires de Céleste Mogador, 1824–1854, où une jolie fille raconte sa jeunesse misérable et scandaleuse, comment elle devint la vedette du bal Mabille et de l'Hippodrome, fut entretenue par les plus riches viveurs et se racheta en épousant un jeune comte ruiné, chercheur d'or, puis consul dans l'Australie des convicts*. Paris: Les Amis de l'Histoire, 1968.  
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*Est-il fou?* 1860; repr. 1879.  
*Mémoires d'une honnête fille*, with Alfred Delvau. 1865.  
*Un amour terrible (Sapho)*, 1876.  
*Émigrantes et déportées, ou Les deux soeurs*, 1876; repr. 1887.  
*Une méchante femme*. 1877.  
*La duchesse de Mers*. 1881.  
*Les forçats de l'amour*. 1881.  
*Marie Baude*. 1883.  
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 Moser, Françoise. *Vie et aventures de Céleste Mogador, fille publique, femme de lettres et Comtesse (1824–1909)*. Paris: Albin Michel, 1935.

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## MOIX, TERCENCI

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1943–  
 Spanish prose writer

### *La noche no es hermosa: Textos de Eros*

*La noche no es hermosa* (1994) is a miscellany which unites erotic texts previously published by Terenci Moix in various forms, including short stories, fragments from novels, selections from memoirs, and articles from newspapers and magazines. The number and variety of these pieces (which range from three or four pages to narratives of more than forty pages) provide a very representative account of the multiplicity of

registers adopted by Moix's erotic writings up to 1993; samples are given from about fifteen different books. Mirroring a Dante-esque itinerary, the collection is divided into three parts: "Inferno," "Purgatory," and "Paradise," with the addition of a "Stravaganza" and "Finale." The use of irony and a subversive toying with tradition, together with a penchant for "culturalist" re-creation, permeate the texts throughout. Alongside some medieval settings that cannot fail to add meaning to the Dante-esque character of the work, Moix's deeply ingrained Mediterranean cultural sensibility recurrently frames his writings in the pseudo-mythical spaces of ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome.

These become ideal scenarios for the celebration of hedonism and sexual refinement, but also, in many cases, for the celebration of cruelty and abuse as a means to attain ultimate sexual gratification. Accompanying these journeys into the past, a number of selections have strictly contemporary settings, situating themselves especially in large and modern cities such as Madrid and Barcelona, where the night life is treated as an experience leading to the furthest frontiers of sexuality.

Many of the texts, particularly those published before the end of the sexually repressive Franco dictatorship in 1975, incorporate a palpable component of provocation that nonetheless managed to elude the censorship that was still in force during the last years of Franco's regime. This attitude would earn Moix a reputation as a precocious *enfant terrible* of Spanish letters. With a degree of explicitness perhaps unprecedented in the country's literature, Moix's writings not only delved into what might at the time have been considered conventional sexual taboos (autoeroticism, homoeroticism, transvestism, and oral sex), but they also treated with equal explicitness and detail practices such as sadomasochism, incest, pederasty, bestiality, coprophagy, and even anthropophagy practiced for sexual satisfaction. Witchcraft, torture, and criminal pedagogy of evident de Sadean reminiscence complete the background for this summa of unconventional practices. All of these experiences, of course, are detailed without the least indication of moral condemnation. On the contrary, they are seen as an incentive and stimulus for artistic creation.

Quite frequently, there exists a sense of playfulness that in some way undermines the "drama" arising from the situations depicted and any possibility of tragic implications. In many cases the very excess of exaggeration intentionally strips verisimilitude from the effects inscribed in the texts. If tragedy appears at all, it is as a result of the feeling of loneliness that emerges from many of the selections, a feeling that always seems to coincide with the experience of the subject in contemporary society, no matter how ancient the times dealt with in the texts. In this respect, and despite the meticulous documentation gathered by Moix throughout years of study and travel to the sites of his imaginative incursions, his creative work is one that perhaps can be understood only in terms of

the sociocultural context of a young generation of the 1960s and 70s avid for cultural and political change and for the modernization of its country.

Though the selections are very different in conception and realization, as are the original sources from which they are extracted, some recurrent preoccupations and topoi traverse the volume. These include the relation between Eros and death, the interplay between the sacred and the profane, the conception of sex as an illusion or as acting, and the materiality of a desire that ends up leading to frustration, weariness, or dissatisfaction.

Eros and death intertwine in a near obsession with the passage of time and the disfiguration of beauty, a theme which is also manifested in the intermingling of pleasure and pain. Amputations and castrations are not infrequent as components of extreme erotic experiences; vomiting may become a stage of pleasure. As a counterpart, there is a constant celebration of youth, with the exaltation of pederasty of classical inspiration, as well as an assumption of narcissism that acquires a perhaps insuperable expression in the act of masturbation in front of the mirror.

The duality of the sacred and the profane projects itself onto the intersection of the sublime and the abject, and onto the rituality observed in sexual practices related to scenes depicting, for example, crucifixion and martyrdom. In spite of apparently spiritual resonances, such an opposition underscores the carnality and rich sensuality that can be discovered beneath the surface of the most radical religious attitudes.

The pieces set in contemporary times are perhaps the ones that more visibly illustrate the inner emptiness to which the mere material satisfaction of desire may lead. These are the selections that also develop more prominently the challenge to an essentialist conception of sex by playing with changes in identity and roles. The idea of sex as a permanent and proteic performance is perhaps best embodied in the figures of transvestites and transformists that appear in some of these selections.

In general, the multiculturalist perspective that presides over much of the whole collection correlates with the blend of racial, textual, and sexual hybridity manifested therein. It also seems to be naturally in agreement with the combination of high and low culture always found in Moix's works.

One of the best expressions of such a combination is represented by his passion for cinema and his re-creations of the lives and the glamour of Hollywood stars. Perhaps as a result of this influence, many of his writings reveal a deliberate search for visual excess and even artificiality, presenting spaces, characters, and effects that seem to have been drawn from a movie set. As he repeatedly indicates in his memoirs and elsewhere, the cinema provides him with a complement or substitution for the experiences he was deprived of as a child in the very sparse environment of post-civil war Spain. That reservoir of images and stories is constantly present in *La noche no es hermosa*, testifying to his firm inclination toward cultural pastiche. He may re-create the sexual battles between Marc Antony and Cleopatra, or penetrate the intimacy of an opera diva, or present the reader with an adolescent's experiences with sex, alcohol, and drugs in a nightclub in Madrid, but all of this is executed with the same lightness of tone.

A visible icon of Spanish gay culture, Terenci Moix has extensively participated in Spanish media and cultural life, with frequent appearances on TV shows and in collaborations with the most widely circulated newspapers and magazines. Through its combination of personal confessions and fantastic flights of imagination, this volume offers a dual perspective that justly represents a figure who has adopted the permanent vocation of keeping life and literature inextricably intertwined.

### Biography

Born Ramón Moix in Barcelona, Spain, January 5. During the second half of the 1960s he began publishing fictional works, primarily in Catalan, and his first collection of stories, *La torre dels vicis capitals*, was awarded the Víctor Català prize in 1967. Around 1980 he adopted Spanish as his primary language for the writing of fiction. Other literary awards include the popular Planeta Prize, which he received in 1986 for his novel *No digas que fue un sueño*, a work that sold more than one million copies.

RICARDO KRAUEL

### Editions

The stories and fragments included in *La noche no es hermosa* appeared initially in the following

publications (in many cases, the author has modified previous versions of the texts or their translation from the Catalan):

- “El demonio” and “Lilí Barcelona.” In *La torre del vicis capitals*. Barcelona: Selecta, 1968; as *La torre de los vicis capitales*, translated by Joan Enric Lahosa, Barcelona: Taber, 1969.
- “La Adalgisa.” In *Onades sobre una roca deserta*. Barcelona: Destino, 1969; as *Olas sobre una roca desierta*, translated by José Miguel Velloso, Barcelona: Destino, 1979.
- “La canción del barrio.” In *El día que va morir Marilyn*. Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1969; as *El día que murió Marilyn*, translated by José Miguel Velloso, Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 1984.
- “Boy Hungry.” In *Terenci del Nil: Viatge sentimental a Egipte*. Barcelona: Selecta, 1970; as *Terenci del Nilo: Viaje sentimental a Egipto*, translated by the author, Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 1983.
- “Narciso y los espejos de china.” In *Siro o ia Increada consciència de la raça*, Barcelona: Edicions 62, 1971; as *Melodrama o la increada consciència de la raza*, translated by Ana María Moix, Barcelona: Lumen, 1976.
- “El banquete” and “La bestia llamada hembra.” In *Món masclé*. Barcelona: Aymà, 1971; as *Mundo Macho*, translated by Jaume Pomar, Barcelona: Aymà, 1972; edition by the author, Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 1986.
- “Glorificando a la masturbación europea,” “Marcovaldo o el sabor de los obeliscos,” and “Minifac Steiman, novelista de orgasmos fallidos.” In *La caiguda de l'imperi sodomita i altres històries herètiques*. Barcelona: Aymà, 1976.
- “Misterios iniciáticos.” In *Nuestro Virgen de los Mártires*. Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 1983.
- “La menstruación de los dioses.” In *Amami Alfredo! (Polvo de estrellas)*. Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 1984.
- “El misterio del amor.” In *Terenci del Atlas, El País* [daily newspaper]. Madrid: August 28–30, 1985.
- “Lamento de la malquerida” and “Placeres de la reina Cleopatra Séptima.” In *No digas que fue un sueño*. Barcelona: Planeta, 1986.
- “Yo Cristo, yo rey” and “Domina Brunilda.” In *Extraño en el paraíso, El País* [daily newspaper]. Madrid: May 1, 1986 through December 10, 1986.
- “Fedro o la agonía” and “Damas en subasta.” In *El sueño de Alejandría*. Barcelona: Planeta, 1988.
- “Flor de onanismo.” In *El cine de los sábados (El peso de la paja I)*. Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 1990.
- “La noche del Viernes.” In *Garras de astracán*. Barcelona: Planeta, 1991.
- “El Domingo del joven triste,” “La piel amada,” and “A un moderno Telémaco.” In *Máscaras alejandrinas, El País Semanal* [weekly magazine]. Beginning November 1, 1992.

### Selected Works

- El beso de Peter Pan (El peso de la paja II)*. Barcelona: Plaza y Janés, 1993.
- Venus Bonaparte*. Barcelona: Planeta, 1994.
- Sufrir de amores*. Barcelona: Planeta, 1995.
- Mujercisimas*. Barcelona: Planeta, 1995.



## MOLLOY, SYLVIA

*El amargo don de la belleza*. Barcelona: Planeta, 1996.  
*Extraño en el paraíso (El peso de la paja III)*. Barcelona: Planeta, 1998.  
*Chulas y famosas; o bien, La venganza de Eróstrato*. Barcelona: Planeta, 1999.  
*El arpista ciego*. Barcelona: Planeta, 2002.

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# MOLLOY, SYLVIA

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1938–

Argentinean literary critic and novelist

Sylvia Molloy is a central figure in the North American (as well as European and Latin American) literary milieu. In addition to her work on Latin American writers such as Jorge Luis Borges, she has contributed to the growing field of sexuality studies with books and articles about sexuality and difference in the Hispanic world, including the coedited collection *Hispanism and Homosexualities* (1998). While she is an important figure in the academic world because of her work in literary criticism, it is with her first novel, *En breve cárcel* (translated as *Certificate of Absence*) (1981) that she made her mark as a writer of fiction. *En breve cárcel* is one of the first novels by a Latin American woman to deal overtly with lesbian themes, through its presentation of a first-person lesbian protagonist who is in the process of writing her memoirs and subsequently discovering her identity.

Eroticism is presented as a key factor in identity formation both in the dissolution of static binarisms that is necessary in order for the protagonist to find her lesbian identity and in the

linking of language and writing with the body and sexuality.

*En breve cárcel* is first and foremost a novel about the process of writing. The protagonist is in the process of writing the story of her life (and simultaneously writing herself into being) in a room of indeterminate location (at least until the end). Through her writing, we learn of her childhood as well as two dysfunctional (and often abusive) love affairs.

The novel is divided into two parts, each with a unique structure. Part I sets up dualities: between the narrator and each of her ex-lovers, Renata and Vera; between Renata and Vera themselves; between the narrator and her sister Clara; and between the narrator as writer and written self. Structural binaries are presented as well, including the all-important dichotomy of presence and absence, which is encapsulated in the written word. Thus, when the protagonist writes about Renata, she is aware of Renata's presence within the writing at the same time that she is aware of the way in which the writing signals Renata's "real" absence. Finally, a spatial binary is set up through the opposition of the outside world (which the protagonist

views through her window panes) and the inside space of the room in which she appears to be trapped (escaping only through the written word).

Part II of the novel serves as a binary to Part I while also beginning to destruct the dualisms hitherto presented. Molloy begins this process of pluralization through triangularization, liminal dissolution, and both mirroring and fragmentation. The doubles set up in Part I are destabilized by the introduction of a triadic structure. Thus, although relationships are presented in pairs in Part I of the novel, Part II focuses on relationships as triangles. The primary Oedipal triangle of mother/father/daughter is shown to be replicated in the relationship of the narrator and her two lovers, Renata and Vera. It is not through dual opposition that the protagonist will be able to carve out her lesbian identity, but rather in the change and space provided by the rupture of this “third” element.

The binaries presented in Part I are also dissolved through the uniting of two apparently disparate entities. This can be seen most clearly in the linking/dissolution of language and writing to/with the body and sexuality. Thus, the novel is not only a text about the writing of a novel, but also a novel about the writing of the body and the expression of sexuality. The act of writing is both violent and pleasurable, an act on and through language, just as sex is a violent and pleasurable act on and through the body. The uniting of these two binary systems comes about in the text through the repeated image of the hand—an instrument of writing, alimentation, violence, and sexual caresses. In addition, the room in which almost the entire novel takes place becomes a space for these binaries to join together as it provides a meeting place for the present tense of linguistic creation and the past tense of the pain and pleasure of sexuality (the protagonist’s past love affairs).

Finally, Molloy adopts the theories of both Lacan and Derrida in order to describe her protagonist’s journey toward identity. This is seen through a variety of motifs present in the text, including a proliferation of mirrors and mirror images. However, rather than agreeing with Lacan that the subject must enter the ordered world of the symbolic (moving past the “mirror stage”) for a full development or maturation,

she rewrites the symbolic (perhaps melding it with the pre-symbolic) and asserts that only with the subject’s acceptance of disorder and Derridean fragmentation can she truly transform herself.

*En breve cárcel* deals with the presentation and destruction of dualities while positing that language can write into being a stable (if not entirely unified) sexual subject. Through a displacement of a traditional view of dichotomies as discrete entities, Molloy creates a novel that simultaneously writes its lesbian subject into existence paradoxically through the questioning of language, space, place, individual identity, and both presence and absence. Not only is language all-important for the protagonist’s identity development in the novel, but her sexuality (tacitly defined as “lesbian”) becomes intricately linked to that language. Thus, the protagonist must accept a fragmentation of language and sexuality in order to understand herself and arrive at her self-identity at the end of the novel—a lesbian identity, but one that is neither unified nor necessarily coherent.

### Biography

Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Grew up speaking English, French, and Spanish in a multilingual household. Received a doctorate in literature at the Sorbonne. Has taught in Spanish programs at the State University of New York/ Buffalo, Vassar, Princeton, Yale, and New York University. Received a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities in 1976, a Guggenheim fellowship in 1984–1987, and a doctorate of humane letters from Tulane and has served as the president of both the Institute of Iberamerican Literature and the Modern Language Association. Has written over 84 essays and articles, as well as several books of literary criticism.

TRACY FERRELL

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## MONK, MARIA

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# MONK, MARIA

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1816/17–c. 1850  
Canadian memoirist

*The Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* was first published in New York in January 1836. The public eagerly awaited it because it had been puffed some months earlier in the *American Protestant Vindicator*. The hyperbolic anti-Catholic book was an immediate success because of its sensational disclosures of sexual defilement, infanticide, and beatings at the Canadian Hotel Dieu Nunnery. It had sold more than 300,000 copies by 1860 and was second only to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as a best seller. It has remained in print continuously.

Monk's apocryphal tale differs from typical "ecclesiastical erotic" stories, epitomized by Boccaccio's nymphomaniac nuns in *The Decameron*, Denis Diderot's lesbian title character in *The Nun*, and Rosa Matilda's libidinous title character in *Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer*. Monk's story reflects the contemporaneous nativist literature of Bourne, Cuthbertson, de Ricci, Mahony, and Reed.

Monk's disclosures are sexually coy compared with more traditional erotica. For example, she describes her sexual initiation:

Father Dufresne called me out, saying, he wished to speak to me. I feared what was his intention; but I dared not disobey. In a private apartment, he treated me in a brutal manner; and, from two other priests, I afterward received similar usage that evening. Father Dufresne afterward appeared again; and I was compelled to remain in company with him until morning. (Chapter 6)

Not only did the nuns service the priests in the adjoining seminary; Monk claims that they were also visited by the 350 priests who lived in the Montreal district. In order to not attract attention in such numbers, the priests accessed the convent via a subterranean passage or a sheltered door, where they rang a concealed bell and then made "a peculiar kind of hissing sound" before they could be admitted (Chapter 9). Though the book shies from explicit sexual detail, it revels in sadistic and masochistic detail. Monk describes a number of torture implements, including a belt worn for self-mortification:

I had my hands drawn behind my back, a leathern band passed first around my thumbs, then round my hands, and then round my waist and fastened. This was drawn so tight that it cut through the flesh of my thumbs, making wounds, the scars of which still remain. A gag was then forced into my mouths [*sic*], not indeed so violently as it sometimes was but roughly enough. (Chapter 18)

The worst was a leather cap which was "fitted close to the head, and fastened under the chin with a kind of buckle." The wearer experienced "violent and indescribable [*sic*] sensation ... like that of a blister, only much more insupportable. ... It would produce such an acute pain as to throw us into convulsions" (Chapter 18).

One of the most brutal passages describes the murder of a nun who rebuffed the priests' advances:

In an instant [a] bed was thrown upon her. One of the priests ... sprung like a fury first upon it, and stamped

upon it, with all his force. He was speedily followed by the nuns, until there were as many on the bed as could find room, and all did what they could, not only to smother, but to bruise her. Some stood up and jumped upon the poor girl with their feet, some with their knees, and others in different ways seemed to seek how they might best beat the breath out of her body, and mangle it, without coming into direct contact with it, or seeing the effects of their violence. (Chapter 11)

Because children resulted from these illicit liaisons, Monk recounts numerous instances of infanticide:

When [the priest] had baptized the children, they were taken, one after another, by one of the old nuns, in the presence of us all. She pressed her hand upon the mouth and nose of the first, so tight that it could not breathe, and in a few minutes, when the hand was removed, it was dead. (Chapter 16)

The bodies were buried in the basement. According to her book, Monk fled the convent when she discovered she was pregnant and told her story to a sympathetic minister in New York—thus conveniently explaining her illegitimate child.

Not surprisingly, the book attracted considerable attention, and Monk's claims were refuted by various people, including Col. William Stone, a Protestant sympathizer and editor of a mildly anti-Catholic publication, *New York Commercial Advertiser*. He visited the convent and compared it with Monk's description, and when the two didn't tally, he printed a pamphlet exposing Monk as a fraud. Maria Monk had never been a nun, she wasn't Catholic, and she had never resided in the Black Convent. Maria Monk has fostered an industry which still survives in books and on Internet sites today.

## Biography

Maria Monk was born to a Protestant family in St. Johns, Quebec. She was an uncontrollable child and was admitted to Magdalen Asylum for Wayward Girls in Montreal in an effort to reform her; apparently, at the time, she was working as a prostitute. Her behavior did not improve and she was asked to leave. At 18 and pregnant, she formed an alliance with William K. Hoyte (or Hoyt), an ardent anti-Catholic. She and Hoyte went to New York City, where they associated with a group of Protestant

sympathizers, among whom were Rev. George Bourne, who wrote Monk's *Awful Disclosures* (and had earlier written *Lorette*, another purported nunnery exposé), and Rev. John J. Slocum, author of *Further Disclosures of Maria Monk*. Monk left Hoyte and started a relationship with Slocum. In 1837 she ran away to Philadelphia with an unidentified man. While there she met William Sleigh, author of *An Exposure of Maria Monk*, and gave birth to another illegitimate child. Completely discredited, Monk drifted from man to man and returned to prostitution. She was arrested for pickpocketing her male companion and died in prison on Welfare Island, New York, aged 33.

TONI JOHNSON-WOODS

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# MONSTERS

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When we think of monsters and the erotic, we probably call to mind Fuseli's famous painting *The Nightmare*, which pictures an incubus of medieval European folklore crouching on the bosom of a sleeping woman; or perhaps we call to mind the equally disturbing image of a cannibalistic Donestre inserting a man's forearm into his mouth. But just as the human subject has changed over time, so too have the monsters it creates. In fact, if we were to chart what might be called the vicissitudes of the "I" from the ancient world to the modern, we would necessarily be charting the vicissitudes of our fears and desires or what we find monstrous and what we find erotic.

Although the shape of our fears and desires has altered over time, what has remained constant is the tension that exists or the ambivalence of the relationship between what we fear and what we desire. As early as Hesiod's *Theogony*, for example, we see a poet establishing a causal

link between a monstrous act and its erotic result in the story of Aphrodite's birth. As Hesiod tells it, when Great Heaven, desirous of love, spread himself over Earth, his son Kronos ambushed him with a metal reaping hook and cut off his genitals. From the blood that splashed onto the earth came the Great Giants, a race of huge and powerful beings who were, properly speaking, neither men nor gods, and the Furies, hideous creatures who hunted down and exacted retribution from those who spilled kindred blood; and from the castrated genitals, which were flung into the ocean and mingled with sea foam, came the beautiful goddess Aphrodite. Born of Great Heaven's bloody genitals, Aphrodite represents the powerful and often destructive force of sexual desire, the monstrously erotic fruit of mutilation and violence. In Hesiod's genealogy of the gods, then, not only do we see the monstrous and the erotic arising from one source and one act, and thus coupled as "twin"

siblings, but we also see in narrative form the antecedent of what will later take a theoretical form in the modern psychoanalytic principle whereby castration (or lack) is said to give rise to desire.

In Homer's *Odyssey*, we again find the monstrous and the erotic rubbing elbows, as Odysseus makes his way back from the battlefields of Troy to the island of Ithaca. During his ten-year journey homeward, Odysseus confronts obstacles that take either the monstrous forms of Charybdis, a whirlpool that sucks men to their death, and Scylla, a six-headed monster that chews men up with row upon row of sharp teeth, or the erotic forms of Circê and Calypso, beautiful nymphs who trap Odysseus in their beds. But whether it is the biological "big death" offered by a monster or the metaphorical "little death" offered by a nymph, the monstrous and the erotic are structurally the same in Homer's narrative. That is, both operate as a lure that seduces Odysseus into delaying his return to Ithaca and thus to his duties as husband, father, and king. Perhaps this is why the monstrous and the erotic are often considered taboo, for they distract us from the duties laid out for us as members of a social community.

By the time we reach Sophocles's Theban plays, we see emerging a new type of monster, man himself. While the Sphinx, a hybrid creature often pictured as having the face and torso of a woman, the body of a mountain lion, and the wings of an eagle, is the ostensible monster in Greek myth, under Sophocles's dramatic influence, the city of Thebes is forced to recognize the murderous and incestuous Oedipus as the real threat to its citizens' welfare. Oedipus not only commits regicide in committing parricide, but also couples with his mother, producing "monstrous" offspring who are both his children and his siblings. With Sophocles, then, the causal link between the monstrous and the erotic becomes the inverse of Hesiod's, for in *Oedipus Rex* it is an erotic act that produces monstrous fruit. Because the offspring of Oedipus defy normal classification, falling as they do under two categories that do not generally overlap, they operate just as monsters do, collapsing biological and sociological categories and signaling by their unnatural birth the onslaught of social crisis and civic disarray. This, in any event, is how the ancient world understood the monster.

It was a world less troubled than the modern by the appearance of monsters because monsters were seen as celestial signs or portents, and thus they were always readable, always pregnant with allegorical meaning. In fact, if we look into the etymology of the word *monster*, we find a connection to Latin words such as *monstrare*, meaning to show or expose; *monstrum*, that which teaches; *monere*, to warn; and *demonstrare*, to point out, indicate, show, or prove.

It would be foolish to say that Sophocles betrays a modern sensibility, but he gestures toward a post-Enlightenment understanding of the monster by placing Oedipus at the center of his drama and making only passing reference to the Sphinx. For modernity's monster is no longer a mere prop with which a hero such as Odysseus shows off his prowess but the site around which all energy circulates, especially erotic energy. Modernity's monster is nothing if not sexual, and we have as proof the creatures populating the works of writers such as Coleridge, Keats, Hawthorne, Poe, Le Fanu, and Stevenson. By the time Freud makes use of Sophocles to establish one of the most fundamental concepts of psychoanalysis (the Oedipus complex), Bram Stoker is creating the most erotic of monsters, Count Dracula. Not only is Stoker's vampire more sensual and potent than the men who track him down, but he also liberates and exalts sensuality in the matronly women belonging to his Victorian enemies. It is hardly a coincidence that Stoker's *Dracula* appeared just shortly before Freud's *The Interpretation of Dreams*, for many scholars read the vampire, and the modern monster in general, in psychoanalytic terms: i.e., as a return of the repressed in disguised form. In this respect, monsters operate in much the same way dreams do, allowing us to express unconscious desires that we think are unacceptable while at the same time concealing them.

BECKY McLAUGHLIN

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## MONTERO, MAYRA

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1953–

Cuban-born novelist and journalist

As a novelist, Montero is known best for her fascination with pan-Caribbean culture and her erotic writing. Her knowledge of Caribbean history and religion was already evident in her first novel, *La trenza de la hermosa luna* [*The Braid of the Beautiful Moon*] (1987), a beautifully rendered tale of an exile's return to Haiti after twenty years as a wandering sailor and of the transformation that leads him from disillusionment to passionate commitment to action against the Duvalier regime. The novel marked Montero as the talent to watch in Caribbean writing, a promise that she has fulfilled repeatedly in the period since *La trenza de la hermosa luna* first dazzled critics. In *Del rojo de tu sombra* [*The Red of His Shadow*] (1992), she unveils the vicious and corrupt politics and African-derived religious traditions that link the Dominican Republic and Haiti through the disturbing tale of the contest of wills between the leaders of two Vodou societies—Mistress Zulé, an inexperienced but gifted priestess, and Similá Bolesseto, a notoriously violent and devious priest—and the disastrous impact on their religious communities, composed mostly of Haitians who have

crossed the border into the Dominican Republic to cut sugar cane in slavery-like conditions. In *Tú, la oscuridad* [*In the Palm of Darkness*] (1995), Montero tells the story of an American herpetologist who, with the aid of his Haitian guide, is on a quest for an elusive and threatened blood frog, extinct everywhere but on a dangerous, eerie mountain near Port-au-Prince. In the volatile and bloody setting of the Haitian mountains, controlled by violent thugs, through her weaving together the stories and vastly different worldviews of her two protagonists, Montero uncovers a new and haunting postcolonial space built upon the conflict between a scientific and an animistic worldview: the extinction of species due to a collapsing environment; the troubled landscape of Haiti, peopled with zombies and other frightening, otherworldly creatures; political corruption and violence; and religious turmoil.

Montero's concerns with Caribbean spirituality, particularly as represented by the Afro-Caribbean religious practices that have been at the heart of so much of her fiction, maintain their centrality in her 1998 novel *Como un mensajero tuyo* [*As Your Messenger*]. Narrated by a young Cuban woman of Chinese and African ancestry, it relates the secret events that transpired when, during a series of performances in

Cuba in 1920, legendary tenor Enrico Caruso fled for his life into the streets of Havana after a bomb exploded in the theater where he was rehearsing Verdi's *Aida*. Montero has also published *El capitán de los dormidos* [*The Captain of the Sleepers*] (2002) and *Vana illusion* [*Vain Illusion*] (2003). *El capitán de los dormidos* builds on the legend of Amelia Earhart through the story, set in 1950, of a young boy growing up in the island of Vieques. His father is fighting against the government in the nationalist insurrection while his mother dies, and he must depend on his friendship with an old American aviator to transcend his reality. *Vana illusion* is the fictionalized account of the life of Puerto Rican concert pianist and composer Narciso Figueroa.

Montero also established herself during the 1990s as the Caribbean's foremost writer of erotic fiction. Her two erotic novels, *La última noche que pasé contigo* [*The Last Night I Spent with You*] (1991) and *Púrpura profundo* [*Deep Purple*] (2000), fuse two deep interests: the nature of erotic desire and its connection to Caribbean classical and popular music. For the former novel, she was a finalist for the 1991 Sonrisa Vertical Prize, given in Barcelona by the prestigious Tusquets Press for the best erotic novel written in Spanish in a given year; for the latter novel, she won the prize in 2000.

*La última noche que pasé contigo*, a just-slightly parodic erotic tale, tells of the encounters of a late-middle-age couple suffering from empty-nest syndrome who look to a Caribbean cruise as a way out of their boredom with each other. Their sexual adventures in the highly eroticized Caribbean of the tourist imagination play against the rhythms and sentimental universe of the Latin American *bolero*, from the classic "La última noche que pasé contigo," which provides the novel's title, to the more contemporary variations of the genre by Dominican star Juan Luis Guerra. The various interwoven narratives grow increasingly explicit in their depictions of erotic behavior, as the main characters penetrate the Caribbean space and shed their inhibitions, bringing themselves as close to sexual ecstasy as to self-destruction. The novel has been praised by critics as much for the rich profusion of its sexual imagery as for the dark humor and subtlety with which it exposes cultural clichés and the often absurd connections between desire and death.

Montero continues to explore the connection between music and eroticism in her award-winning erotic novel *Púrpura profundo*. Its narrator, Agustín Cabán, a music critic who has hoarded the memories of his erotic adventures like a scrupulous miser, is persuaded by his editor to narrate his varied and complex sexual life in vivid detail. Featured prominently in them are Virginia Tuten, a beautiful mulatta from Antigua who handled her violin like an eroticized body, and Clint Verret, a pianist who took him to the verge of homosexual love. *Púrpura profundo* differs from Montero's earlier erotic novel in its single narrative perspective (*La última noche* has multiple points of view and incorporates multiple types of texts, particularly letters), which allows Montero to delve deeper into her narrator's psychology and build a more vivid and more deeply etched main character.

### Biography

Mayra Montero was born in Havana, Cuba, in 1952, but has lived in Puerto Rico since the mid-1960s. She studied journalism in Puerto Rico and Mexico and began her writing career as a newspaper correspondent in Central America and the Caribbean. She continues to write for *El Nuevo Día*, a San Juan newspaper. In 1981 she published her first collection of short stories, *Ventitrés y una tortuga* [Twenty-three and a Turtle] and has gained increasing recognition for her fiction ever since.

LIZABETH PARAVISINI-GEBERT

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# MORATÍN, NICOLÁS FERNÁNDEZ DE

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1737–1780

Spanish poet and dramatist

### The *Arte de putear* or *Arte de las putas*

The *Arte de putear* [*Art of Whoring*] or *Arte de las putas* [*Art of Prostitutes*] is an extensive mock-didactic poem in four cantos probably composed in the early 1770s and, like all erotic poetry in eighteenth-century Spain, not printed at the time due to the Spanish Inquisition, hence the uncertainty concerning the author's preferred title. Though Moratín's poem circulated only in manuscript, it fell into the hands of the Inquisition and was banned in 1777, remaining unpublished until an anonymous edition of 1898. Comprising some 2,000 hendecasyllabic lines, Moratín's work echoes Ovid's *Ars amatoria*, though directed to the impecunious young man who seeks to satisfy his sexual appetite in safety and with the minimum expenditure of money, not the man in pursuit of love. The poem is a curious miscellany centered on eighteenth-century Madrid, providing the reader with a wealth of scientific, cultural, and social information on sexuality at the time. The use of the didactic format allows for multiple digressions and contrasts of tone, features which have provoked a variety of sometimes contradictory interpretations from the work's readers.

In Canto I, Moratín justifies his topic by contrasting the poetic treatment of sexuality with the epic's traditional high-culture topic of war. Taking a sideswipe at Catholic morality, he points out that were the world to heed the Church's admonition to abstain from sex, humanity would come to an end. Moratín claims as his moral starting point that whatever nature ordains must be right, going on to justify brothels and their legalization. He nevertheless claims that there is no pleasure equal to that enjoyed by those in love. Ecclesiastical hypocrisy is exposed by Moratín in the constant examples of clerics who are described seeking sexual pleasure. To those who would condemn his poem he points out that he only provides a mirror to life, insisting that his work serves the purpose of giving useful advice.

Cantos 2 and 3 deal directly with Madrid's prostitutes, and Moratín recommends the use of condoms to avoid sexually transmitted diseases, providing a brief excursus on the condom, its origins and history. Admitting that wealthy men will always manage to attract willing sexual partners, Moratín offers advice to the rest. He lists the parts of Madrid where prostitutes and other women willing to have sex are to be found: the terminus points of provincial carriage routes being among the best. In a manner not dissimilar to published guides in late-eighteenth-century London (cf. *Harris's List of Covent Garden*

*Ladies*), Moratín names individual prostitutes, their favored haunts and outstanding features. These sometimes involve details of physical characteristics and sexual attributes. The variety of prostitutes is evident, and none is singled out for negative comment. Other likely meeting places are pointed out, such as the public masked balls, theatrical entertainments, bullfights, fairs, and street spectacles. The author seems to know his way around and to be well acquainted with a host of women, some of whom receive his personal seal of approval.

The final, fourth canto treats women who, while not prostitutes, may often prove to be willing sexual partners. At this point the male art of seduction is invoked. Street vendors who come from the countryside to sell their produce in the capital will often lend themselves to sex, as will household servant girls. Moratín, following a standard technique, reviews the characteristics of women from the various regions of Spain, seeming to award the prize to those from Aragon. He suggests that the female sexual appetite is no smaller than the male, but faithful to his male target audience, he offers advice on how to make oneself attractive to women in order to achieve seduction. He argues that women are attracted by various features in a potential lover: an athletic body or fine physique may be no more effective than a fine mind or literary and cultural appeal.

Moratín's poem conveys a festive, playful spirit in spite of the economic imperative to obtain sexual pleasure with the minimum of expense. The variety of sexual pleasure for the young male is emphasized, as are the arts of prostitutes in providing satisfaction. Contemporary descriptions of sexual activity and attitudes are contextualized against the historical record, evoking comparisons with episodes from the Bible, the documentary and literary record of classical Greece and Rome, and more recent European and Spanish history. Traditional moralizing is ridiculed, and the acceptance of an apparently biological imperative with a consequent absence of traditional constraints comes across forcefully.

### The Anacreontic "Éramos inocentes"

The anonymous anacreontic ode "We Were Innocent," discovered by Francisco Aguilar Piñal in 1980 in a manuscript collection in Madrid's

Historical Municipal Library, can also be reliably attributed to Moratín. The heptasyllabic lines, in assonantal rhyme, allow a light, swift rhythmic pulse to carry the narrative forward. It presents the first sexual experience between the fifteen-year-old narrator and his thirteen-year-old girlfriend in a garden setting, viewed in retrospect. Their initial innocence is evoked as he, affected by the summer heat, falls asleep by a fountain, to be awoken by Dorisa, who has been stung by a bee. She raises her skirt to point out the intimate location of the sting, revealing her genitalia in the process, a sight which the narrator has never before seen. In delicate language (a constant of the poem) he describes what his eyes behold, with the innocence of youth mediated by the experience of maturity, re-creating the novelty of what his body then felt and how his mind reacted. In the hope of reducing the pain, Dorisa asks him to rub the sting, but the sensitivity of the location causes her to become sexually aroused. Not knowing how to proceed, the narrator invokes nature, which encourages him to caress her skin and then kiss her mouth. On his touching her breasts, she reacts with delight, and they proceed to exchange kisses and caresses as their bodies move excitedly, overwhelmed by pleasurable sensations. The poem ends with the narrator recalling that as a consequence of this first sexual encounter, when Dorisa wants to initiate physical intimacy she coyly pretends to have been stung by a bee.

### Biography

Born into a family with a tradition of service in the royal household, where he also served, Nicolás Moratín achieved fame during his lifetime as a poet and dramatist. His poetry covers the full range of contemporary genres, among which the anacreontic odes rehabilitated the form for his generation, evoking the sensuality of many of the classical models.

PHILIP DEACON

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# MORAVIA, ALBERTO

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1907–1990

Italian novelist and short story writer

The characters of Moravia are often haunted by a feeling of lassitude which prevents them from living (they doubt whether their actions have any sense), whence their difficulty in transforming and evolving their lives. Moravia's stories are thus not sustained by the logic typical of a *bildungsroman* (or coming-of-age novel) as is common in English-language literature, but by a principal idea (angst, lassitude) dominating the text and expressing the difficulty man has in grasping a reality which escapes him.

In this aesthetic-narrative context, eroticism plays an important role, but it should be noted that the stories are generally not centered around a sexual thematic. Except, perhaps, in *L'uomo che guarda* [*The Voyeur*], a novel which recounts the obsessions of a voyeur haunted by an image from a lesbian poem of Mallarmé's describing a vulva as resembling the pale and pink interior of a mollusk. However, for Moravia, sexuality is a fundamental reality which makes an extremely important contribution to man's existence. Because of this, his works were placed on the *Index librorum prohibitorum* by the Roman Catholic Church in 1952 because of their potential

content as "lascivious and obscene things." And some critics even think that the erotic dimension of his work prevented him from being awarded the Nobel Prize.

A novelist concerned with existential agitation much like Dostoevsky (whom he admired) and his contemporaries Camus and Sartre, Moravia used eroticism in his early novels as a psychological resource for expressing the reality of the life of his characters (*Gli indifferenti*, 1929; *Agostino*, 1944). This eroticism accounts for much in giving a true-to-life effect to his characters, especially in *La noia* [*Boredom*], a novel in which eroticism symbolizes a vital life force. But nevertheless this life force is susceptible of being turned into a morbid impulse: in *L'attenzione* (as *The Lie*), the protagonist, Francesco, has sex with a prostitute whose body is compared to a corpse.

From the 1970s onward, a special erotic modality, which was already hinted at in earlier works, becomes more and more pronounced in the author's work: scopophilia. One can even affirm that this voyeuristic impulse is the most essential element of Moravia's eroticism. These stories often present male characters who take pleasure in secretly watching naked female bodies as if this sort of contemplation were necessary both to give birth to and to accomplish their

desire. The ultimate aim of this attitude is to reveal what is hidden: the vagina, which is often minutely described, e.g., “a cyclamen crack” (*La Cosa e altri racconti* [*The Fetish and Other Stories*]), “a petite vertical mouth with well defined red lips” (*La donna-leopardo* [*The Leopard Woman*]).

Corresponding to masculine voyeurism there is also feminine exhibitionism, which seeks to attract the looks and desires of men. In *L'uomo che guarda*, women voluntarily exhibit their bodies: Silvia, for instance, masturbates in front of her husband in a public bar, bent slightly backward in order to better reveal her vulva, while asking him to give names to her pubic hair, e.g. “a frightened pussy,” “a rooster’s crest,” “the rising sun.” In *La donna-leopardo*, Ada doesn’t want to betray her husband and is content to display herself before her putative lover; nevertheless, her vulva remains hidden by a large amount of pubic hair. These virtual contacts incontestably symbolize the difficulty of amorous relations between the two parties. If women are the objects of masculine imagination, mixing the real and the imaginary, at the same time their desires are often incomprehensible and their characters often impenetrable. As for their physical appearance, it is often a mixture of voluptuous and underdeveloped attributes: small busts together with large asses or vice-versa. In general, once again Moravia can be placed in a tradition, one deriving from Dante and Beatrice, who makes love a sad quest much more than a reciprocal relationship.

His novel *Il viaggio a Roma* [*Journey to Rome*] gives an explanation of the importance of the voyeuristic regard. The protagonist, Mario, recalls a scene from his childhood when he saw his mother make love with an unknown man and during which their eyes met momentarily. Occasionally he sees this type of maternal look in the eyes of women; but most importantly, the memory of this scene leads him to allow himself

to be seduced by his father’s mistress, thus to repeat the scene as a simulacrum of incestuous desire.

The fact that seeing, desiring, and having orgasms form a continuity in Moravia’s stories is related to the nature of narrative literature, which is often a modality of making us see some things that are hidden. The narrator of *L'uomo che guarda*, a professor of literature, explains this very clearly at the beginning of the novel by referring to the work of Proust: the novelist makes us see what no one could see unless he is really a voyeur.

### Biography

Alberto Moravia was born Alberto Pincherle in Rome. He excels at a tight narrative style which, while emphasizing concentrated action more than description, permits a focusing on the intensity of an experience rather than on the orderly unfolding of the plot. Moravia belongs to the Italian narrative tradition, principally consisting of short works, of Buzatti, Pirandello, and Pavese.

MICHEL ERMAN

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# MURASAKI SHIKIBU

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c. 973–c.1015  
Japanese novelist

## *The Tale of Genji*

*The Tale of Genji*, by Murasaki Shikibu, is the most highly regarded work of narrative fiction in all of Japanese literature. It revolves around the emotional repercussions of the sexual liaisons of several members of the imperial court, but does so without including explicit descriptions of physical intimacy. The work opens with an account of the emperor's unseemly exclusive passion for one woman of rather low rank, Kiritsubo. The jealousy this ignites in the emperor's other consorts is less a matter of personal feeling than a reflection of the fact that the emperor was expected to bestow his affections according to the political value of his various women. Aristocratic families strove to marry their daughters to emperors in the hope of becoming maternally related to the imperial line. In fact, that is what lies behind the creation of the tale itself. Its author, known as Murasaki Shikibu, was invited to live at court in the service of Empress Akiko with a view to making Akiko's quarters the kind of lively and engaging place to which an emperor would be drawn.

Genji, like his father, behaves according to the dictates of his heart rather than out of political ambition. This fact and his physical beauty, many artistic talents, and impeccably good taste signify that he is an admirable character in the world of the text. In his youth Genji seeks out a variety of romantic entanglements and is attracted to a fairly wide range of women, but has only a chilly relationship with his official wife, who is several years older than he. Even in his mature years he is unable to resist the allure of the prospect of surprising beauty and elegance. The last quarter of the work examines the romantic adventures of Genji's putative son and his grandson, and does so in greater depth while focusing on a smaller number of

characters. The tale stops without any particular sense of resolution for these troubled figures.

Major themes of *The Tale of Genji* are set forth in chapter 2, when a few young men spend a rainy night discussing the qualities they seek in a wife and describe their expectations of women of the various ranks in their hierarchical society. This is where Genji first gets the notion that there may be hidden beauties tucked away in unexpected places. The stories these young men share also reveal a double standard whereby men may freely engage in several amorous affairs simultaneously, while women are expected to be at least relatively faithful to a man, but may enjoy multiple affairs if they do so sequentially. Another feature of the social system in which these characters operated was that a man tended to marry for the career opportunities available through his wife's father's connections. Thus, women without influential male relatives had dim prospects.

Once Genji is married to the daughter of the Minister of the Right, an event described at the end of chapter 1, his career prospects are secure, even after she dies in childbirth. Genji's relationship with his father-in-law is more important than that between Genji and his wife, and his father-in-law is inclined to tolerate Genji's sexual adventures, as long as Genji treats his daughter with respect. The first such adventure is with Utsusemi, the young wife of a middle-ranking older man. While visiting as a guest of her stepson, Genji sneaks into Utsusemi's quarters and spends the night with her. An attendant considers intervening but acquiesces to avoid attracting attention to a situation that is already embarrassing. While dialogue between Genji and Utsusemi is recounted, their physical actions are left vague. Most scholars suggest that sexual intercourse is to be presumed. Utsusemi is at first frightened, then angry, and finally distressed. Genji tries to win her affection with romantic words, but Utsusemi refuses to be placated. She is described as like bamboo: bent, but unbreakable. This metaphor might plausibly be

understood to mean that penetration did not occur, but it might also be taken to refer to her will rather than her body. Afterward Genji longs for another meeting and is frustrated by her reluctance even to correspond with him. She regrets that her marriage makes an affair with Genji inappropriate. As consolation Genji takes her younger brother under his wing, and then into his bed. When Genji attempts another meeting with Utsusemi, he finds himself accidentally alone with a different woman. He suavely seduces this woman instead, partly to avoid an awkward situation, partly because this woman is attractive and he enjoys an adventure.

As a young man Genji is also involved in a relationship with someone of equal rank, the widow of the former crown prince. The text does not describe his courtship of Lady Rokujo; it merely suggests that Genji pursued her largely because she represented a challenge, although he acknowledges that her elegance is very impressive. Lady Rokujo, however, becomes deeply attached to Genji, and when humiliated by his wife and Genji himself, her anger and jealousy are so intense that her spirit, of its own accord, leaves her body and attacks her rivals. One of these rivals is Yugao, a hidden treasure of the sort foreshadowed in the rainy night conversation. Quite unlike his aloof wife, the difficult Rokujo, and the resistant Utsusemi, Yugao is experienced but docile, shy but affectionate. Having fallen deeply in love, Genji neglects his obligations at court to spend uninterrupted time with her at a deserted villa. Vulnerable in this lonely place, Yugao dies by spirit possession, and Genji is devastated. In the course of his recovery from an illness brought on by this shock and grief, Genji discovers the young Murasaki, who strikingly resembles her aunt, Fujitsubo. As adults, men and women of the aristocracy did not mingle freely, but as a child Genji had been able to meet Fujitsubo, the emperor's consort who resembles Genji's mother and replaced her in his father's affections. Unlike Kiritsubo, Fujitsubo has the appropriate rank and family connections to thrive at court and eventually rises to the rank of empress. As a youth Genji falls in love with Fujitsubo and she becomes the standard by which all other women are judged. Ruled by his heart as he is, Genji pursues Fujitsubo and induces her to indulge his passion when, in his despair at her resistance to him, he voices suicidal thoughts. The child that

results is passed off as the emperor's progeny, and Fujitsubo never again allows physical intimacy between them, but Genji and Fujitsubo are forever bonded in their concern for their son's well-being.

Meanwhile, Genji kidnaps Murasaki and raises her to become an ideal wife: elegant but dependent, loving but tolerant of his other relationships. She was a child of ten when he found and took charge of her, and a young woman of fourteen when he marries her and consummates their relationship. The evening before Murasaki's first sexual experience Genji is described as impatient to satisfy his long-deferred desire and concerned about Murasaki's potential reaction. The next morning Murasaki is depicted as alienated from him, but there is no description of their sexual intercourse itself. Translators tend to imply that she is angry because Genji forced himself on her, but it is also plausible that Murasaki's anger is inspired by a sense of betrayal. Genji has casually suggested in a poem he leaves by her pillow that he had been dissatisfied with their previous platonic relationship. She might be insulted by the casualness of this note or offended by his dismissal of their prior friendship. Genji's advance concern may have reflected an awareness that the loss of one's virginity is a momentous occasion, especially if one has been left ignorant of sexual matters, as Murasaki seems to have been, since she has been described as naive. In any event, Murasaki's anger dissipates and they enjoy a deep and relatively stable relationship for the rest of their lives.

Another sexual liaison that has major ramifications is Genji's affair with Oborozukiyo, who is both an aunt of, and betrothed to, the new emperor. Although Oborozukiyo flirted with and eagerly accepted Genji as a lover, when Genji is found in Oborozukiyo's room one night, her sister Kokiden, the new emperor's mother, takes Genji's affair with her sister as a brazen affront and uses her political influence to make life miserable for him. Genji chooses to exile himself, hoping that his fortunes might revive in the future.

While in exile, Genji enjoys an apparently fated encounter with the Akashi Lady. Despite the disadvantage posed by her country upbringing, her father, an obscure prince, is intent on finding a prestigious husband for her. He offers her to Genji. The Akashi Lady is sure that a relationship with so high ranking a man is a

mismatch that will only lead to grief and resists Genji's advances. Without explaining how he managed to get around or through a locked door, the text next describes Genji's impressions of the lady during their first night together. Genji does not, indeed, treat the Akashi Lady with a great deal of respect, but she tries to make the best of the situation and Genji learns to appreciate her. That it was a fortuitous union eventually becomes apparent when the daughter that the Akashi Lady bears Genji becomes an empress. Although the Akashi Lady had to give her daughter to Murasaki for a proper upbringing, she willingly puts her daughter's future first and ultimately wins respect for her dignity and immense prestige as mother of an empress.

Although Genji loves Murasaki deeply, she lacks social standing because of her deceased mother's obscurity and because her father more or less abandoned her, and Genji never makes her his official wife. While he makes sure she knows she is first in his affections, he continues to court other women. What distinguishes Genji from other men and marks him as a hero is not fidelity, which is neither expected nor widely valued, but his reliability and generosity. When some of the women he had hoped would turn out to be hidden treasures disappoint him, he takes permanent responsibility for their material support. His flirtation with Tamakazura, a long-lost daughter of Yugao's, whom he has adopted, is inappropriate, but she wittily and resolutely rebuffs his advances, and he does not, after all, bed this surrogate daughter.

Late in life, Genji accepts a princess as his official wife, partly because her father asks him to do so, and partly because he is curious. This marriage is a disaster, because Murasaki is genuinely threatened by the princess's high status and Genji finds the young princess impossibly immature. The young courtier Kashiwagi, however, falls in love with her. Intending only to tell her of his love, Kashiwagi manages a nighttime intrusion. The princess is terrified, but he interprets her naive passivity as docility and consummates his desire. Afterward, he becomes desperate for her to acknowledge his love but she is nearly mute in her dismay. Kashiwagi later falls ill and dies because of his guilt at having cuckolded his friend Genji.

While this partial summary has focused on the sexual liaisons of the characters, the text also

painstakingly describes music and dance concerts, banquets, and poetry contests as it chronicles the lives of the characters. Romantic encounters and sexual adventures were part of the culture of court life, where the value that linked all activities was the pursuit of beauty and elegance.

Modern adaptations of the work tend to include only the first few chapters and to present the content as a scandalous soap opera. Some twelfth-century readers believed Murasaki Shikibu must have gone to hell for concocting such a tale. The great poet Fujiwara Shunzei (1114–2104), on the other hand, admired Murasaki Shikibu's style and urged any serious poet to become familiar with her work. The scholar Motoori Norinaga (1730–1801) understood the tale as a reflection on the workings of the human heart and admired the author's ability to evoke *mono no aware* [the pathos of things].

### Biography

Murasaki Shikibu was a servant of the imperial court during the Heian period. Her mother died when she was a child and she was raised and given a male's education by her father, contrary to tradition. Murasaki was the lady in waiting for Empress Shoshi/Akiko and kept a diary giving a vivid account of court life.

MARGARET H. CHILDS

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# MUSSET, ALFRED DE

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1810–1857  
French novelist

***Gamiani ou deux nuits d'excès*  
(attributed)**

*Gamiani*, a minor pornographic classic of the French Romantic period, is now generally (but by no means universally) attributed to the well-known poet and dramatist Alfred de Musset (1810–1857). The story takes place over “two nights of excess,” the first Night and the second Night. The bibliographical history of this brief dialogue novel is extremely complex, and despite a century and a half of specialized research, basic information about its composition, publication, and diffusion is still unavailable, and given the nature of such works, likely to remain so. A lavishly and, at least in its original form, graphically illustrated book which, even in the relatively liberal early years of the July Monarchy, ought have attracted the notice of the police, *Gamiani* is not recorded in the *Bibliographie de la France*, the official listing of all books published in France since 1810. There are no copies of the rare hand-engraved, lithographed first edition (advertised on its title page as “Brussels 1833”) in either the Bibliothèque Nationale or the NUC (National Union Catalog). Two copies of the equally rare first typeset (i.e., second) edition, inaccurately labeled “Vénise [*sic*], 1835, par Alcide, baron de M\*\*\*\*\*,” no doubt in order to hint at a connection with Musset’s ill-starred but at the time celebrated romantic escapade to Venice with George Sand in 1833, were acquired by the Bibliothèque Impériale only in the 1860s thanks to a police raid on a collection of pornographic material. A duodecimo edition appeared in Paris around 1864, backdated “Amsterdam, 1840,” with a preface in which Musset is explicitly designated as the author. In several of the many subsequent 19th-century reprints, George Sand is referred to as the author or coauthor of

the second Night, or alternatively as a model for the insatiable lesbian heroine; a suggestion that, given what we now know of Sand from her voluminous correspondence and her autobiography, appears quite implausible, and for which there is not a shred of evidence. In 1881, Alcide Bonneau, a specialist in contemporary erotic literature, published a strongly worded refutation of the attribution on stylistic and moral grounds; the notion that the author of *Les Nuits*, those much anthologized poems celebrating spiritual love, could have penned this sulphurous text, in which nuns indulge in unspeakable orgies, and at least three characters copulate with animals, was simply not to be entertained. Yet serious debate about the question of authorship continued for the next hundred years, at least within specialist circles, with Dr. Iwan Bloch, one of the founders of modern sexology, among the yea-sayers and Pascal Pia, both in his own name and behind the pseudonym of “Dr. Fr. Froebel” leading the skeptics, while Louis Perceau, another specialist in erotic literature, took the “plausible but not proven” middle ground. For a discussion of the current state of the debate, the reader is referred to the late Simon Jeune’s 1992 edition. However, since *Gamiani* has been neglected by mainstream literary historians and critics, a brief summary of the plot, such as it is, may be in order.

The story opens in the aristocratic apartment of the comtesse Gamiani. The narrator, Baron Alcide, wonders why she has no known attachment, despite her many advantages; and, like Raphaël de Valentin at the beginning of part 2 of Balzac’s *La peau de chagrin*, he resolves to spend a night in her bedroom in order to solve the mystery. (A footnote in the first edition compares her to Balzac’s Foedora, proving beyond doubt that *Gamiani* could not have been written before August 1831, when *La peau* first appeared). But in *Gamiani*’s case, according to another guest, there is in fact no mystery: “C’est une Tribade!” i.e., a lesbian. Alcide decides nevertheless to observe for himself these forbidden forms of love. (From this opening scene to the melodramatic



denouement, voyeurism will constitute one of the basic elements of the plot). Gamiani duly enters, accompanied by her inexperienced (but, as things turn out, all too willing) partner Fanny, whose name may not be entirely coincidental: John Cleland's celebrated *Memoirs* were readily available in both French and English at the time. Gamiani seduces Fanny, and during one of their pauses for recuperation, Alcide joins in the fun. Gamiani confesses that she has "unnatural" desires that can never be satisfied; whether this is because she is a lesbian or a woman is a question frequently addressed, but never satisfactorily answered in the text. The three protagonists then proceed, between bouts of triangular love-making, to tell the stories of their respective initiations into the world of sex; these embedded stories take up the balance of the first Night.

Gamiani had been brought up in Italy by a widowed aunt, who used to take her into her bed and embrace her with strangely powerful (and to the heroine incomprehensible) convulsions (readers of Diderot's *La Religieuse* will recognize not only the situation, but the virtually identical words used to describe it: "I thought she was having an epileptic fit"). But since the niece was growing up, she needed to be prepared to suffer for her future sins, as Christ did to redeem ours; consequently, the aunt takes her to a monastery, where she is predictably flogged and then raped by twenty priests, after which, understandably, she vows eternal hatred of men. Fanny's tale is one of typical adolescent longings, with pillows stuffed between her legs and a general incomprehension of what was happening to her body; words like "love" and "passion" trouble her, but until this evening, she had no idea what lay behind them. As for the narrator Alcide, his initiation takes the form of a sustained day-dream, largely inspired by the paintings of Bosch and the younger Breughel, together with images from classical literature, in which visions of fleeting, unattainable virgins alternate with nocturnal bacchanals. The reaction of the three protagonists to this poetic orgy is consistent with their behavior throughout the novel: Fanny is exhausted and wants to sleep; Alcide, a mere man, is used up by the various excesses of the first Night; while Gamiani, as always, wants more, and continues her exercises in an adjacent room with the help of her servant and an obliging dog. After satisfying desires revived by this spectacle, Alcide and Fanny fall asleep.

Next morning, by a curious but significant twist in the story, they resolve to leave this den of vice and give themselves over to more conventional expressions of love.

As the second Night opens, Alcide is discovered once more in his observer's position, but this time contemplating the sleeping Fanny and hoping she is cured of the excessive desires inflamed by Gamiani. When the latter reappears, with servants dismissed and doors locked in the best de Sadean tradition, it becomes clear that this is far from the case, and Alcide witnesses another scene of lesbian love at its most extreme. Most of the second part of *Gamiani* consists of an account of the sequel to the heroine's education, this time in a convent under the dubious, but to readers of 18th-century anticlerical literature, all too familiar tutelage of the Sisters of Redemption, an apprenticeship that culminates in the murder of a male intruder. For a time, Gamiani consoles herself with men, primarily in order to prove their inadequacy. In a final scene, still in search of her goal of a sexual absolute, she gives Fanny a "love potion" and takes some herself. Before Alcide can intervene, both women die; as the heroine had predicted, Eros and Thanatos have finally come together.

From this brief synopsis, it is clear that *Gamiani*, by any standards, is an obscene book. But to dismiss it as a cheap, formulaic imitation of the Marquis de Sade, as Mario Praz does in his influential *The Romantic Agony*, is to do it an injustice; for if we apply to it the question of "redeeming literary merit" raised by judges in every obscenity trial from *Madame Bovary* to *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the answer must be an unequivocal affirmative. Alcide's lengthy account of his initiation is an imaginative *tour de force* worthy of Nerval. As Simon Jeune has shown, the text is full of linguistic inventiveness. The author makes clever use of embedded stories designed to stimulate both listeners and readers, while the occasional witty aside encourages the latter to keep a critical distance from the appalling events that are being narrated; thus, at the end of Alcide's story, the heroine remarks: "You spin a fine yarn, sir, that was just like something out of a book," to which he demurely replies, echoing Boccaccio or *The Arabian Nights*: "Il faut bien passer la nuit" [It helps to pass the night]. Above all, the heroine's desperate search for a sexual absolute that will satisfy her, and her association of sexual climax

with death, is carefully developed throughout the story. Whoever wrote it, *Gamiani* is a somber and disturbing book, one that the pioneer students of sexual pathology in late-19th-century Germany were right to take seriously. Small wonder that Baudelaire, no stranger to the theme of lesbian love and a discerning literary critic in his own right, openly confessed his admiration for the book, while never ceasing to pour scorn on Musset's better-known sentimental works.

GRAHAM FALCONER

### Modern Editions

*Gamiani*. Facsimile of the Paris edition ("Brussels, 1833") with an introduction by Jacques Duprilot. Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1980.

*Gamiani, ou deux nuits d'excès*. Edited by Simon Jeune. Paris: Ramsay/Jean-Jacques Pauvert, 1992. Aside from the question of authorship, no substantial critical study of *Gamiani* exists, but many relevant issues are raised by the critical *notice* in Simon Jeune's edition.

*Gamiani*. London: Scarlet Library, 2001.

*Gamiani, or Two Nights of Excess*. London and New York: Tandem Books and Anchor Books, 1968.

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## MYSTICISM AND MAGIC

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Satanism is an extreme form of the occult; however, in terms of erotic literature, it figures prominently. The Devil is often portrayed as sexually alluring, as Mark Twain writes in *The Mysterious Stranger*, "[W]e could only listen to him, and love him, and be his slaves, to do with us as he would. He made us drunk with the joy of being with him, and of looking into the heaven of his eyes, and of feeling the ecstasy that thrilled along our veins from the touch of his hand" (Twain). The Devil as an erotic figure, however, predates the nineteenth century. In 1772, Jacques Cazotte's romance *Le Diable amoureux* portrayed the sultry temptress Biondetta, who ultimately turns out to be the Devil in disguise. Fiction in the Middle Ages often invoked images of an incubus or a succubus—a male or a female demonic figure, respectively, who comes to sleepers in their nightmares to have sex with them. Balzac used the theme in his 1833 story *Le Succube* [*The Succubus*], about "the tragic fate of a beautiful woman, believed by her contemporaries to be a demon who charmed men in order to lead them to their ruin" (Rudwin).

Satanism in the nineteenth century was different from medieval witchcraft and cults that were linked more to ancient beliefs and pagan forms of worship. In medieval times, Satanism was an act of rebellion on the part of the lower and

oppressed classes and a means of escape from the tyranny of the Catholic Church. By the nineteenth century, however, Satanism had become adopted in many European capitals and was practiced by cultured socialites. This is described in J.-K. Huysmans' novel *Là-Bas* [*The Damned*] (1891), which focuses on the Parisian underground of black magic and erotic devilry. Its principle character, Durtal, decides to write a biography of Gilles de Rais, a marshal of France and an infamous leader in the French medieval witch cult who confessed to the ritualistic killing and mutilation of hundreds of children in perverse and sadistic acts of diabolism and was executed in 1440. Durtal's involvement with the mysterious Madame Chantelouve enables him to attend a black mass. Afterward, it is described that "[s]he grabbed hold of him, took possession of him and initiated him into obscenities whose existence he had never suspected; she was like a ghoulish fury. But when, eventually, he was in a position to escape, his heart stood still: for he saw that the bed was littered with fragments of the Eucharist" (Huysmans, 230). Indeed, the inclusion of a black mass is unsurprising in erotic literature, as it contains numerous examples of sexual perversion, debauchery, blasphemy, and sacrilege. The spilling of blood in the form of a sacrifice (usually an animal) and the substitution of holy water with urine replaced Christian

## MYSTICISM AND MAGIC

rituals such as the Eucharist and the sprinkling of holy water. The body of a nude woman was often used as an altar, and the mass would often end in an orgy.

This literary genre of occult fiction was not restricted to France. Toward the latter part of the nineteenth century, an organization for the study of magic and the occult was established in London. Members of the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn included A.E. Waite, William Butler Yeats, Arthur Machen, Algernon Blackwood, and Aleister Crowley. Their interest in magic and the occult influenced their works. Machen's novel *the Great God Pan* (1894) portrays the demonic individual Helen Vaughan, a name she uses among many other aliases. "The text hints at a correspondence between Helen's perverse activities and primitive, orgiastic rites said to have been practiced by certain of the ancient Romans, cultists of Pan, who once inhabited Britain" (Hurley).

Aleister Crowley had first experimented with magic as a student at Cambridge, and throughout his life he referred to himself as the Great Beast. His magic focused on blasphemy, sacrilege, and sexual rituals. The most famous of his few novels is *Moonchild*, which was written in 1917 but published later, in 1929. This work describes a "magickal" war between Good and Evil and focuses on the sexual nature of magic rituals: "She saw Cyril and Cybele draw together; they gave a laugh which (once again) she fancied she could hear. It rang demoniac in her very inmost soul. An instant more, and their mouths met in a kiss" (Crowley). This ritual scene continues with the protagonists discarding their robes and "dancing together. It was wild and horrible beyond all imagination; the dancers were locked so closely that they appeared like a single monster of fable, a thing with two heads and four legs, which writhed or leapt in hideous ecstasy" (Crowley).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that there are other, less obvious examples of erotic devilry and black magic—for instance, vampirism. The vampire novel was an already established literary genre before Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Vampirism had always been portrayed as erotic, where moral, social, and sexual boundaries were pushed to the limits. Indeed, the vampire is a predator for whom race, class, and particularly gender make no difference (Sheridan Le Fanu's

*Carmilla* [1871], for example, flirts with the idea of lesbianism). Stoker's text perhaps illustrates the true nature of vampirism and eroticism and conveys its three requisite appeals in erotic fiction, viz., vampirism itself is erotic; it "embodies some form of sexual threat or 'subversive' sexuality; and ... the (male) characters in the text, being 'typical' Victorians, fear vampires because of the threat they pose to orthodox sexuality" (Mighall).

Occult literature was rare in Britain in the nineteenth century, but there was much produced in France that "a blanket term such as 'mysticism' could not hope to cover" (Griffiths). It would be difficult to describe, for example, Barbey D'Aurevilly's *Les Diaboliques* (1874) and various *Contes cruels* by authors such as Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, Charles Baudelaire, or Gérard de Nerval as works of "mysticism." They portray horror and the macabre, focusing on subjects from Gilles de Rais to alchemy. During this period, the French Revolution was, by no means, a distant memory, and poets and writers poured their fears and anxieties into their work. They reacted pessimistically and cynically against Christianity, politics, and primarily materialism, and one of the most extreme crazes born out of this social rebellion was the rise of the occult.

SARAH BERRY

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## NABOKOV, VLADIMIR

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1899–1977  
Russian novelist

Nabokov, who owes his worldwide popularity largely to *Lolita* and the scandal it created, was a prominent novelist, one of the most original in this century with Joyce and Proust, as well as one of the most sexually explicit. In one of his interviews published in *Playboy*, however, he derided sex in the following terms: “Sex as an institution, sex as a general notion, sex as a problem, sex as a platitude—all this is something I find too tedious for words. Let us skip sex.” (*Strong Opinions*). There is an element of bad faith, of course, in this statement, for sex plays a prominent role in most of his novels, starting from his second one, *King, Queen, Knave*, a modern version of *Madame Bovary*, in which Franz, the young protagonist, masturbates repeatedly until he becomes the lover of his mature cousin. Already, in this novel, Nabokov avoids using crude words to describe the lovers’ sexual behavior: “The rather droll but endearing contrast between his thin body and one cocked part of it, shortish but exceptionally thick, would cause his mistress to croon in praise of his

manhood: ‘Fatty is greedy!’” (90). Most of his other novels written in Russian, especially *Glory*, *Laughter in the Dark* and *Despair*, contain subdued erotic scenes but they never flirt with pornography, with one exception, *The Enchanter*, a short piece which Nabokov wrote in the late thirties but never tried to publish in his lifetime; after the publication of *Lolita* he did mention it to Walter J. Minton of G.P. Putnam’s who was willing to consider it for publication but he never sent it, being aware, apparently, that it might hurt his reputation. It is a primitive prefiguration of his masterpiece: the story is more or less the same, with the difference that the nymphet’s mother does not die in an accident but as a result of an incurable illness; it ends abruptly with the nympholept’s suicide after he ejaculates in front of the girl who has unexpectedly woken up at that critical moment. The sexual fantasy at the root of this short fiction is very much the same as in *Lolita*, but the erotic scenes are a great deal less poetic in comparison.

Most of the novels Nabokov wrote in English, beside *Lolita* and *Ada* which will be analyzed below, contain a number of erotic scenes, especially *Bend Sinister* (Mariette trying

to seduce Krug), *Pale Fire* (homosexual King Xavier's funny dealings with women), *Transparent Things* (Person's clumsy sexual commerce with his wife), and *Look at the Harlequins!* (Vadim's strange lovelife with his four women). None of those scenes, however, are as developed and "poerotic" (poetic and erotic) as those described in *Lolita* and *Ada*.

### *Lolita*

Nabokov's pet fantasy as evoked in *The Enchanter*, to wit the seduction of a prepubescent girl by a mature man, was already present in *Laughter in the Dark* and *The Gift*. When he had finished writing *Lolita*, he wrote to Katharine White of *The New Yorker* that it had taken him "five years of monstrous misgivings and diabolical labors" and offered to send her the manuscript "under the rose of silence and the myrtle of secrecy." (*Selected Letters*, 140) He originally planned to publish the novel anonymously to protect his status and reputation at Cornell which had already suffered as a result of his so-called "dirty lit course" in which he taught, among other novels, *Madame Bovary* and *Ulysses*. After four American publishers had turned down the book, he accepted Maurice Girodias's offer to publish it in his Paris-based firm, The Olympia Press, whose catalogue included not only famous or less famous pornographic works but also novels which are now literary classics, such as Beckett's *Watt* or Donleavy's *Ginger Man*. Immediately after its publication, *Lolita* was banned by the French Minister of the Interior at the English government's prompting, along with twenty-four other books published by Girodias. The latter, to save his house, petitioned the *Tribunal Administratif* (Administrative Court) which eventually rescinded the Minister's ban in 1958—a little before the novel was published by Putnam's in the United States to become a best-seller.

The novel tells the story of a thirty-seven-year-old man of letters of Swiss origin, Humbert Humbert, who has always been attracted to prepubescent girls between the age limits of nine and fourteen endowed with special gifts whom he calls nymphets: "Between those age limits, are all girl-children nymphets? Of course not. Otherwise, we who are in the know, we lone voyagers, we nympholepts, would have long gone insane. Neither are good looks any criterion;

and vulgarity, or at least what a given community terms so, does not necessarily impair certain mysterious characteristics, the fey grace, the elusive, shifty, soul-shattering, insidious charm that separates the nymphet from such coeval of hers as are incomparably more dependent on the spatial world of synchronous phenomena than on that intangible island of entranced time where Lolita plays with her likes." (*Lolita*, 19) Fearing for his sanity and safety, he decided to marry Valeria, a woman who gave an imitation of a little girl, but, as he was about to embark with her for the United States, she left him for a Russian taxi-driver. Following a period of mental illness, Humbert retires to a small New England town, Ramsdale, where he takes lodging with a dull but passionate widow, Charlotte Haze, whose only asset, from his perspective, is her twelve-year-old daughter, Lolita, in whom he recognizes a girl he once loved in his youth on the Riviera. Within a few weeks, he manages to attract the girl's attention and even masturbates, fully dressed, against her buttocks one Sunday morning: "The nerves of pleasure had been laid bare. The corpuscles of Krause were entering the phase of frenzy. The least pressure would suffice to set all paradise loose (...). Suspended on the brink of that voluptuous abyss (a nicety of physiological equipoise comparable to certain techniques in the arts) I kept repeating chance words after her—barman, alarmin,' my charmin,' my carmen, ahmen, ahamen—as one talking and laughing in his sleep while my happy hand crept up her sunny leg as far as the shadow of decency allowed." (62) Charlotte, though unaware of what is happening between them, sends Lolita to a summer camp and wants her to go to a boarding school after that, firing Humbert with murderous frustration. Providence, indirectly goaded by him, causes her accidental death, which makes of him Lolita's natural guardian. He joins her at the camp and takes her to a hotel where, at the end of a harrowing night when he vainly tries to possess her, she playfully offers to make love with him: "She saw the stark act merely as part of a youngster's furtive world, unknown to adults. What adults did for purposes of procreation was no business of hers. My life was handled by little Lo in an energetic, matter-of-fact manner as if it were an insensate gadget unconnected with me. While eager to impress me with the world of tough kids, she was not

quite prepared for certain discrepancies between a kid's life and mine." (135–136) This marks the beginning of a long journey together across the United States during which Humbert becomes more and more possessive and tyrannical, and Lolita moody and uncomplying. When they settle in a college town for a few months, she drifts away and, unbeknown to him, starts an affair with a playwright, Clare Quilty. She guilefully begs Humbert to take her upon a second journey during which Quilty, with her complicity, bedevils the more and more perplexed nympholept who never manages to discover his identity. Finally Lolita elopes with Quilty and disappears from Humbert's life until, years later, she writes him explaining that she has married a young engineer, is pregnant, and needs money. He calls on her and brings her to surrender the name of the man she eloped with, Quilty, whom he murders a few days later. In the concluding lines of the novel, Humbert, who is now in prison and cannot hope ever to live with Lolita, confesses that he truly loves her and says, addressing her beyond death: "One had to choose between him and H. H., and one wanted him to make you live in the minds of later generations." (311)

The erotic element of the novel, important as it is in the first part, gradually disappears in the second part in which Humbert, faced with his nymphet's unwillingness to play his sexual games, becomes more and more tyrannical and cruel. In his first-person narrative, he does not so much try to defend himself as to turn the chronicle of his perversion into a genuine love story and to gain the aesthetic approval of the literary connoisseur.

### *Ada*

*Ada*, less famous than *Lolita*, is infinitely more erotic though it has never caused a similar scandal. It is a story of incest, the chief characters, Van Veen and his "cousin" Ada Veen, being in fact biological brother and sister. Their idyll begins on a paradisiacal estate, Ardis, on a planet called Antiterra: these two highly educated and supremely sensual children, respectively fourteen and twelve, soon begin to caress each other, uninhibited by any moral laws. In one of the most erotic scenes of the novel, Ada plays with Van's penis until he ejaculates:

"Oh, dear," she said as one child to another. "It's all skinned and raw. Does it hurt? Does it hurt horribly?"

"Touch it quick," he implored.

"Van, poor Van," she went on in the narrow voice the sweet girl used when speaking to cats, caterpillars, pupating puppies, "yes, I'm sure, it smarts, would it help if I'd touch, are you sure?"

"You bet," said Van, "*on n'est pas bête à ce point*" ["there are limits to stupidity," colloquial and rude].

"Relief map," said the primrose prig, "the rivers of Africa." Her index traced the blue Nile down into its jungle and traveled up again. "Now what's this? The cap of the Red Bolete is not half as plushy. In fact" (positively chattering), "I'm reminded of geranium or rather pelargonium bloom."

"God, we all are," said Van.

"Oh, I like this texture, Van, I like it! Really I do!"

"Squeeze, you goose, can't you see I'm dying."

(*Ada*, 119)

After this scene, they start a very active and creative lovelife in every nook and cranny of the estate, without bothering about the servants who spy on them, though their stepsister, Lucette, a nine-year-old nymphet, soon starts to interfere with their idyll. Van leaves Ardis at the end of the summer and comes back four years later: he is still madly in love with Ada who is now surrounded with men; Lucette tries to participate in their sexual games but her stepbrother refuses to make love to her. The summer ends in disaster when Van discovers that Ada has had two lovers. In the following years they see each other at more or less regular intervals until their father finds out that they are lovers and orders them to separate. Ada marries a man she does not love and becomes a film actress; Lucette commits suicide when Van refuses to make love to her; and Ada's husband finally dies. Van and Ada, now respectively fifty-two and fifty, resume their life together, and together, as they are nearing the age of a hundred years, write the present chronicle.

Here again, the erotic scenes, often more poetic and comic than in *Lolita*, are to be found mostly in the first half of the novel. This violates the principles of "pornography" which, in Nabokov's view as expressed in his after-word to *Lolita*:

... connotes mediocrity, commercialism, and certain strict rules of narration. Obscenity must be mated with banality because every kind of aesthetic enjoyment has to be entirely replaced by simple sexual



## NABOKOV, VLADIMIR

stimulation which demands the traditional word for direct action upon the patient (...). Thus, in pornographic novels, action has to be limited to the copulation of clichés. Style, structure, imagery should never distract the reader from his tepid lust (...). Moreover, the sexual scenes in the book must follow a crescendo line, with new variations, new combinations, new sexes, and a steady increase in the number of participants (in a Sade play they call the gardener in), and therefore the end of the book must be more replete with lewd lore than the first chapters." (*Lolita*, p. 315)

Though he creates erotic scenes often more exciting than many pornographers, Nabokov manages to transmute sexual desire into what he calls "aesthetic bliss" (*Lolita*).

### Biography

Vladimir Nabokov, born in Saint Petersburg on April 22 1899 (new style), was the son of a professor of penal law who later became a prominent figure in Paul Milyukov's Kadet movement and participated in the first provisional government after the March 1917 Revolution; he was shot to death in Berlin in 1922 while trying to shield Milyukov. Following the October Revolution, the family moved to Crimea and then to London and Berlin. Vladimir, after graduating from Trinity College, Cambridge, joined his family in Berlin where he started his literary career while giving private lessons in English, Russian, tennis, and even boxing. In 1925, he married Vera Slonim who remained his faithful companion, his secretary, and favorite reader throughout his life. His first novel, *Mary*, written in Russian like all the books he published until 1940 (see the bibliography), came out in Berlin in 1926. His elitism, his aloofness, and lack of involvement in the political debates agitating the Russian community labeled him as an eccentric. Fearing for his Jewish wife and his three-year-old son, he left Germany in 1937 for France where he wrote his first "English" novel, *The Real Life of Sebastian Knight*. In 1940, running away from the Nazis, he went to the United States where Edmund Wilson acted as his mentor

and helped him publish fiction and essays. While doing research on butterflies at Harvard's Museum of Comparative Zoology, he started teaching literature at Wellesley College and, after 1948, at Cornell University, having acquired American citizenship three years earlier. *Lolita*, his third novel written in English, came out in France in 1955 and became a bestseller after its publication in the United States in 1958. Having achieved financial security at last, he resigned from Cornell and went back to Europe, settling in Montreux where he remained until his death in 1977. During his European years, he continued to write novels of which *Pale Fire* and *Ada* are the best known, and had his Russian novels translated into English.

MAURICE COUTURIER

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# NAFZÂWÎ, AL-

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Early fifteenth century  
North African story writer

***The Perfumed Garden of Sensual Delight***  
**[*Al-raud al-âtir fi nuzhat al-khâtir*]**

Nafzâwî's *Perfumed Garden*, written around 1411–1433, is a classic of international erotic literature. Following a conventional manner of presenting knowledge to a general audience, the work is written in an entertaining style, offering serious information amidst humorous tales and anecdotes. In general, the author follows the agenda of discussing and presenting all kinds of phenomena he regards as relevant for a contemporary heterosexual Arab male. In a rather loosely arranged program of 21 chapters, the author informs about images and qualities of men and women, about the arts of seduction and sexual stimulation, about aphrodisiacs, contraceptives, and abortion; besides, the narratives he quotes give ample room to sexual fantasies-fantasies.

The chapter headings run as follows: (1) The Man of Quality; (2) The Woman of Quality; (3) The Repulsive Man; (4) The Repulsive Woman; (5) Sexual Intercourse; (6) Sexual Technique; (7) Harmful Effects of Intercourse; (8) Names for the Penis; (9) Names for the Vulva; (10) The Members of Animals; (11) Women's Tricks; (12) Questions and Answers for Men and Women; (13) The Causes and Stimulation of Sexual Desire; (14) Remarks on Female Sterility and Methods of Treatment; (15) Causes of Male Sterility; (16) Ways to Provoke Miscarriage; (17) Treatment for Three Types of Erection Problem; (18) How to Expand and Enlarge a Small Penis; (19) How to Remove Underarm and Vaginal Odour, and How to Tighten the Vagina; (20) The Symptoms of Pregnancy, and How to Determine the Sex of the Unborn Child; (21) The Benefits of Eggs and Sexually Stimulating Beverages.

Both the way of composition and the work's content show it to be a late descendant of a

traditional genre of Arabic literature dealing with sexual hygiene from a medical perspective. In contrast to other works of the genre, the *Perfumed Garden* is a compilation with little ambition. It aims at the general reader and is rather intended as a practical guide for the ordinary man. The *Perfumed Garden* might have remained relegated to obscurity, had it not been for French novelist Guy de Maupassant (1850–1893) to “discover” the work and English orientalist scholar and translator of the *Arabian Nights* Sir Richard Burton (1821–1880) to utilize it as a further ingredient in the nineteenth-century European invention of the Orient. These Western renderings of *The Perfumed Garden* have resulted in a distorted perception that had more to do with Western expectations and fantasies than with the original work's intention.

Nafzâwî presents the male individual as unquestionably heterosexual. A man's only goal is to satisfy the lust of women, or rather to use women in order to satisfy his own lust. In contrast to men, women are allowed autoerotic manipulations as well as homoerotic contacts. Besides these digressions, which are, albeit, heavily criticized by the author, Nafzâwî regards women exclusively to serve men, and there is no discernible effort to see female sexuality in its own right. The satisfaction of female sexuality is rather regarded as a social necessity, because otherwise women would strive to satisfy their lust beyond legitimate borders, that is, extramarital, and, consequently, threaten social order. In short, Nafzâwî writes against a male chauvinist and decidedly misogynist backdrop. Moreover, by describing his role models joyfully and without a notable degree of reflection, Nafzâwî both accepts them and partakes in passing them on within his own cultural context.

This evaluation of Nafzâwî's work explains to a certain degree why the work was so fascinating for Western male readers. After all, Nafzâwî presents a world in which the male individual is legitimated to devote his activities solely to

satisfy his own desire without having to take over social responsibility for his acts. Moreover, the sexual behavior of Nafzâwî's characters contrasts sharply with social reality, as they neglect and contradict social restrictions, enjoying sexual intercourse with a naive lust and total lack of inhibition. With these characteristics, the work offered itself as a matrix for Western sexual fantasies, a fact that furthered its enthusiastic reception in the nineteenth century.

Nafzâwî's *Perfumed Garden* was first translated by a French army officer in Algeria, who in the French translation achieved in 1850 bashfully mentions his name as "Monsieur le Baron R\*\*\*, Capitaine d'Etat Major..." A quarter of a century later, four French officers, presenting themselves with the initials J.M.P.Q., printed this translation. It is said that they printed the work on the official lithographic press of the army, and when their activity was discovered by their superior, had to stop. Some 35 copies were printed. The next trace of the work is found in a letter dated August 25, 1884, mailed by Guy de Maupassant from the oasis of Bou Saada to Paris. While the letter's addressee is unknown, shortly after, in 1885, an almost identical reprint of the first edition was published. In addition, the Paris publisher Isidor Liseux, renowned for his interest in exceptional works of literature, had the French text typeset and printed in Paris in 1886, in an edition of 220 copies. This edition, which has been reprinted numerous times, due to its wide availability has served as the basis for several translations. The English translation prepared from the French by Sir Richard Burton is still more influential. It was published in two editions in 1886 as the third volume edited by Burton's Kama Shastra Society, following the translations of the Indian erotic classics *Kamasutra* (1883) and *Anangaranga* (1885). Virtually all of the numerous translations of the *Perfumed Garden* prepared in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries rely on either the French or the English translations without taking recourse to an original Arabic text. Only when the critical edition of an old manuscript of the *Perfumed Garden* preserved in Copenhagen was published, a new English translation was prepared, aiming at representing the original text as faithfully as possible without any conscious interference of orientalist imagery, such as Burton's translation.

Nafzâwî's worldview does not differ decisively from the worldview of contemporary Western or Christian authors. This evaluation is corroborated by the fact that several of the tales Nafzâwî quotes appear both in early Oriental as well as medieval Western tradition. The story of *The Lover's Gift Regained*, in which the wise fool Buhlûl tricks the vazier's wife into granting triple intercourse without any recompensation, is widely known in a similar version contained in Italian novelist Boccaccio's *Decamerone* (8,2). Likewise, the story of *The Weeping Bitch*, in which an old woman employs a weeping dog in order to convince a woman to grant her favors to her lover, is of Indian origin; it was transmitted to Europa by the famous *Disciplina Clericalis* of Petrus Alfonsus, who wrote early in the twelfth century, and is met with in a large range of medieval compilations.

Nafzâwî's work remains an important source for the cultural history of the Near East, conveying detailed information about sexual attitudes and fantasies in the fifteenth-century Arab world. The way it deals with sex in an outspoken and uninhibited manner makes it interesting reading, even though at times it is rather amusing than either stimulating or edifying.

### Biography

Little is known about the life of Abû 'Abdallâh Muhammad ibn Muhammad al-Nafzâwî. He was born at Nafzawa sometime before 1411 and lived most of his life in Tunis (modern day Tunisia). As evidenced by the medical understanding displayed in his writings it is possible that Nafzawi was trained as a physician.

ULRICH MARZOLPH

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## NASHE, THOMAS

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c. 1568–c. 1601

English poet, satirist, and pamphleteer

### *The Choise of Valentines*

This, Nashe's only surviving narrative poem, is likely to have been written around 1594. A number of manuscripts exist, but no early edition. Its extraordinary and highly sophisticated play of allusion, style, and vocabulary indicate that it may well have been originally written for the entertainment of a noble patron and his friends: the Earls of Derby and Southampton have both been suggested as possible intended recipients. It appears to have circulated fairly widely: a number of contemporary writers comment adversely on its lubricity, including Gabriel Hervey, with whom Nashe engaged in a prolonged and vitriolic pamphlet war, in *The Trimming of Thomas Nashe*, Sir John Davies of Hereford in *The Scourge of Folly* and Joseph Hall, Bishop of Exeter and Norwich, in his *Satires*.

The poem takes as its context the old custom of choosing, privately or by lot, a lover, friend, or sweetheart on the fourteenth of February to be one's 'Valentine' for the coming year. The choice was usually marked by a gift. Nashe writes in the first person, in the character of comic anti-hero. His narrative interweaves Ovidian worldliness, Chaucerian farce, even Spenserian epic and lyric registers with touches of the new metaphysical style into a brilliant, burlesque fantasy of his own anticlimatic sexual humiliation. The opening presents a quite misleading evocation of pastoral innocence:

It was the merie month of Februarie,  
When yong men, in their iollie rogerie,  
Rose earlie in the morne fore breake of daie,  
To seeke them valentines soe trimme and gaie...  
And goe to som village abbordering neere,  
To taste the creame and cakes and such good cheere;  
(11. 1–12)

When the poet then begins his own, urban, pilgrimage 'to my ladies shrine' however, this dainty prelude can be seen to be a witty expansion of the same pun on 'country matters' with which Hamlet will later taunt Ophelia. Nashe goes to the lady's lodging only to find that recent enforcement of the town statutes against prostitution,

...had scar'd her from the place;  
And now she was compel'd, for Sanctuarie,  
To fly unto a house of venerie.  
(11. 22–34)

He follows her there, and is welcomed by the brothel-keeper who, on due payment, shows him to...

...a shady loft  
Where venus bousing vestalls skirmish oft,  
(11. 47–48)

and offers him 'of prettie Trulls, a paire'. He 'spake them faire,' but insists on having his own, far more expensive, 'gentle mistris Francis' who, as the brothel keeper tells him,

'...in her veluett gounes,  
And ruffs and perwigs as fresh as Maye,  
Can not be kept with half a croune a daye.'  
(11. 64–66)

## NASHE, THOMAS

She is summoned, and welcomes her 'Thomalin,' with joy. He falls upon her, literally, and sweeps away her skirts, like Donne in *Loves Progress* ascending to his goal;

First her bare leggs, then creepe up to her kneese,  
(I. 102)

only to be foiled by his own inadequacy; literally he cannot rise to the occasion:

Her armes are spread, and I am all unarm'd (L. 123).

The lady is all sympathy, and her fully detailed professional skills prevail upon his 'silly worme,' to their mutual, graphic but short-lived delight. 'To die' was at this time a common euphemism for orgasm: his is premature, and he laments his failure accordingly in terms of elegiac pathos:

The whilst I speake, my soule is fleeting hence,  
And life forsakes her fleshly residence.  
Staie, staie sweete ioye, and leaue me not forlorne  
Wht shouldst thou fade that art but new lie born?  
(11. 209–212)

The lady's frustrated distress matches his, but is combined with exasperation:

Adieu! faint-hearted instrument of lust;  
That falslie hath betrayed our mutual trust;  
(11. 233–234)

She has, after all, a reliable alternative to such masculine fallibility:

My little dildo shall suply their kinde...  
And plays at peacock twixt my 1eggs right blythe,  
And doth my tickling swage with manie a sighe.  
(11. 237–241)

There follows her lover's impassioned and explicit diatribe against 'this woman's secretarie' and all its very varied works. He himself can do no more:

I am not as was Hercules the stout,  
That to the seaventh iournie could hold out.  
(11.299–300)

Aphrodisiacs, 'Druggs and Electuaries of new devise,' might be a solution, but he cannot afford them. He pays the brothel keeper her full

price, and leaves, '...as Jeane and lanke as anie ghoste.'

That the whole poem is a virtuoso performance to be relished by the leading actor as well as by his audience is revealed in the conclusion:

What can be added more to my renoune?  
She lyeth breathlesse; I am taken doune;  
The waves do swell, the tides climb or'e the banks;  
Judge gentlemen! if I deserue not thanks?  
And so, good night! unto you euer'ie one;  
For loe, our thread is spunne, our plaie is donne.  
(II. 309–314)

The Virgilian pastoral reminder that the irrigation channels should be closed at nightfall (Ec. III. 111) plays on the vinous revelry of Nashe's likely audience to provide a neat conclusion: '... sat prata biberunt: the meadows have drunk enough'.

### Biography

Born in about 1567, he studied at Cambridge and, like the hero of his picaresque novel *The Unfortunate Traveller*, journeyed briefly in France and Italy. By 1588, he was living in London. He made a living by writing pamphlets, for the most part virulently satirical, on an enormous range of topics, as well as plays, poetry, and his novel, the first of its kind in English. His prose style has been compared to that of Rabelais. He died in or about 1601.

ELIZABETH PORGES WATSON

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# NECROPHILIA

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The theme of sexual arousal on contact with a corpse has been a feature of literature since classical antiquity (Achilles is said to have slept with Penthesileia after her death) and continues to occur in the form of the present day Western fascination with sexual transgression, death, and violence. Seemingly regardless of local cultural and historical factors, desire for the dead stands as one of the universal taboos of socio-sexual life, transgressing both the Christian edict which states that the corpse is sacred, and the socially-acquired responses of disgust and fear that the living are taught to feel for the dead. However, the ways in which necrophilia is conceived and represented artistically have undergone important shifts over time.

The naming of sexual typologies in socio-medical discourse and the privileging of perverse sexual subject matter in literature share common historical and ideological roots. The term “necrophilia” (literally, “love of corpses”) was coined by the Belgian alienist, Joseph Guislain in 1852, as one of a group of sexological categories in the late-nineteenth century, and was adopted by E. Monneret in his *Treatise on General Pathology* (1861). It was mentioned by Richard von Krafft-Ebing in the first edition of *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), the most famous work of nineteenth-century sexology, and filtered into the major European languages via subsequent translations of this work. Probably the first literary work to use the word was Guy de Maupassant’s story, “La Chevelure” [The Head of Hair] in 1884. The nineteenth century in Europe saw an efflorescence of necrophilic subject matter, as attested to by Mario Praz in his, now famous, account of the underside of the Romantic literature *The Romantic Agony* (1933). The Modern European fascination with the morbid aesthetic, which elevates corrupt and disturbing subject matter to the status of beauty in the interests of social and aesthetic transgression, can be traced from the Marquis de Sade in the late-eighteenth century, through Edgar A. Poe and Charles Baudelaire in the mid-nineteenth

century, to Decadent literature in the 1880s and 1890s. Some examples of necrophilia exist prior to Sade’s writing, but within the scope of this article, the intention is primarily to explore necrophilic representations, produced in their heyday, as the symptoms of a recognizably modern phenomenon and, secondly, to cast an eye towards their legacy in the twentieth century.

Sade’s *œuvre* features several instances of necrophilia. In the final section of *Les 120 Journées de sodomie* [*The Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom*] (1784–1785), entitled “Murderous Passions,” Sade describes several acts of intercourse with corpses, often in scenarios involving other taboos such as incest and blasphemy. Here, necrophilia is of interest primarily as one figure of extremity among many, rather than in and of itself. In *Juliette* (1797), for example, a female libertine, the Abbess Delbène enjoys sex with a living partner on top of the bodies of her murdered victims. Juliette herself is also described using her victims’ bones as dildos. In these cases, the corpse itself is less the object of erotic interest than the bizarre and blasphemous use to which the “relics” can be put.

Representations of necrophilia in the nineteenth century run the gamut from subliminal and suggestive to explicit and extreme. “Subliminal” necrophilia, when the deadness of the object desired is expressed by the evocation of states which resemble it, is found in such themes as the sexual violation of an unconscious woman (Heinrich von Kleist’s *Die Marquise von O*, 1808) or the libidinal investment in cold, inanimate, pale statues (Théophile Gautier’s *Spirite*, 1866). In these cases, the necrophilic impulse finds its manifestation in a gentle passion, an eroticism akin to sleep and dream. In Georges Rodenbach’s Belgian novel, *Bruges La Morte* (1892), the wasted, moribund cityscape of Bruges is lovingly and nostalgically described in an allegorical mode which collapses the fashion for the dying/dead female body onto topographical subject matter. Here, necrophilia becomes less a sexual perversion and more a flavor of the aesthetic *Zeitgeist*.

## NECROPHILIA

Necrophilia can be understood as the result of the failure of mourning (see Ernest Jones, 1933). The theme of the dead beloved who is reanimated by the strength of erotic memory and desire is common in tales of the supernatural (e.g. Edgar A. Poe's "Ligeia" [1835], "Morella" [1838], and Villiers de l'Isle-Adam's "Véra" [1874]). In other cases, the dead being is transformed into a powerful figure; a sexualized vampire, zombie, or ghost. (See Gautier's *La morte amoureuse* [1836], Bram Stoker's *Dracula* [1897], and Rachilde's *Le grand saigneur* [1922]). These texts offer insight into a common underlying fantasy of necrophilia—the projection of desire by the living being onto the dead other. The epigraph of Heinrich Heine's *Der Doktor Faustus* (1847) offers a particularly good insight into this phenomenon. The first person poem is voiced by a dead woman who has been called back into the world of the living by her grieving partner: "Du hast mich beschworen aus dem Grab / Durch deine Zauberwillen" / "Thou hast called me from my grave / By thy bewitching will." In the closing lines, this relation is neatly turned around, so that it is the dead woman herself who desires an impossible consummation: "Die Toten sind unersättlich! / The dead can never be sated."

Charles Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal* (1855) features more explicit representations of necrophilic desire. "Une martyre" recounts the erotic reactions of a viewer standing before a painting of a decapitated female corpse. The poetic voice starts by describing the dead body, with its gartered leg and artlessly inviting pose, before going on to imagine the sexual murder which led to the creation of the *tableau*. The poem embodies powerfully the imaginative identifications the poet makes with both the imagined killer and the corpse, and invites the reader to collude disturbingly with the poetic persona's fantasy.

The Decadent French female writer Rachilde is responsible for one of the few full-length novelistic explorations of necrophilia in existence, *La tour d'amour* (1899). This work charts the relationship of a lighthouse keeper, who sates himself on the bodies of female shipwreck victims, and his young assistant who, by the end of the novel, admits to his own necrophilic tendencies. It is lyrically written in a style which focuses on a progressive sliding of identity, encroaching

delusion and delirium. The figure of the seabed as joint symbol of birth, death, and nirvana is exploited by Rachilde, as is the idea of family romance: the novel can be read as a perverse oedipal parable.

In Georges Bataille's pornographic writing, death and sexuality are aligned as experiences through which the boundaries of the ego and subjectivity are fatally transgressed. It is not surprising, then, that in works such as *Histoire de l'oeil* [*The Story of the Eye*] (1928) and *Le bleu du ciel* [*The Blue of the Sky*] (1935), scenes of necrophilia and the mutilation of corpses are accorded a particular prominence. In *The Story of the Eye*, it is noteworthy that it is the female protagonist who carries out necrophiliac practices on the body of a priest, skewing the expected gendering of necrophilia as a male perversion.

Indeed, in the twentieth century, the figure of necrophilia has featured increasingly in writing by women. Gabrielle Wittkop's erotic novella *Le Nécrophile*, published by Jean-Jacques Pauvert in 1972 and republished in popular *livre de poche* format in 1998, takes the form of the sexually explicit confessional journal of a necrophile character, Lucien. Similarly, and more recently, the Canadian writer Barbara Gowdy's beautiful and spare short story "We So Seldom Look on Love" (1992) is a first-person narrative which voices the story of a young, female necrophiliac. In both of these stories, medico-legal language and Christian discourse are carefully avoided. The writers' tone is deliberately guilt-free and void of ethical comment. They treat necrophilia as an identity and a form of self-expression, tapping into the cultural and epistemological change which starts to see sexual taste less as a physiological and psychiatric condition and more as an expression of identity politics. The (post)modern texts authored by Wittkop and Gowdy write against the tradition which makes necrophilia a masculine perversion and its aesthetic representation a symptom of misogyny (See Bram Dijkstra, 1986 and Elisabeth Bronfen, 1992). They neutralize the gendered power imbalance (by featuring in one case a bisexual male necrophile and in the other a female necrophile), and make necrophilia the default model of desire in the fictional universes described, rather than an aberrant deviation.

LISA DOWNING

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## NEDJMA

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North African novelist

***L'Amande***

This book is described as "the first erotic narrative to be written by a Muslim woman," however, Nedjma is not the first Moroccan woman to speak of her sexuality. Fatima Mernissi, Soumaya Naamane-Guessous, and Ghita El-Khayat have already unveiled the taboo of the female sexual speech. Nevertheless, Nedjma's intimate narrative gained the most popularity when it first appeared in France with close to 50,000 copies sold. Many other countries have also bought the rights to *L'Amande*.

This intimate narrative, written in the first person, recounts in a crude and sensual manner the weight imposed on a young Arabian woman bearing the many cultural interdicts. *L'Amande* is foremost the testimony of a woman who discovers for the first time her own sexual urges. Nedjma's style is quite liberal—she speaks overtly of sex, however, she has a keen sense of human nature and knows how to punctuate her novel with some much needed mystery which allows the element of erotica to create the desired impact upon the reader. The author allows Badra, the main character, to speak freely since she is perceived by her entourage—husband and family members—as a mere body, an organ responsible for procreation. As the story

unfolds, Badra discovers her womanhood and attempts to emancipate herself from the many sexual taboos which plague Morocco in the 1960's. Written with the intent to restore the Arabian woman's once confiscated voice, Nedjma's intimate narrative makes the reader swing from one end of the pendulum to the next, seeing the world through the eyes of the submissive woman and then seeing it through the eyes of the liberated one. The story occurs through short chapters where Badra's past, before she ran away to Tangier, is found in italicized chapters interlacing the course of the main story where the reader can observe the protagonist's sexual and psychological growth.

The heroine, Badra bent Salah ben Hassan el-Fergani, is fifty years old when she decides to tell her story. Wed at 17 years old to Hmed, a forty-year-old notary who had previously repudiated two other women for reasons of infertility, she will suffer the same fate when she will leave him five years into their marriage. Leaving Imchouk, her native village for Tangier, brings a key character in Badra's personal development. She takes refuge with her aunt Selma, a strong, free-thinking woman, who will indicate to Badra the necessary steps to take for her to find herself as a woman. One night, where Selma prepares a reception dinner, Badra meets the man her sex will ever worship. Although her aunt does not approve of Driss, a cardiologist in his thirties, Badra nonetheless indulges in her sexual urges.



Disappointed in her niece's choices, Selma abandons Badra and refuses to offer her any more guidance and counsel. On the other hand, Driss allows Badra some financial security, encouraging her to get an education and eventually a good job; however he refuses to engage himself matrimonially. This encounter with an experienced man, loving and churlish, will teach her to discover her own body and will allow her to achieve her climax. However, Badra will refuse to engage in some sexual transgressions. After being "heart amputated," she therefore decides to break things off with Driss, leaving the only man she has ever loved.

The author begins her story with a long list of well known clichés (such as Arabian and Persian women being more fertile than other races, or Nubians having rounder and firmer buttocks) defied by the narrator by stating openly her belief that her cunt is the most beautiful of all. A strong statement she is allowing herself to openly say because at the moment where the writing takes place, Driss is already deceased. She adds that in spite of her aging body and her menopause, and although she is in her fifties, she is well capable of giving birth. She returns to Imchouk to write her story, having left behind Tangier and all those idiotic women wearing the traditional veil because of their refusal to wear their sex.

Then, Badra reveals how her future mother-in-law, accompanied by her eldest daughter, examine her at the hammam "like a sheep," the human flesh, according to her, having much less value than animal's flesh. Badra also explains how, before her wedding, the family will intentionally make her gain weight and make her skin go pale, as well as how they curtly verify her virginity. In an evocative chapter entitled "La nuit de la défloration" [The Night of the Deflowering], which is a complete opposite to eroticism, Badra recounts the details of her first night with Hmed. Her family tells her she must place a white shirt beneath her in order for them to see the deflowering blood, then her sister advises her to bite her lips and think about something else. Her husband, unfortunately, is unable to perform intercourse with his new wife; the mother-in-law is infuriated and binds Badra's hands and feet. That way, she loses her virginity in front of her mother and sister-in-law's eyes.

Later, her husband's family will not hesitate to track Badra, looking intensively for any sign of pregnancy; none will appear and Badra will be humiliated.

Badra also reveals another key moment of her childhood, which she calls "The Annunciation," where near a river she recalls of a hand caressing her breasts and vagina. This experience introduces her to sex and she links it to the birth of a second heart between her legs. Stemming from this experience, Badra will have a deep desire to explore her sexuality. The tale is as erotic as it is mystic; in fact, the intensity of her relationship with Driss makes her believe that it was him who had first caressed her genitals near the Harrath River. Badra also believes that it was with Driss with whom she lost her "true" virginity, that is the one of the heart. The first real erotic scene comes when they finally have their first sexual intercourse. Through the story, sex and soul become one even after Driss's death, because even angels have a sex.

It is therefore with love, hate, or even laughter that the author attempts to deliver an erotic story, troubling, crude, searching to show the difficult steps to take for a submissive woman towards an impossible attempt of personal liberation. Albeit her separation from Driss, Badra has a hard time controlling her mind, body, and soul. Her vagina remembers all of the penises that have penetrated it, but has no gratitude for them and the memory of all the men vanishes with the years. At the end, only her mind remains.

### Biography

Information regarding the author of *L'Amande* is quite limited. For reasons of personal safety, the author writes under the pseudonym of Nedjma referring to Kateb Yacine's famous character. The outside back cover only indicates that the author is in her forties and lives in North Africa.

NATHALIE DUMAS

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## NERCIAT, ANDRÉA DE

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(1739–1800)

French novelist

Andréa de Nerciat had theatrical aspirations, but is remembered today mainly for his erotica. A musician, diplomat, soldier, spy, and novelist, Nerciat, a member of France's hereditary aristocracy, harbored Republican tendencies; politically, he might be best described as a constitutional monarchist. He led a tumultuous life during a time of great political and social upheaval. He wrote ten works in all, more than 2,100 pages.

His literary works show greater philosophical cohesion than his chaotic political career. They are uniformly both licentious and aristocratic, and permeated throughout with the *joie de vivre* of the sensualist. They encompass a wide range of genres: some reflect the classical structure of the *roman d'éducation* (*Félicia*, *Monrose*, *le Doctorat impromptu*, *La matinée libertine*); others are written in the picaresque tradition (*Le Diable au corps*, *Les Aphrodites*, *Julie philosophe*), and still others are poetic compositions (*Contes polissons*, *Contes nouveaux*).

In *Félicia ou mes fredaines* (1775), the narrator Félicia, an uninhibited libertine, recounts her escapades. Her sexual curiosity is piqued for the first time when she looks through a keyhole and sees Sylvina amusing herself with Béatin, a debauched priest whose sins, according to Nerciat's ethics, include hypocrisy, scandalmongering and cowardice. Curious and intrigued, Félicia asks Belval, her ballet master, to explain the lovers' actions. Belval agreeably reenacts the scene as she describes it and encourages her to participate in the playacting. Sylvina enters the

room unexpectedly, surprising them. She doesn't hold Félicia accountable, but expels Belval from the house.

Félicia and her friends meet at the home of a member of the local bourgeoisie, Madame Dupré, for an evening orchestrated by the local prelate, who is famous for his skill at throwing parties—everything about the evening's atmosphere reflects his careful planning and heightens the sensuality. An ensemble of Italian musicians participate in an assortment of amorous acts; Félicia's antics outdo those of Sylvina, and she wins the right to bed the passionate Géronimo. Another guest, D'Aiglemont, stirs the lust of two young Italian women, but finally chooses Argentine; after much hesitation, Madame Dupré gives in to the knight despite her upcoming marriage to Lambert. The evening turns into an orgy: cries of pleasure and cries of those refusing their importuners are heard throughout the entire neighborhood, but a scandal is avoided with ingenious explanations.

The introduction of a new character, fourteen-year-old Monrose, changes the dynamics between the characters. Monrose recounts his traumatic childhood as an orphan to Félicia and Sylvina. After his abuse at the hands of the regent and principal of his school, Monrose fled the institution, and found himself among the dregs of society. Félicia and Sylvina, moved by his story and seduced by his charming personality, take him under their wing and invite him to Paris. Once again, the adoptive mother and daughter compete for the sexual attentions of the same man. Félicia wins and introduces Monrose, whose experience until now is limited to men, to sexual pleasure with a woman. She

insists that he is hers alone, but Sylvina persists in trying to seduce Monrose, and the resulting competition results in almost farcical comedy.

The arrival of Lord Sydney, an Englishman, further complicates the plot. Sydney tells Félicia of the unusual circumstances of his birth and the unexpected ties his family has to Madame de Kerlandec (the woman in the portrait, who is also known as Zéila), ties shared by him and Monrose. The mystery surrounding Monrose is solved, and the novel ends with happy endings for all—marriages, a small fortune won in the lottery, trips to Italy and England—except for the repulsive Béatin, who is finally punished for his hypocrisy and pettiness.

The posthumously published *Le Diable au corps* (The Devil in the Flesh) (1803), is both a celebration of sexual pleasure and a sexually-expressed affirmation of Nerciat's Republicanism. All social classes are mixed together—bodies, regardless of their social origin or standing, pile up on top of each other. The book is essentially a collection of ribald stories connected by the slightest of plots and intertwined like the participants of the orgy which Nerciat describes in the course of the narrative. It opens with a tale that sets the tone for the rest of the book.

The Reverend Boujaron conspires with Bricon, a peddler of erotic paraphernalia, to introduce a Marquise to the pleasures of sodomy. The pair arouses the Marquise with Bricon's assortment of merchandise, such as a dildo made for "*Saint Luc et Saint Noc*" (the names are palindromic puns—in French, *boustrophédon*: spelled backwards, *Luc* and *Noc* spell *cul* and *con*, French slang terms for the female genitalia. The sacrilegious addition of the word 'Saint' increases the shock value of the humour), and she submits to Boujaron and Bricon's advances.

The Marquise and her friend the Countess then collaborate in an elaborate scheme to determine whether the Viscount Molengin deserves his name (another pun from Nerciat—the surname 'Molengin' combines two French words: 'mol,' soft, and 'engin,' penis: thus the Viscount's own name mocks his erectile disfunction). But the Countess will also be duped as the story continues. She complains that her lover, Tournesol, is recently showing less passion in bed. Tournesol tells her about his discovery of a miraculous aphrodisiac, the *immortalita del*

*Cazzo*. The pair hurries to the Countess' bed-chamber to test the elixir's efficacy, but Tournesol replaces himself with six different men, each of whom in turn bring the countess to such a climax that her extreme pleasure renders her incapable of distinguishing among her partners.

A young girl named Nicole is sexually initiated by the knight Rapignac. Although she does not know by whom she is being deflowered, she gladly participates in the act.

At one point, the Countess, who has contracted smallpox, tells the Marquise that both Dupeville and Rapignac want to marry her. She tells the Marquise that her smallpox may force her to curb her antics, but the Marquise refuses to believe her, especially since the Countess has recovered fully. In the end, the countess opts to keep her freedom and continue her mischievous adventures.

The Marquise and the Countess also arrange an escapade with Félix, a jockey in the Marquise's service, which unfolds like a ribald play. The countess pretends to be asleep with her *derrière* exposed, and she is sodomized by Félix, who cannot resist her. But as Felix is sodomizing her, she grabs his pants, refusing to let him withdraw. Totally astonished, Félix swoons. When he awakens, he weeps, humiliated at having been fooled by the women. The escapade ends well for everyone—to assuage his feelings, the Marquise announces that henceforth, Félix will serve the Countess.

The Countess reveals to the Marquise and a character named Belamour that her brother, the Baron, once had sex with Nicole while she was still Belamour's mistress. The Baron disguised himself as Cascaret (another name for Belamour) in order to seduce Nicole. Instead of taking offense, Belamour and the Baron reconcile, and the tale ends with the two seducing both Nicole and her mother. Nicole allows Belamour to bed her again, while at the same time and in the same room, the Baron amuses himself with Nicole's mother, Madame Culchaud (another sexual pun. Here Nerciat combines *cul* with *chaud*, French for 'hot'). While copulating with Belamour, Nicole syncs her lovemaking to the rhythm of her mother's, so that the sounds of her own lovemaking will not be heard.

We also learn of Mademoiselle Julie, now Madame de Conbannal, who is in fact Belamour's mother. Before her death, she locates

her son in order to leave him her entire fortune, believing that her good deed will help her avoid the fires of Hell. Belamour inherits his mother's fortune, allowing him to leave the Marquise's service. The Countess, disappointed at the loss of a lover, regretfully recounts her adventures with Belamour to the Marquise. The Countess' nymphomania shocks even the Marquise, who feigns prudery and begins spouting moralistic platitudes on licentiousness, but the facade dissolves under the Countess' repeated caresses, and she proposes sexplay with an enormous dildo. Their antics are interrupted by the unexpected arrival of Tréfoncier, who is invited to participate in the festivities. The Countess, always seeking unusual pleasures, attaches the dildo to Tréfoncier's face, allowing him to penetrate them both at once.

The book is an exercise in sensual anarchy. All manner of trickery results in countless combinations of characters and sexual acts. Nothing is taboo: homosexual liaisons between prelates and young boys, the Marquise and her servants, and between Nicole and Philippine, a servant girl, abound. At one point, the Countess and Philippine engage in bestiality with a donkey in a series of acts originating in the Countess' fertile imagination.

In *Les Aphrodites* [*The Aphrodites*] (1793), Nerciat writes of a secret society headquartered in a château near Paris, where aristocrats go to indulge in lascivious pleasures in an atmosphere of utter sexual abandon. Madame Durut, the royal go-between who masterfully orchestrates all encounters between the society's members, demands a large sum from the men (the women pay nothing) in exchange for a highly erotic visit. Everything in the castle stimulates lust: the decor, which continually changes according to different needs, is indescribably beautiful; the rituals are orchestrated performances that embellish the numerous unorthodox activities that take place in the different rooms of the castle or in its nearby rotundas. The guests compete in sexual exploits in this paradise, a world devoid of intolerance and restraint. Everyone is young and beautiful and in possession of a perfect body, and is described according to his or her sexual capacities. Certain games organized by the inventive Madame Durut require the participants to race to climax. There is no sadness or heartbreak in this cheerful paradise, and if misfortune arrives, Madame Durut quickly

remedies the situation with various stratagems, each one more amusing than the rest.

Other works, equally engaging and often shorter in length, illustrate similar themes that all expound upon Nerciat's key concept: that sexual pleasure is at the centre of any fully experienced life. Some examples are *Contes nouveaux* (1777), *La matinée libertine ou les moments bien employés* (1787), *Contes polissons (appelés aussi contes saugrenus)* (1799), *Le Doctorat impromptu* (1788), *Julie Philosophe ou Le bon patriote* (1791), *Monrose ou le libertin par fatalité* (1792), *Mon noviciat ou les joies de Lolotte* (1792).

Nerciat's novels, for all their unbridled lewdness, exhibit a surprisingly commonsense and centrist political philosophy, and overflow with a happy and healthy appreciation of human sexuality. This philosophy stands in stark contrast to the cynicism and harshness of the political life of his era, which was particularly corrupt and bloody. If his work is any reflection of his life, Nerciat – a spiritual libertine – must have experienced great personal joy throughout the many vicissitudes of his professional life.

If, however, his work bears no resemblance to the actual events of his life, his imagination is all the more impressive for its elaborate compensation. If so, the contrast is sharp—Nerciat's life was as dangerous as his work is full of joy.

If this question must be resolved, we suggest that Nerciat's work is largely autobiographical and presents a faithful reflection of the very uninhibited morals of the pre-Revolutionary French aristocracy (but without their corruption and violence).

The picture Nerciat presents of his era and its ethos also contrasts sharply with the atmosphere of the post-Napoleonic Restoration era, and the relentless moral repression that accompanied it.

### Biography

Andréa de Nerciat was born in 1739 in Dijon and died in Rome in 1800. At the age of twenty, Nerciat became a soldier, in which capacity he traveled to Denmark, Flanders, Germany, and Switzerland. Participation in a conspiracy resulted in his banishment from the court of Hesse-Cassel; he petitioned Frederick II for patronage, but was unsuccessful, even though the Prussian king enjoyed his play *Dorimon ou le Marquis de Clarville*, and abandoned his career

as a playwright. Following his expulsion from Hesse-Cassel, Nerciat went to Amsterdam, where, as a lieutenant-colonel, he defended the Republicans against the conservative Stadhouder. He participated in the French Revolution, but apparently served both sides in spite of his clearly Republican inclinations. Following his active participation in the Revolution, the aging Nerciat became a bookseller in Hamburg and Leipzig. In 1796, he became a spy for France while living in Vienna and was expelled from that city. He served Marie Caroline of Naples and was imprisoned by the France's General Berthier in Rome's Castel Sant'Angelo from 1798 to 1800. He died upon his release from prison.

JULIE PAQUET

Translated from the French by

KATHRYN GABINET-KROO

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# NIN, ANAIS

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1903–1977

French diarist and novelist

Anais Nin's early life was spent traveling around Europe with her parents and two brothers during which she was exposed to a variety of artistic and bohemian circles. After the family was abandoned in 1914 by Nin's father, she began what was to become her most notorious piece of writing, namely her diary en route to the United States. From 1914–1922, Nin lived with her family in New York, dropping out of high school at the age of sixteen. In 1923, she married a rich banker, Hugh P. Guiler, in Cuba and in all probability lived there for a number of years. In 1931, Nin returned to Paris with her husband and it was here that she was introduced to a number of influential artists and other seminal influences, which were to color her later writing. While living near Paris in Louveciennes, Nin completed her first book: *D.H. Lawrence: An Unprofessional Study* (1932) and also began psychotherapy with Dr. Rene Allendy and later the famous Jungian disciple: Otto Rank. During this time she also became deeply involved with the American expatriate writer Henry Miller and his wife June, (whom she met through lawyer Edward W. Titus. Titus negotiated the contract for her Lawrence book). Nin eventually went on to support Miller's literary efforts by financing his accommodation and providing him with a typewriter. In 1934, Nin partially paid for the publication of Henry Miller's novel: *Tropic of Cancer* (1934). Together with Miller and a number of other writers, Michael Fraenkel, Walter Lowenfels, Lawrence Durrell, and Alfred Perles, Nin became part of the Villa Seurat Circle, named after the artists' studio that many of them occupied. Through their own publishing ventures Nin's second book *House of Incest* (1936) was published under the imprint Siana (Anais spelled backwards) and later *Winter of Artifice* (1939) under the imprint of Obelisk Press.

During World War II, Nin returned to the United States, establishing her own press: the

Gemor Press. Gemor Press reprinted limited editions of *Winter of Artifice* (1942) as well as collections of short stories: *Under A Glass Bell* (1944), *The Hunger* (1945), and a reprint of *House of Incest* (1947). Following an extremely favorable review by the critic Edmund Wilson in *The New Yorker*, *Under a Glass Bell* was the only selection of Nin's short stories to appear in a second edition within four months of the original publication. In 1946, Nin was offered a contract by E.P. Dutton to publish the five-part series of her 'continuous novel': *Cities of the Interior. Ladders of Fire* came out in 1946, followed by *Children of the Albatross* (1947), *The Four Chambered Heart* (1950), *A Spy in the House of Love* (1954), and *Solar Barque* (1958). In the 1960s, another version of *Solar Barque* was eventually published as *Seduction of the Minotaur* (Swallow Press, 1961) as was a collection of short pieces, *Collages* (1964). Most of Nin's time in the 1960s and 70s was spent editing her voluminous diary for publication. According to herself, the diary was over 35,000 pages in 200 manuscript volumes by the time she began editing them. The first volume was published in 1966 and five more volumes were published up through 1976. Nin also published a brief treatise on writing in general: *The Novel of the Future* (1968). In 1977, the year Nin died, a collection of erotica: *Delta of Venus* became a posthumous bestseller. Nin died of ovarian cancer in Los Angeles, January 14, 1977.

While Nin's literary reputation rests largely on the success of her diaries, the novels that precede them introduce her assertively personal style; a mixture of self-actualization described in poetic terms coupled with a firm belief in the value of minute introspection. Nin's first novel *The House of Incest* (1936) and the following three novelettes published under the heading: *Winter of Artifice* (1939) explore the female psyche through a combination of dream analysis and surreal imagery. In these texts, the overall strategy is designed to convey the disjointed life of a woman for whom the boundaries between

dreams, desire, and actual experience is deliberately left unclear. *The House of Incest*, in particular, represents the style Nin was later to explore to a varying degree in most of her fiction. Through the work of Henry Miller, above all, Nin realized that the exploration of the unconscious, the use of stream of consciousness, and an acceptance of the irrational could lay the foundation for a form of writing dedicated to an exploration of the feminine psyche—for better or for worse.

The majority of Nin's fiction is structured in the form of lengthy prose poems, using a combination of interior monologue, dreams, and psycho-analytical jargon to represent an unnamed narrator in the midst of self-discovery. Although there appears to be no structure for the action per se, the subconsciousness of the character—or rather the development of that subconsciousness into an instrument of poetic intent—constitutes the main narrative.

*House of Incest* thus contains the basic stylistic ideas and themes that were later to become Nin's hallmark. Nin's writing is characterized by the use of highly symbolic imagery, and above all, a focus on the importance of dreams as a harbinger and symptom of liberating desires.

Seeking to reveal the hidden feelings and emotions of a woman hovering on the edge of hysteria, Nin's legacy as a feminist writer is a mixed one. Her style can either be seen as an honest attempt to investigate the uncharted territory of female sexuality in a liberating sense or as a deeply narcissistic exercise in a form of self-revelatory writing that suffers from an obsessive need to be constantly self-revelatory.

Another complicating factor in any reassessment of Nin's work lies in the fact that selections of the material originating in the short stories re-emerges in Nin's diaries, and similarly, the diary often contains material passed off as fictitious in another literary context. Nin, like Henry Miller, believed firmly that the distinction between autobiography and fiction was a fluid one vis-à-vis the intrinsic value of the confessional voice within literature.

Although Nin published her five novels at regular intervals between 1945–1961, she intended for the novels to be interrelated through recurring characters and themes. Under the heading: *Ladders of Fire*, Nin set forth an ideology of writing based on the concept of the continuous novel, what Nin called “a series of

novels on various aspects of relationships.” From *Ladders of Fire* (1946), *Children of the Albatross* (1947), *The Four Chambered Heart* (1950), *Spy in the House of Love* (1954), and *Seduction of the Minotaur* (1961), a collage of stories emerge chiefly with and about female protagonists.

In the prologue to her continuous novel Nin states: “I have to begin the story of women's development where all things begin: in nature, at the roots. It is necessary to return to the origin of confusion, which is women's struggle to understand her own nature. Man appears only partially, because for the woman at war with herself, she can only appear thus, not as an entity.”

Throughout most of her fiction as well as in her diaries, Nin's work walks a tightrope between the liberating stance that enamored her largely female readership in the 1970s, and a rhetoric more reminiscent of largely Francophile libertarianism that owes a great deal to Surrealism. Contrary to much surrealist writing, however, Nin's protagonist is often punished for her sexual indiscretions and remains unfulfilled emotionally and psychologically. This paradoxical stance has puzzled feminist critics who, one the one hand, wish to appropriate Nin into a canon of positive role-models for feminist writing while, on the other hand, have to get to grips with her oftentimes torturous stance on female sexuality and tendency towards biological determinism. Although Nin's work is predominantly read as a burgeoning female modernist voice within a largely male-dominated literary establishment, there is also much to be said for a reading of her, which takes into account the politics of modernism at a time when a feminist voice did not necessarily take the form of a directly liberal and/or leftist response. Instead Nin channels her writing through a form of modernist endeavour that freely embraces the psychoanalytical discourse of the 1910s and '20s. In other words, Nin's introspective heroines are also the mouthpieces for a discourse that unashamedly embraces the value of the irrational and the dreamworld as a creative impetus in itself, without necessarily taking the issue of gender and political correctness into account.

Similarities have nevertheless prompted many to compare Nin to the Surrealists, and indeed Nin's friendship with the famous French actor Antonin Artaud, who operated on the fringes of Surrealist practice, is relatively well documented. Nevertheless, despite attempts to consolidate

Nin's reputation within the context of Surrealism the affiliation remains tenuous. Less so is her literary relationship to Henry Miller, a writer whose early style and diction Nin's own writing mimics to a disturbingly close extent. While much has been written in biographies of Nin on her sexual and personal relationship with Miller, little has been documented on their common attraction to a Spenglerian worldview in which the personal and the erotic is symbolically related to a politics of despair, a sense that would have been augmented by the increasing sense of impending doom just prior to and after World War II. Nin's search for her own body through a process of sexual healing for example, shares a great deal with Miller's use of sexual promiscuity as an analogy for a modernism gone astray, fearful of its own effectiveness and potential neglect of humanism and sensitivity.

In 1961, Nin moved to Los Angeles and began to intensify the reediting of her diaries. The first volume (1931–1934) was published in 1966, at which time she also began to give lectures and interviews around the country on the art of writing fiction and autobiography. Nevertheless, in spite of its relatively late success in terms of Nin's overall career, the diary itself had been a well-known fact since the early 1930s amongst her friends and those sympathetic to her writing. Following an enthusiastic article on Nin's Diary by Henry Miller: 'Un etre etoilique' (1937), the publication of an installment of the diary was actually announced in an issue of the *Booster*; an Anglo-American journal briefly edited by Miller, Lawrence Durrell, and Alfred Perles in 1937. Nevertheless, the publication never occurred and it was not until a cautious first printing by Harcourt in 1966 that the diary eventually reached the public, by which time it became so popular it was quickly reprinted several times.

Volume I (1931–1934) details Nin's artistic awakening and early collaborations, literary as well as sexual and personal with Henry Miller and his wife June, her encounters with the psychoanalyst Rene Allendy, and her meeting with the actor Antonin Artaud. It also documents the return of her father and finally her meeting with the famous psychoanalyst Otto Rank, whom she ended up working with in New York. This is documented in Volume II of the diary. In Volume II (1934–1939), Nin further explores her oftentimes volatile and stormy

relationship with Miller as well as her nurturing of him and other writer/lovers throughout the decade. The supposed disclosure of Nin's sexual liaisons with most of the artists she encountered has, indeed, become one of the mainstays of her work's allegedly risqué content. In this respect, Otto Rank, Henry Miller, a Peruvian Marxist writer Gonzalo, and indeed her own father, figure prominently.

Throughout the diaries, the last and sixth Volume documents the period 1955–1966, Nin's attempts to establish herself as a writer and artist are interspersed with her psychoanalytical sessions and her sexual encounters. Whether these "sessions" are imaginary and/or real is deliberately made unclear in many instances. Other passages in the later diaries detail in slightly more pragmatic terms Nin's return to the United States and how she attempts to get to grips with American mores and morals.

The popularity of the diary elevated Nin, who presents herself as the diary's chief protagonist and dominating persona, to a cult figure for a strengthening feminist movement in the late 1960s and throughout the 1970s. As Nin's life of sexual exploration became a marker for an increasing feminist awareness, Nin herself capitalized on this, drawing larger audiences for the increasingly popular college and literary lectures she gave. In critical terms, there was a general agreement that the diaries provided a remarkable sense of the bohemian life of 1930s Paris. Coupled with the sexual life of a young childless and uninhibited woman, the diaries were thus taken by many to be a reflection of an early attempt at feminine self-liberation. Since 1985, however, large amounts of material expurgated from the original diary publications have emerged, prompting a revision of Nin's allegedly liberated sexual life. Hitherto undisclosed facts about Nin's life—such as a possible incestuous relationship with the father she was reunited with at the age of 20, and several unintended abortions—have tended to color the previous "so-called" true accounts in the diaries.

In the wake of these disclosures, two unexpurgated versions of Nin's Diaries: *Henry and June: From the Unexpurgated Diary of Anais Nin* (1986) and *Incest: From 'Journal of Love,' the Unexpurgated diary of Anais Nin* (1992) can be seen as either predominantly commercial attempts by the estates of Nin's work to make money following her death or alternatively further testimony



to the honest and passionate disclosure in writing of a women's most private life.

Henry Miller's relationship to Nin likewise stands as an ambiguous testimony to both of their oeuvres as it is unclear how much they edited and rewrote each other's work during the 1930s. From a staunchly feminist perspective, Nin's long-term relationship with a writer such as Henry Miller, known for his supposedly male chauvinist agenda, is a troubling reminder that her public persona is possibly very different from the one she advocated the disclosure of in most of her work. As an example, it was through Henry Miller that Nin was introduced to an anonymous collector searching for compliant writers of erotica for private consumption. Nin acquiesced and the following years not only supplied short pieces but became the procurer and middleman for friends wishing to submit. According to Miller, as quoted by Nin in her diary, the stories were to "leave out the poetry and the descriptions of anything but sex. Concentrate on Sex."

In spite of this, Nin's *Delta of Venus* (1977) and *Little Birds* (1979) are still remarkable visions of a sexual landscape set within a woman's land of dreams and desires. Dealing with such issues as voyeurism, bisexuality, and the elaborate enactment of fantasy and role-playing, Nin's erotica displays a more playful and neurosis-free version of a woman's quest for sexual fulfilment than that oftentimes witnessed in the diaries. Nin's value as a writer of erotica is an issue that has nevertheless fallen by the wayside in most critical assessments of her work.

Towards the latter part of her life, Nin also successfully published a number of books on the art of writing in general: *The Novel of the Future* (1968) and *In Favour of the Sensitive Man and other Essays* (1976). *The Novel of the Future* was published by Macmillan in an attempt to capitalize on the success of the diaries and indeed on Nin's growing reputation as a role model for young aspiring female writers. *The Novel of the Future*, a series of thoughts and commentaries on writing in general, can be seen as an extended exposition on her previous fiction. Reaffirming her interest in the psychological, the use-value of dreams, and symbolism in writing, *The Novel of the Future*, rather than elaborate on her use of sexuality as a guiding principle, returns to Nin's preoccupation with individual empowerment through an acceptance of the irrational and

dreams. *In Favour of the Sensitive Man and other Essays* (1976) briefly deals with the issue of sexuality after the sexual revolution. In typical Nin vein it pays homage to the so-called "sensitive man" whilst simultaneously reminding women that their femininity must be preserved and indeed celebrated in order not to be suppressed.

## Biography

Born in Paris, France 21 February 1903, the daughter of Joaquin Nin, a Spanish composer and pianist and Rosa Culmell, a singer of French and Danish ancestry. At age 11 she began keeping the diary for which she became one of the most celebrated diarists in literary history. She died in Los Angeles, California on January 14, 1977. The last volumes of her diaries were published posthumously.

CAROLINE BLINDER

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# NOËL, BERNARD

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1930–

French novelist and poet

## *Le château de Cène*

Bernard Noël's *Le château de Cène* is a classic twentieth-century French erotic novel. First published in 1969 in Paris under the pseudonym of Urbain d'Orlhac, it was immediately banned by the authorities. In 1971, J.-J. Pauvert reissued it under Noël's name. The second edition drove Noël back to court where, in 1973, he was found guilty of obscenity. This may have been one of the last instances of prohibitions of this nature during the Fifth Republic; soon after censorship was abolished in France. Free again to be printed and distributed, *Le château de Cène* was published in 1977 in a paperback series (10–18). In 1985, another edition was released by Éditions Nulle Part and the novel was published by Gallimard in 1990. It coincided with the novel's stage adaptation at the Bataclan in Paris starring Philippe Léotard.

*Le château de Cène* is a short novel, but a disconcerting one that was obviously influenced by the Surrealist movement. Written in a highly poetic style, it stages an array of characters that are fascinated by the frightening and the unusual and are open to all sorts of excesses, including sadism and zoophilia. The story is about a special kind of apprenticeship, which takes place in two stages. In the first, the hero-narrator runs ashore on a remote island of the South Atlantic. For the local celebration of the equinox, he is chosen to deflower a young woman, Emma, who represents the new moon. This ritual ceremony takes place in public and is similar in its general structure to the famous poetic suite *Amers* by Saint-John Perse, although the analogy stops there. Noël's hero must go through a series of physical suffering before he can make love to the young woman. When he does, he finds a moment of true happiness.

In the second stage, the hero learns that he was chosen for this initiation by a mysterious

and extremely beautiful lady from a neighboring island, whom he saw nude during the moon ritual. He decides to go to the island and meet her. Guarded by dogs, Arabs, and armed Black men, this island is dominated by Mona, a mythical countess who resembles the dangerous Hecatus. Before having access to his lady, the narrator is once again put to the test. He has to experience sex with two dogs who are mastered by a cruel Black man—this is one of the episodes for which the novel was censored. He also has to watch the atrocious execution of one of Mona's lovers, who is torn apart by a pack of dogs. Finally, he has to endure the unbearable spectacle of Emma, who is entwined with a snake within a glass prison.

Once he has passed these tests, the hero can have access to Mona, but he soon understands that his initiation is not over. He will still have to submit to the sadistic domination of the countess and her sexual fantasies, which include his being raped by a monkey.

Beyond this erotic calvary of the dark sides of sexuality, the hero will be happy to see the cruel Mona change into the sweet Ora. Further, for his great courage, he will be introduced to an exclusive secret society in which he will experience a new self and have the privilege of becoming the imagination of the group. There he will receive new powers including that of life and death over others.

The *Cène* (the Last Supper) of the title refers to his invitation to join this group and to the principles of sharing and reciprocity that govern the castle of Mona–Ora, a castle that is a hidden paradise of pleasures. The *Cène* also highlights the oral and digestive themes that dominate the sexual representation in the novel. This reaches its peak in an episode in which a black male is castrated and his erect phallus is thrown into a boiling bouillon.

This oneiric novel was followed by *Le château de Hors*, a brief coprophagic narrative, which further explores the oral and digestive dimension of this universe.

The author also added two texts, *L'Outrage aux mots* and *La pornographie*, which serve as commentaries on *Le château de Cène* as well as reflecting on the creative writing. Among other things, Noël draws a political parallel between his novel and the Algerian war, an intellectual interpretation that may also be used as a means of justifying his discursive production of sex by "serious" discourse. This self-interpretation is similar to another major problem that Noël courageously confronts: self-censorship, which may be as important, if not more so, than dealing with official censors. In these texts the reader discovers that the writing of *Le château de Cène* was a liberating experience for its author: this book was not written to sexually arouse the reader but to help the author master his own most intimate fears, thus helping to create the artist he ultimately became. Noël's first victory over his own censorship occurred with the publication of the second edition of the novel in 1971, when he decided to stop using a pseudonym: "[...] the pseudonym was making the censorship last, my signature was voiding it." (157)

Bernard Noël goes even further by creating a new word, *sensure* ("sensorship") besides the usual *censure* (censorship). The *sensure* is for a new kind of repression in our modern cultures and refers to the deprivation of more than just speech, meaning itself (*sens* in French). The traditional *censure* acts against words, the new *sensure* acts on us with the words. With this in mind, he sees eroticism, when it is elitist and sectarian and has a defined set of rules, as the last resort of a moral order to *sensor* the body of its physical and organic dimensions. He uses the erotic genre against that eroticism as a subversive tool to fight the political blunder and as a means to subvert bourgeois values.

### Biography

Born in 1930 in the French Aveyron. His first book of poetry, *Extraits du corps*, was published in 1958.

He has written several novels, plays, collections of poetry (for which he won the National Poetry Award in 1992), essays, and art criticism. He contributed to numerous literary magazines, and is currently editor-in-chief of the magazine *Correspondances*.

GAËTAN BRULOTTE

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# NOSAKA AKIYUKI

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1930–  
Japanese writer

In all his work novelist Nosaka Akiyuki tries to tear down the usual distinction between the *watakushi shosetsu* [the I-novel] and the entertaining novel which deals with relations between men and women. He rejects also the difference made between “popular” and “pure” literature. He loved writing songs, and then subverted the popular detective story as well as the porno novel. *The Pornographers* is not a pornographic novel in the usual sense of the term, as it doesn’t oppose a strong male to a weak woman, which is always the case in Japanese literature. On the contrary, he often depicts weak men, and the voyeur–reader at the same time is deceived: there are none of the expected erotic scenes, and the censors have no precedents on which to decry such a tricky masterpiece. The casting is nether convincing and the *mise en scène* of pleasure is always laborious. What is described is rather the traffic of sexual fantasies organized for “art” and by “philanthropy” by a funny quatuor which is described. This polemical writer was prosecuted in 1974, at a time when he was editor-in-chief for the *Omoshirohambun* review. He published an anonymous short story, *Yojouhanfusuma no shitabari*, attributed to Nagai Kafû in the Taishô period. The trial became an opportunity to open the debate on censorship in Japan. Though he lost the trial, this short story is no longer forbidden.

With *Tomuraishitachi* [*The Funeral Undertakers*], it will be another type of organization, this time turned towards the death industry. The four characters are worried, like the previous pornographers, about how they can take advantage of the emerging capitalist market, and from their own experience of survival during war time. The economical progress is linked to the sex and death profits.

The last opus of the *ero-guro-tero*” (erotic-grotesque-terrorist) literature, *Tero-Tero* (1971)

close a destructive achievement of an “eye-writer,” cruel and lucid, who never stops critiquing post-war Japan, and his own destiny. Nosaka is strongly influenced by French naturalism, and he defines himself as a “hakkaisakka” (a writer without pity). The pornographic writer Kakiya that he imagines in *The Pornographers* writes in an old-fashioned way, and only while masturbating. He writes only with his imagination and through his act of writing he masturbates himself. The verb “kaku” means “to write” and onanism simultaneously. This novel is a deep investigation into masculine Japanese mentality. These men who sell sex fantasies, such as false virgins, “live” and natural sex audio tapes, photos and various items, films (which they shoot and direct themselves, before Imamura Shohei made his own version of the whole story in 1965, under the title *Erogoshitachi yori jinruigaku nyûmon* [*Gang bangs*], are charlatans. It is a “cock-novel” (“le roman du zizi,” wrote Patrick de Vos) which showed the failure of sexual liberation. Subuyan discovers the main law: onanism. The climax comes when he marries a “poupée gonflable” wearing a girl school uniform. In fact, the main character feels an incestuous desire for his daughter, and then he becomes impotent. The lack of sexual power, associated with masturbation, resumes the main conception of the author. In *Amerika no Hijiki* (1968), Toshio brings the American friend of his wife to witness Japanese sexual power, but the actor, Kitchan, is completely impotent, a circumstance tied to his memories of the war and a shameful sense of inferiority.

*Kan* [*Viol*] deals with the ritual sexual intercourse between a shintoist temple guardian in a remote southern island and the cadavers of virgins. The ghost of a little dead girl disturbs the sexual and religious intercourse of the guardian who becomes impotent, and dies in the waves still having a holy wooden *olisbos* on his hips. The guardian refused to have sex with the little girl, because she looked like his sister. Then she

## NOSAKA AKIYUKI

became a ghost. Nosaka never stops writing to express his guilt at having survived the Kobe bombing, and to have left behind his mother and his little sister. *Hotaru no haka* [*The Firefly's Grave*] is the basis from which his novels can be understood as a way of asking forgiveness. The last utopy he can imagine is a pornotopy, based on onanism, impotency, and incest, like the collective tribal incest and sacrifice of newborn babies in *Honegami Toge Hotoke-Kazura* [*The Dead Vineyard on the Skinny God's Pass*], just the opposite of the democracy offered by the sexual liberators.

### Biography

Born in Kamakura near Tokyo, Nosaka Akiyuki was brought up by adoptive parents in Kobe, as his mother died when he was born. At 14 years old, after the bombing of Kobe, he loses his parents, and his young sister. He survives then in the “yake-ato” time (literally “after burning”) of the black market and ruins. His father, vice-governor for the province of Niigata, takes him out of the corrective house where he was placed. He entered Waseda University in Tokyo, but is not keen on studying for a long time. He worked many unusual jobs. In 1957, he writes scripts, commercial songs, and slogans for advertisements on radio and TV. In 1963, he publishes his very first novel, *Erogoshitachi* [*The Pornographers*]. It became a cult novel of the sixties. From 1962 to 1972, he wrote novels, political fiction, and many essays, being involved in the political life of the country first as a member of the United Left Front, then as a senator.

MARC KOBER

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# NOUGARET, PIERRE

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1742–1823

French compiler, historian, novelist, and dramatist

Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Nougaret was an indefatigable literary hopeful who left the provinces to make his way as a writer in Paris. Intent on selling books, he tried his hand at nearly every possible literary genre. His more than one hundred published works include heroic poems, geography books for children, libertine novels, patriotic hymns, plays and theatrical criticism, religious history books, pro-monarchy treatises, pro-revolutionary treatises, a history of French prisons, and a collection of amusing stories about monkeys. In short, his unrestrained output reveals an obsession to publish that left him with a reputation for literary metamorphoses and a certain prodigious mediocrity.

Virtually nothing is known about his childhood or family, and his education appears to have been minimal. After staging a one-act play in Toulouse at the age of eighteen, he left the provinces for Paris. There, he attempted to do precisely what an obscure newcomer from the provinces should do—make alliances with the literary establishment. He went about it rather badly, however, and soon was known for his sequels, vaguely disguised copies, and alternate versions of other people's work. He wrote a poem about the Calas affair to ingratiate himself with Voltaire, as well as a supplement to one of Voltaire's more scandalous poems, "La Pucelle." The addition to "La Pucelle" was deemed immoral, and Nougaret was imprisoned in the Bastille. Imprisonment gave him a certain literary cachet; opportunistic booksellers soon encouraged him to compose licentious works, as *livres obscènes* were selling well in 1760s Paris. The result was his first novel, *Lucette, ou les progrès du libertinage*, published in 1765. In 1769, he was imprisoned again for publishing the adventures of a libertine monk, *La Capucinade*.

He was a puppet of the book market, trying to mimic whatever was selling well, as is illustrated by many of his titles, which echo those of other writers: *Les nouvelles liaisons dangereuses*, [*New*

*Dangerous Liaisons*] after Laclos, and *La paysanne pervertie* [*The Perverted Peasant Girl*], after *Le paysan perverti* [*The Perverted Peasant*] by Rétif de la Bretonne. (Rétif, who hated Nougaret, later published his own *Paysanne pervertie*.) He also increased sales by republishing his own works with new titles, making only minor changes in plot or character names.

Of Nougaret's seventeen or eighteen texts that have at some point been classified as *livres obscènes*, the two most often cited are *Lucette, ou les progrès du libertinage* and *La Capucinade*. Some of his licentious novels were published anonymously, some with the indication N\*\*\*, still others under the pseudonym Frère P.J. Discret N\*.

### *Lucette, ou les Progrès du libertinage, 1765*

Two young lovers, Lucette and Lucas—both peasants from the provinces—end up in Paris where they engage in sexual intrigues throughout the city. He is a lackey who keeps busy entertaining aristocratic women; she is a kept woman who flits from lover to lover: a prince, a bishop, several different merchants. Finally, worn out from their urban exploits, they escape from the city and are married. Crippled with debt and miserable, they soon die penniless. The sexual adventures are recounted within the frame of a cautionary tale in which the narrator helps the reader recognize characters' "false steps," as is illustrated in the narrative of Lucette's lost virginity:

From that moment—fatal to her virtue—she felt an unknown agitation, and for a long time felt the strong desire in her heart to follow the example of the ladies of the city, persuaded that she could imitate them.

### *La Capucinade, histoire sans vraisemblance, 1769 [The Capucinade, Story against All Probability]*

A young monk discovers the pleasures of love with the young Nanette. From this initiation, he enjoys a series of nights of pleasure with

## NOUVEAU PARNASSE SATYRIQUE DU DIX-NEUVIÈME SIÈCLE, LE

different women. He soon learns that his fellow monks share his inclination for the pleasures of the flesh and they begin to calculate different ways to sneak young women into the monastery. The novel is more anticlerical than erotic. To be sure, many characters have sexual liaisons with many other characters, but details are scant and the narrative seems written to amuse rather than to excite. For example, after seducing a virgin, the narrator offers only this commentary: "A cry announces my victory and lets me know that the gate to pleasure is now open for good." If anything, the narrative offers a diatribe against clerical celibacy: the narrator-monk continually reminds his reader of the natural inevitability of his desire for women.

### Biography

Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Nougaret was born in La Rochelle, 16 December 1742. Moved to Toulouse where his first play was staged, 1760; moved to Paris, 1763; published his first novel, 1765; imprisoned in the Bastille for publishing an illicit book, 1765 and 1769; during the French Revolution, worked as an intelligence agent, following an alleged spy throughout southern France, 1792; named head of the office of

surveillance in Paris, 1792; after the Terror, lived off the modest revenue from his writing. Died in Paris, June 1823.

DIANE BERRETT BROWN

### Selected Libertine Works

*Lucette, ou les Progrès du libertinage*. 1765; also published, with modifications, as *La Paysanne pervertie ou les moeurs des grandes villes, Les Dangers de la séduction et les faux pas de la beauté, Juliette, ou les Malheurs d'une vie coupable*, and *Suzette et Pierrin, ou les Progrès du libertinage*.

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*Les Faiblesses d'une jolie femme, ou mémoires de Madame de Vilfranc, écrits par elle-même*. 1779.

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## NOUVEAU PARNASSE SATYRIQUE DU DIX-NEUVIÈME SIÈCLE, LE

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In 1864, Auguste Poulet-Malassis, publisher of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du Mal*, established in Brussels as a publisher of erotica works after bankruptcy in France, published *Le Parnasse satyrique du dix-neuvième siècle* [*The Satirical Parnassus of the Nineteenth Century*], an anthology of "spicy and ribald verse" (according to its subtitle) by contemporary writers. Poulet-Malassis also assembled the poems for a second anthology, *Le nouveau Parnasse satyrique du dix-neuvième siècle* [*The New Satirical Parnassus*]

(1866). (The titles echo the volume of satirical and erotic poems published in 1622 under the name of Théophile de Viau.) Both collections encompass a variety of pieces; their tone ranges from the colloquial and popular (the poems are often monologues or dialogues), to the witty and allusive, and the highly literary.

The collections comprise contemporary satirical poems and epigrams (including Musset's deft review of the members of the Académie française, and Joachim Duflot's "Portraits de

femmes” [Portraits of Women], evoking the alleged sexual proclivities of famous actresses); mildly indecent verse that had fallen foul of the censors (risqué popular poems by Pierre-Jean de Béranger, ribald celebrations of sex, food, and drink by Félix Bovie); a facsimile of a letter by George Sand to her seamstress about an overtight corset; humorous pieces such as an innocent drinking song that adapts obscene terms as its rhymes; poems exploiting *double entendre*, like an indecently allusive hymn to a candle; bawdy parodies of contemporary poems and songs from vaudevilles, including “Le Con” [The Cunt] (Albert de La Fizelière), a sustained transposition of Lamartine’s idealized recollection of lost love, “Le Lac” [The Lake]; mock-heroic verses on themes such as a chambermaid’s battle against pubic lice; realistic monologues with a comic flavor, such as Henri Monnier’s “La Pierreuse” in which a prostitute addresses her client; outrageously explicit humorous verses, such as a prostitute’s jaunty account of her life and chief pleasure (“Minette,” i.e., cunnilingus). Many poems are verbally and formally inventive. A subversive element is often present in the celebration of prostitutes, drunkenness, and in antimilitarist and anticlerical mockery. Paul Saunière’s “L’Amour” is provocative in its grossly realistic demythification of “love” through insistence on the physicality of sex. Among the more serious poems in the 1864 edition were the six condemned poems from Baudelaire’s *Les Fleurs du Mal*, and Théophile Gautier’s “Musée secret” [Secret Museum], a celebration of pubic hair through art, literature, history, and legend, which he had withdrawn at the last minute from his volume *Émaux et camées* [Enamels and Cameos], alongside four neatly turned comic poems including a fantasy on a battle between fleas and pubic lice, and an evocation of the column in the place Vendôme as a giant dildo.

The second anthology (1866) included further poems by Baudelaire, including “Les Promesses d’un visage” [Promises of a Face], refused for publication in France because of its closing reference to pubic hair. The Appendix made several corrections and additions to the first collection, and revealed the identity of several authors presented anonymously or disguised in 1864. A third collection, published in Brussels by Henry Kistemackers in 1881, subsumed material from the first two and further included, grouped

together, works by the five Naturalist writers associated with Émile Zola in the volume of stories *Les Soirées de Médan* [The Médan Soirées] (1880), but not Zola himself. These demonstrate not the uniformity of a school but variety. Henry Céard’s “Ballade des pauvres putains” [Ballad of the Poor Whores] is a sympathetic and realistic portrayal of the plight of street prostitutes in winter; it is coupled with an ironic ballad to the Virgin whose refrain is a plea to preserve the poet from syphilis. Léon Hennique contributed two light-hearted poems, one a Rabelaisian monologue of a monk mixing sex, scatology, food, and drink in pastiche Old French. Paul Alexis’s “Le Lit,” a Naturalistic evocation (with some squalid touches) of the bed as a place of birth, love-making, illness, and death, is philosophical and lyrical rather than shocking. In contrast, J.-K. Huysmans contributed two dense sonnets: one evokes cunnilingus with a menstruating woman; the other (“Sonnet masculin,” with exclusively masculine rhymes) is a graphic description of sodomy. Both push language to extremes in order to shock, but are highly literary in their rare words and elaborate syntax, and combine fascination with physiological revulsion. Maupassant is represented by three erotic poems, one celebrating cunnilingus in conventionally poetic terms, the others provocatively crude. The collection also reprinted several pieces from Jean Richepin’s *La Chanson des gueux* [The Song of the Beggars] that had earned the author a year in prison: they exploit popular language and evoke vividly and with sympathy marginal characters and working-class victims (the son of a prostitute turned thief in “Fils de fille”).

The first volumes represent a mixture of unpublished material acquired by Poulet-Malassis and his collaborators, previously published but banned material, and pieces contributed by their authors. Stéphane Mallarmé’s *Les Lèvres roses* [Pink Lips], a vivid but uncharacteristically explicit and sadistic evocation of a pedophile lesbian negress, animalized and “in the grip of the demon,” was written for the 1866 anthology (at the instigation of his friend Albert Glatigny, who contributed several poems). The choice indicates a desire to show reputable authors in a new light, and sometimes to discredit figures now in positions of importance or displaying an ostentatious devoutness under the Second Empire: the 1866 Preface draws a parallel with Ham



## NUNNERY TALES

unveiling Noah's nakedness and the anthologist revealing his contemporaries in questionable poses. The volumes were smuggled into France for clandestine sale. The first volume was condemned in Paris in 1865 for "outrage to public and religious morality," the second in Lille in 1868. The volumes were however widely known; the critic Charles Monselet (whose verse figures in the 1866 anthology) devoted a lengthy article in *L'Événement* (Paris) in 1878, shortly after Poulet-Malassis's death, to the 1864 collection, noting that "everyone is a bit compromised in it, the most famous as well as the most obscure, as everyone has had, in his life, a moment of madness."

PETER COGMAN

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# NUNNERY TALES

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*Nunnery Tales* (printed anonymously from 1866–1868 for the booksellers of London, under its full title of *Nunnery Tales; or Cruising under False Colours: A Tale of Love and Lust*) is one of many such tales set in a convent and part of a genre of anti-religious erotica which became popular during the eighteenth century. By the nineteenth century, these stories have become more explicit and detailed in their description of increasingly varied sexual acts. The narrative takes the simple form of introducing a handful of characters who then go on to describe their own sexual adventures in turn. In order to ensure progressive heightened sexual excitement, a device is followed, whereby the sexual action becomes increasingly outrageous (or what would have been perceived as "abnormal" behavior in the nineteenth century). The stories guide the reader through increasing gradations of sexual fantasy ranging from flagellation and the taking of virginity to sodomy, incest, and bestiality. Flagellation was particularly prevalent in this type of nunnery tale as it assimilated Catholic religious penitence of self-mortification into sexual fetish.

Told in three volumes, this story is essentially that of a young man, Augustus Ermenonville, who hides away in a convent and has sex with

many nuns. Augustus's aristocratic father had fled to England to escape the Sans-Culottes. His mother plans to take refuge in a convent of St. Claire, where her sister is abbess. Augustus suggests he should disguise himself and enter the convent alongside her, renaming himself Augustine and passed off as his father's first wife's niece.

Within the convent setting, a space of sexual frenzy is depicted with the introduction of a flagellation scene. A young nun comes forward to receive her punishment from her confessor, Father Eustace. Alongside him is the abbess who proclaims, "But stripped you will have to be, and I think slightly whipped. So you had better begin to undress yourself at once in order to save time." The buffet on which she was to be whipped is described in detail by Augustus: "It was a sort of low divan, provided with pillows and cushions, and covered with black velvet—at each corner moreover it was furnished with leather straps and buckles. On this black velvet altar then, which set off the dazzling whiteness of her skin most charmingly, the beautiful Emile knelt down as a victim for sacrifice, and having deposited the rod between her spread legs, proceeded to her devotions or what we presumed to

be such." He admires the lovely naked Emile awaiting her punishment which is due as a result of her being caught masturbating with the extra candle she had been given by the abbess Agatha, Augustus's aunt. The father who has come to inflict the punishment has no breeches and his cassock hung loose exposing his genitalia; "his frock became a little open in front, and a most monstrous standing prick became undisguisedly exposed to view,—it was a powerful machine, with a huge purple knob." He performs "his whispering forgiveness" on her, a euphemism for cunnilingus, and "anooints" her with his "his holy oil" (sperm).

Augustus, still disguised as Augustine, acts as chamber maid to the lovely young nun. He offers to wipe her dry with his handkerchief. She in turn, introduces him to Louise and Adele. The reader is then introduced to incest when Emile warns him he will be expected to sleep with his aunt, who has sex with all the new young nuns, "By the bye [sic] I hope you do not consider it immoral to sleep with your Aunt; for she will most certainly make you do so tonight."

Adele explains how the abbess seduced her. She describes oral sex with details of female ejaculations and a torrent of genital fluids; Adele declares, "my mouth was filled, and my face and throat drenched with a warm oily liquor." Inspections for virginity are frequent in this erotica. The abbess checks on Adele's status by thrusting her fingers inside the young nun. She then declares her intention of taking her maidenhead. The dildo is described, "a curious thing that seemed like a thick ivory ruler, about nine inches long, partly covered with red velvet.—This apparatus had an elastic appendage round-shaped like a ball, which was filled from a phial, and the whole machine was firmly strapped round her front and bottom by a strong bandage." On squeezing the ball, the dildo ejects a milky liquid.

They all have supper together upon which it is noticed by Father Eustace that Augustus is no nun by virtue of the discovery of his great cock. Eustace declares, "He is his Father's own Son" thereby claiming paternity of Augustus, it having been made obvious from the onset that the mother knew Eustace intimately. He agrees that Augustus should have the run of the young nuns but stay dressed as one himself. Agatha, his aunt, protests that she should have him first. Father Eustace facetiously remarks that "con-

nection between relatives so near of kin was not allowed by the Canons of the church!" Father Eustace begins to have sex with Augustus's mother while the son takes up with his aunt. Augustus sums up the situation; "this is rather a strange predicament for a young man!—To find himself in girl's clothes riding the Lady superior of a strict Convent, and which lady is his own Aunt! And at the same time witnessing his Mother being outrageously fucked in the same rim by her Father Confessor whom I firmly believe to be my own bodily Father!"

The Abbess then recounts the tale of her seduction by the monks, Abelard and Eustace, overseen by Beatrice her superior. Both of them inspected her to ensure she has maintained her virginity. The reader is then introduced to anal sex during Agatha's tale, "you had better grease her bottom hole, as well as your infernal machine." Both the men enter her together, one in her vagina, one in her anus. She describes it, "I felt as if my belly and the lower part of my body was complete filled up by two large snakes."

The stories continue along the same lascivious vein; another scene follows with Augustus taking the maidenhead of Louise, assisted by Emile and Adele, and yet another where he takes the virginity of the pious young Agnes who turns out to enjoy it. The other nuns are also involved.

Louise goes on to tell her tale involving bestiality when she stayed at the Chateau of Madame de Fleury who kept numerous extraordinary pets including dogs, birds, and a baboon which masturbates itself. Her grandmother wonders if they could not pay a peasant girl to satisfy the baboon. During one incident, Louise witnesses her respected governess as "she grasped the baboon's ugly stiff red machine and worked it up and down." Her monitor, Madam Herbelot, is then mounted by the baboon, Sylvain. The grandmother buys a peasant girl, Marie, to have sex with the animal while Louise looks on. Louise also described a scene where Jean, Marie, Robert, and Annette watch a bull mounting a heifer.

Emile then tells her story of losing her virginity. The story so excites the listening nuns that they fall upon each other. Adele is sodomized by Augustus, while she in turn, complete with strap-on dildo, thrusts into Aunt Agatha. Emile continues with another story, followed by Eustace who recounts a tale about a woman

## NUNNERY TALES

called Julie, the king's favorite; his mother then tells her tale.

By volume three, we are introduced to Helene, her brother Charles, and her cousin "fucking her rump hole." After a sexual encounter with her dalmation dog, her mother issues her a warning about a girl who had two half-monkeys as a result of having sex with a baboon. She was sent away to the country to deliver "three or four little animals" which she never saw.

Finally, leaving the convent for Bordeaux where Father Eustace has hired them a schooner, Augustus and his mother return to England as the Revolutionaries are nearing. He takes Agnes with him for gratification en route. His mother has sex with Captain Dufour of the ship, who tells of his encounter with Donna Isadora and Donna Isabella. In the post-chasie for London, with his mother watching on, he penetrates Agnes with her bottom in his lap. Further adventures ensue in London.

The book is fairly well-written, although the stories do at times become repetitious.

JULIE PEAKMAN

### Editions

London c. 1888; 1890; 1892; 1893; c. 1895; 1896; 1899, 1902; c. 1921.

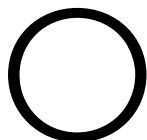
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## OBAYD-E ZAKANI

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c. 1300–1371

Persian poet and prose writer

Throughout the fourteenth century, Iran was ruled by various local princes appointed by the Mongols, who had invaded and devastated the country in the previous century. Great wealth existed alongside abject poverty, and changes in the personnel of local government could be abrupt and frequent: the venality and inter-cine belligerence of most of the country's rulers were proverbial. Obayd-e Zakani came from a family known for its administrative abilities and he appears early in life to have been a functionary at a provincial court (which one is not known), possibly rising to the rank of minister. However, in his poetry he constantly complains of his debts and extreme poverty, as well as his lack of connections with the powerful. Although claims of poverty are conventional for medieval Persian poets, the consistency and vehemence of his remarks implies that for much of his life he lived at or beyond the edge of respectable society, and indeed harbored a deep-seated contempt for those who were successful in it.

His writing clearly reflects the unstable social conditions prevalent throughout Iran during his lifetime, but it is also part of a more local literary tradition. Shiraz had been well-known as a literary haven since the time of the poet Sa'di (thirteenth century) and Obayd's contemporaries and neighbors in Shiraz included two major poets, Hafez, and Jahan Khatun, (who was a daughter of the provincial ruler). A number of themes explored by Obayd, including the recommendation to cultivate a private life of hedonism away from centers of power, skepticism as to the claims of religion, and a sharp eye for the hypocrisy of those who possessed either secular or religious authority, were shared by these and other local writers. What makes Obayd's works distinctive are his highly developed use of irony and parody as literary devices, the intensity of his denunciations of hypocrisy (it is this that chiefly draws his ire), and the obscene language that pervades many of his most famous compositions.

Most of his work is self-consciously literary, often to an extreme degree, delighting in direct and indirect allusions to other works, elaborate parodies, and quotations from well known and

obscure sources: (one result of this is that much of it is extremely difficult to translate effectively). In their combination of ironic playfulness, vehement anger, and scatological aggression his writings can remind one of Swift: the glimpses they give of a bohemian life of debts, brawls, drunkenness, and indiscriminate sexual energy can give the impression that the author was a kind of Persian Villon. But the western author Obayd's writings most insistently call to mind is Rabelais; this is due largely to their mixture of parodied learning (Obayd uses Arabic and the literary traditions of medieval Islam much as Rabelais uses Latin and the literary traditions of medieval Christendom) with lewd, hyperbolic fantasy (as for example in his *Book of the Beard* [*Rishnameh*], a mock treatise on the appearance of an adolescent male's beard, which marks the end of his sexual attractiveness).

His chief satirical work is *The Ethics of the Nobility* [*Akhlaq al-Ashraf*]. Parodying serious works on ethics, this is divided into seven chapters each of which defines a virtue. But rather than describing these virtues as timelessly incumbent on all Moslems, as is usual in such works, Obayd describes an old or "abrogated" form of each virtue, and then the new or "preferred" form. The "abrogated" form is the virtue as it is normally understood, the "preferred" form is its moral opposite: thus the "preferred" form of bravery is cowardice, the "preferred" form of chastity is sexual license, the "preferred" form of religious belief is atheism, and so forth. The work is a prosimetrum (a common form for a serious didactic work in medieval Persian) with the prose containing most of the exposition, while the verse passages are usually used as a gnomic summing up of the points being made. In what is perhaps the work's best known passage of verse, an encounter between the greatest Persian epic hero, Rostam, and one of his enemies is described: their combat is not however with swords, instead they alternately sodomize one another.

Obayd wrote a number of other works in prose: among these the best known are *The Treatise of a Hundred Councils* [*Resaleh-ye Sad Pand*, a book of cynical advice], *The Heart Delighting Treatise* [*Resaleh-ye Del-Gosha*, a book of facetiae, jokes, and amusing anecdotes], and *The Treatise in Ten Chapters* [*Resaleh-ye Dah Fasl*]. This last is a kind of a "Devil's Dictionary" in which words are given cynical and derogatory

definitions: for example, "A lawyer" is "One who perverts the truth"; "Thought" is "That which uselessly makes men ill"; "A virgin" is "A noun with no referent," and so forth).

Recent writers on Obayd (Javadi, Mahjoub, Sprachman) have seen him mainly as a satirist, and as most of his satire is in prose they have regarded these works as his most important. However he has been traditionally regarded primarily as a poet, and it is the present writer's view that his poetry is at least as significant as his prose. His best known poem is a comic fable with clear political overtones (*Mush o Gorbeh*, [*Mouse and Cat*] about a predatory cat and a horde of mice who unsuccessfully try to destroy it. His other chief, relatively long, poem is a work celebrating masturbation, particularly as practiced by sufis (Moslem mystics, who often claimed to be celibate). Indignation at the sufis' hypocrisy seems to be interwoven with a genuine enthusiasm for the poem's subject. A number of short poems celebrate sex either with women or with adolescent boys: in some the author claims he doesn't have a preference between the two, in others he stages brief mock debates on the relative virtues of their sexual parts. Obayd also wrote a number of serious poems, including panegyrics to local rulers, as well as conventional ghazals (love lyrics) and shorter poems, which are by no means contemptible.

### Biography

Obayd-e Zakani was born in the north of Iran, in Qazvin, but spent most of his life in Shiraz, the capital of Fars, the chief province of southern central Iran.

DICK DAVIS

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# OCAMPO, SILVINA

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1903–1993

Argentine poet and short story writer

Silvina Ocampo's own writings first appeared in the newspaper *La Nación* and Victoria Ocampo's *Sur*. In 1936, Ocampo contributed to the short-lived *Destiempo*, a literary magazine founded by Bioy Casares, and in the following year, published her first collection of short stories, *Viaje Olvidado* [*Forgotten Journey*].

Most of Ocampo's stories and poems are narrated in the first person and are populated by eccentric child-like figures whose intensity of experience belies the ordinariness of their surroundings. Bestiality and same sex relationships are also present in Ocampo's work, and although explicit sexual episodes are never dealt with, sensuality is very much part of her prose and poetry. A good example of this is the autobiographical poem "El caballo Blanco" [The White Horse] (2001), where Ocampo relates her first attempt at drawing and the immense pleasure she experienced after finishing a sketch depicting a white horse. In her recurrent fashion of portraying children as sensitive to sensual and sexual delight, Ocampo vividly recalls 'una profesora francesa cuya cara se ha borrado pero no la mano ni el sexo.' That French teacher whose face she cannot recall but whose hand and sex are clearly imprinted in Ocampo's memory triggers the young girl's physical pleasure for drawing. In this poem Ocampo describes in detail the sensuality and gratification the girl experiences while drawing the animal, particularly the genitalia, which she draws from memory. That precision to detail is what shocks her puritan family and friends. Furthermore, Ocampo hints at a trace of oral sex in her fetish for sketching; the young girl in the poem would happily abandon the delight of sucking her sweets in favor of secretly drawing under the table.

In general, these young narrators are not only ahead of their sexual awakening but also particularly sensitive to any manifestation of desire. In 'Cornelia frente al espejo' (1988), for

instance, the mirror with whom Cornelia engages in conversation tells her how he remembers her as a precocious young girl who was eight years old and had twenty orgasms a day (*Cuentos Completos II*). This in itself intensifies the fantastical element in her work as well as justifying an ever-present tendency towards black humor. Hidden behind the over simplistic and innocent titles of individual tales—"La muñeca" [The Doll], "La nube" [The Cloud], "Las fotografías" [The Photographs], and "El cuaderno" [The Notebook]—Ocampo's stories invite a psychoanalytical reading. They present a world in which all manner of crimes, sins, acts of cruelty, and sexual aberrations are hinted at, though never precisely unveiled. In addition, her protagonists, although often very young, also tend to suffer some form of psychological abnormality in their own right. This forces them to behave in a manner which is likewise either anomalous or cruel, especially when they are confronted with rites of passage, unwanted sexual initiation, or even the normal processes of maturation and growth. One of Ocampo's most popular tales, 'El pecado mortal' (Mortal Sin) offers an account on one such passage from innocent childhood to sexual awareness. As in most Western literature, this change is brought about by adult sexual aggression. A woman, who is only identified as the narrator, tells a story rich in erotico-religious symbolism of a young girl who falls victim to a male servant's sexual fantasies but is then forced to take her first Communion without confessing her sin. The text is left deliberately vague as to its interpretation, however. An ideological reading, for example, might attempt to link the themes of sexual exploitation, ritual humiliation, and guilt to one of class conflict, especially given the discrepancy in social status of the woman and her seducer. Yet, as is often the case with Ocampo, the victimizer is often the victim of his or her own inner conflicts too, such that the denouement often entails a psychological reversal. In some stories, for example, male

aggression is ultimately explained in terms of a failure of potency or a metaphor of homosocial desire.

Voyeurism is another frequent theme in Ocampo's work. In 'Los mastines del templo de Adriano' [The Mastiffs of Hadrian's Temple], the narrator experiences a form of erotic pleasure by secretly witnessing a sexual encounter. Likewise, in 'The Atonement,' a complex *ménage à trois* establishes itself between Antonio, his wife, and Ruperto, such that Antonio is resentful of Ruperto's obvious fascination with his wife but is only able to perform sexually with her when he is resident in the house. The fantastical denouement of the story involves Ruperto's being blinded by a flock of carefully trained canaries with poisoned beaks. Sometimes Ocampo deliberately conceals the elements needed to offer any meaningful level of interpretation. In 'Miren cómo se aman' [Look How They Love Each Other] the protagonist, Adriana, who works in a circus, has a boyfriend who is very jealous of Plinio whom she has 'trained' and feeds and looks after every day with a passion and devotion she hardly shows for anyone else. Because the author refuses to tell the reader whether Plinio is a baby or an old man, any psychological judgment concerning the boyfriend's jealousy has to remain in abeyance. Ultimately, Adriana returns home one day to find Plinio apparently dead. Having rejected her boyfriend's offer of marriage, Adriana agrees to marry Plinio who, to the reader's surprise, is no longer a monkey but a prince.

Silvina Ocampo's position as one of the principle South American writers of the twentieth century seems assured on her own continent. The recurrent themes she explores in her writing—themes which encompass sexual perversion, cruelty, and sadism—are clearly important ones. However, it also seems likely that her work is too resolutely linked with Argentine mores to appeal easily to English-speaking readers.

### Biography

Born into a prosperous Buenos Aires family among whose ancestors were several of the founding fathers of Argentina, Silvina Ocampo's initial education was provided by French and English governesses, combined with annual trips to Europe; later she studied painting and

drawing in Paris. In common with many Argentine literati, her early tastes were shaped by French and English models, both in the literary and the artistic domain.

Although a prolific author in her own right, Ocampo is perhaps best known for her ties with many of the most illustrious names on the Argentine literary scene of the period: her husband, Adolfo Bioy Casares (b. 1914), is now an internationally celebrated novelist; Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986), probably the most outstanding Argentine figure of the twentieth century, was a close friend and best man at her wedding; while her sister, Victoria Ocampo, was the founder of the literary journal *Sur*, the main conduit by which European literature was introduced not only to Argentina but Latin America generally, and the publishing house of the same name.

CAROLINA MIRANDA

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## OGAWA, YÔKO

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1962–  
Japanese novelist

Yôko Ogawa's works are restricted to a very intimate sphere, especially the body, reaction, sensually to smells and sounds, closed spaces, such as an old hotel on an island (*Iris Hotel*), an orphan's institution (*Diving pool*), a laboratory for specimens (*The Annular*), or a dormitory. Most of the time, the main character is a young woman who is experiencing an intimate universe of sensations the narrator who is experiencing strange, scandalous relations with peculiar isolated men. Ogawa creates opportunities to draw portraits of perverse male characters far beyond the normal standards, and may be thematically linked to the activity of writing itself, an abnormal activity. The female narrator describes very precisely the reasons for which she is attracted. We can trace back a few of these basic instincts, which can shed light.

The first is related to elegance and to a tidiness of appearance and perfection of physical motion. For example, Ogawa describes the scrutiny of Jun's body by the female character while he performs a dive: she loves his muscles, his technique, and she washes his swimming trunks at night. Through secret viewing, this young voyeur desires to be embraced by him, and she feels caresses from the inside. Jun embodies

cleanliness related to water, and ablution for her feelings of guilt and impurity. The story culminates in a brief dialogue with Jun who happens to have known from the beginning that she was looking at him almost every day. They avoid direct contact and maintain that visual relation. In contrast, Jun sees her sadistic acts towards an orphaned five-year-old girl, Rie. This is the second aspect of her personality. Her yearning for the kindness of Jun, and for pure elements (like snow or water) is opposed to her deep hatred of her mother. She desires to crush her lips between her fingers. Her homicidal compulsion towards the small Rie, whom she tries to poison with rotten food, seems to be linked to her own suffering. It is revealed she was raised as just one among the many orphans of the Hikari institution run by her parents. She becomes intimately familiar with the cruelty of adults very early in her life and repeats it, taking pleasure in Rie's tears, which she keeps in a jar. These obsessions may not be those of the author, but the sadistic aspects of education, and the rude behavior of mothers in particular towards daughters are a recurring theme in her work; for example, the dysfunctional relationship between Mari and her mother in *Hotel Iris* which leads Mari into a masochistic relationship with an old man. All of her childhood memories are of taboo acts and as a teenager, love seems to be



poisoned and out of reach because of her sadistic impulses and obsessions, like decaying food, the flesh of children and a mold she imagines is growing on her skin.

The female main character is attracted to particular aspects of the male body such as fingers, the hands, or the feet, and then they are remembered with tenderness and desire. They are intricately described, in great detail and are isolated them from the rest of the body.

A glimpse of the physical appearance of the director of a dormitory is enough to create an intimate link, because he is a cripple. His erotic beauty is not obvious: he has no arms and only one leg remaining, and he is slowly dying from a strange illness. His sex appeal is not separate from his handicap. The narrator compares the perfect shape of her cousin, an athlete, to the beauty of a perfect hand used skillfully to serve tea. The handicapped man is, likewise, attracted by perfect young men's hands. The example of an isolated aspect of the body as the spark for sensual passion can be found in the sound of the voice. The old man in "Hotel Iris" speaks to a prostitute with a quiet and decisive voice in front of Mari, who will be led to erotic submission. She is also attracted by the tidiness of his clothes, house, and writing.

In the case of "Iced Perfume," the narrator can remember her late suicidal lover through the perfume he created, but more precisely through the smell of his brother's body. To fall in love, she only needs to smell his hand, and to remember the touch of his finger behind her ear.

Ogawa's novels are not systematically erotic, but they are always based on a very sensitive approach toward space and sound, like the swimming pool where she feels swallowed as if by a monster, or a ringing phone compared to a sensual animal. In "The Annular," we find a good example of that eroticisation of space. The laboratory for specimens of M. Deshimaru is a wide and complex space where the narrator enters as an employee. She once had a growth removed and she imagines this annular floating in a test tube, among other items in that strange laboratory. Deshimaru has a penchant

for transforming the suffering objects into classified specimens which he stores away. As a suffering girl, he transforms her into a passive object for his desires, in a sadomasochistic relationship like the one described in "Iris Hotel." The erotic scenes take place in an old bathroom. She strips, and puts on a new pair of shoes in which she feels as if she is floating. She must then walk in the bath, and feel the coldness and the hardness of the tiled floor. The sexual relations she has with the specimen's master seem to transform her into a suffering thing, a specimen. In "Iris Hotel," the strange relations between Mari and the old translator occurs in a pattern of bondage and sadomasochism. At the same time, the female narrator and character can be the source of unconscious sadism as in "Pregnancy," where she encounters a normal couple, and imagines that she can destroy her sister's fetus through chemically treated grapefruits. She feels compassion and disgust towards her pregnant sister's appetite and change of mood.

Erotic and compassionate feelings are very often mixed together with a sensitive and personal worldview in a very detailed and precise manner, which is the charm of these novels.

### Biography

Born in 1962, she published her first novel in 1988, and received the Kaien prize for it. In 1991, she received the Akutagawa award for "Ninshin Calendar."

MARC KOBER

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# OLESHA, YURY KARLOVICH

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1899–1960

Russian novelist, short story writer, newspaper serial-writer, dramatist, and film scriptwriter

Yury Karlovich Olesha was the author of the novel *Envy*, a number of short stories, several plays, and co-author of several film scenarios, as well as articles and reviews for the press. Olesha was a writer of immense talent whose total output is modest and who did not realize his full potential. Nevertheless, *Envy* is a minor classic that still provokes an active response from critics, especially in the West; and a handful of Olesha's short stories, especially "The Chain," "Liompa," "Love," 1928, and "The Cherry Stone," 1929, are among the best of the Soviet period. Eroticism in Olesha is both heteroerotic and homoerotic, as may be seen in the first pages of *Envy*, where the hero Nikolai Kavalerov spies on Andrei Babichev doing his morning exercises.

When Babichev lies down on the bath mat on his back and begins to raise his legs one after another, a button on his trouser snaps, exposing his crotch, which is magnificent; "A tender spot. A forbidden nook. The groin of a progenitor. I saw just such a groin on a male antelope. A single look from him is probably enough to send amorous currents flowing through his girls, the secretaries and office girls" [my translation from *Izbrannoe*].

Here, Olesha moves from homoeroticism to heteroeroticism; one might say he uses the latter as a cover for the former. This passage is especially effective as an early statement of the novel's profoundly ambiguous sexuality. When the NEP entrepreneur Babichev, a sausage maker and proprietor of a communal dining facility (The Quarter), runs, his breasts bounce up and down. He also has maternal instincts, as when he takes waifs like Kavalerov off the street and replaces motherhood itself with The Quarter. Andrei's androgyny is symptomatic of the whole short novel. Valya, supposedly Babichev's niece adopted from his brother Ivan, is also androgynous, as she is both a tomboy who

jumps rope with her friend Volodya, the soccer goalie, and the object of Kavalerov's desire. At the soccer match, one of the few ostensible events in *Envy*, the whole crowd is drawn to her. When the wind blows her dress over her head, her is on display for all to see. Yet, it is just this sight that makes Kavalerov realize that her youthful purity puts her out of his lascivious reach and that his attraction to her can never be realized. This pattern of arousal followed by its denial is characteristic of Olesha's treatment of eroticism in *Envy* and elsewhere.

Ivan Babichev's all-powerful fantasy machine, Ophelia, is similarly laden with paradox. Named for Shakespeare's ultra-sensitive heroine, Ophelia impales her creator with a long proboscis in a drunken dream of Kavalerov and thus displays her male, phallic side that complements her machine-like and feminine qualities. Her maker Ivan's sexuality is only revealed in the last words of the novel, when it turns out that he and Kavalerov are living in a ménage à trois with Annichka Prokopovich, a repulsive widow who embodies the debased lasciviousness of the two men.

William Harkins has made a definitive analysis of sexuality in *Envy* in which he finds that sterility is the dominant theme. Volodya Makarov, who in soviet fashion takes as his model the machine, promising (perhaps jocularly) not to kiss Valya for four years. Andrei, the object of Kavalerov's spying, is never shown in a relationship with a woman (or a man). Kavalerov, who likes his blanket and dreams of Annichka's bed, is largely infantile in his sexuality. Whether or not this sterility is an essential part of Olesha's depiction of a Soviet dystopia, everything from erotic impulses to sexual relations in *Envy* seems either unfulfilled or even degraded.

The film *A Strict Youth* begins with a shot of the heroine Masha's naked back—she is in a bathing suit. The hero Grisha Fokin, who soon appears in a white outfit, is another androgynous Oleshan hero who could appeal to both men

## OLESHA, YURY KARLOVICH

and women. His friend Kolya, the discus thrower, receives a rub-down that features a vigorous massage of his breasts as some young men and women Komsomol members look on in a room filled with phallic Grecian pillars (Heil.) There is humor here too, as characters run around in their undershorts and a dog spies on Masha getting dressed. Her relations with Fokin are unresolved, as she can not decide between him and her husband. The paradox of this film is that the strict Komsomol members, who mouth empty slogans about fitness for labor and defense, are the vehicle for their authors' ventures into erotic zones that must have given the censor a thrill even as s/he banned it.

In "Love," the hero Shuvalov is so overwhelmed by his infatuation for Lelya that he sees things that do not exist and thinks in images, so that when a wasp flies into the room he cries, "It's a tiger!" He even offers to trade places with a colorblind man to escape the press of his feelings. In the end, however, he tells the man to go eat his blue pears, after putting his head on Lelya's breast. "His head lay on her sweaty breast and he saw her nipple, pink with wrinkles that were delicate like foam on milk" [my translation from *Izbrannoe*]. This is one of the most graphic and certainly the most tender erotic passage in all of Olesha's work.

The mercurial eroticism found in Olesha is an integral part of his poetics, for it lies at the base of the characters' ever-changing, ambiguous identities. With Olesha, we are never sure what the true nature of people and things might be; we never know which version of his story is the "real" one.

### Biography

Born in Elizavetgrad, Ukraine, March 3, 1899; grew up in Odessa. Studied at Rishlevsky gymnasium. As a youth played soccer, which he followed all his life. Married to Olga Gustavovna Suok. Wrote jingles under the pseudonym of "The Chisel" for *Gudok* [The Whistle], 1922–1929, where Isaac Babel and Mikhail Bulgakov also worked. Publication of the novel *Envy*, 1927, gave Olesha instant recognition. Published the children's story *Three Fat Men*, his best known work in Russia, 1928. Worked on play *A List of Blessings*, 1931, with Meyerhold. The

film *A Strict Youth*, is banned as "ideologically depraved," 1935, and not shown until late 1980s. Worked on other films in 1930s. Returned to serious literature in 1956 with publication of excerpts from his writer's diary named by compilers *No Day Without a Line* posthumously and first published in 1965 after his death in 1960.

VICTOR PEPPARD

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# OLYMPIA PRESS

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The Olympia Press, probably the twentieth-century's most celebrated and influential publishing house specializing in English-language erotic literature, began operations at Paris in the Spring of 1953, initially as part of a sort of symbiotic relationship between its founder, Maurice Girodias, and a group of young American and British expatriate writers centered around a literary magazine called *Merlin* that had itself started only a year earlier.

The Merlinois, as Girodias referred to them, were anxious to begin publishing books, especially English translations of the works of Samuel Beckett, an Irish novelist and playwright who preferred to write in French. Under French law, however, publishing companies run by foreigners were required to have a French manager. Girodias was happy to fill this role, and also provide access to an accommodating printer. In return, members of the *Merlin* crew would supply him with translations of Sade and Apollinaire, and later with original novels, as will be seen.

Girodias was no stranger to the publishing world, and erotica in particular. His father, the English-born Jack Kahane, had founded the Obelisk Press in Paris in the summer of 1931 with a view to publishing books that for one reason or another were persona non grata in Great Britain or the United States. Among his more celebrated offerings were the first editions of *Tropic of Cancer* (1934) and *Tropic of Capricorn* (1939) by Henry Miller, and *My Life and Loves* (1933, 4 vols.) which had originally been privately printed at Paris (Vol. 1) and Nice (vols. 2–4) by their author, Frank Harris. Two others, *The Young and Evil* (1933) by Parker Tyler and Charles Henri Ford and Lawrence Durrell's *The Black Book* (1938), were to see print again in the 1950's when Girodias dusted them off for the Olympia Press.

Kahane père died the day World War II officially began, leaving his son Maurice to run the business. Having such a Jewish name as Kahane during the Occupation was definitely a liability, and Maurice prudently assumed his mother's

maiden name and exchanged his British passport for forged French documents.

Girodias' initial publications under his own steam consisted at first of trifles such as *Paris-Programme*, a periodical listing of the latest films and plays. In 1941, he founded Éditions du Chêne, and for the remainder of the war he published under this imprint a series of books dealing with art, architecture, tapestries, and similarly 'safe' subjects.

With the War over in 1945, Girodias took advantage of the large numbers of Americans and British in Paris by reviving the Obelisk Press and reprinting some of his father's more lucrative titles, including Henry Miller's books. Soon he was able to offer Miller the opportunity of having *Sexus*, the first volume of his 'Rosy Crucifixion' trilogy, published in a handsome, 2-volume limited edition.

Despite the success of the English-language books, the Éditions du Chêne imprint was not abandoned, and one of Girodias' more important coups occurred in 1947 when he acquired the manuscript of Nikos Kazantzakes' novel *Alexis Zorba, ou le Rivage de Crète*, which he published in Yvonne Gauthier's French translation. However, it was another Éditions du Chêne title, *Le Pain de la corruption* (1947) by an ex-resistance fighter named Yves Farge, which gave the first indications of his penchant for butting heads with authority.

*Le Pain de la corruption* was an exposé of the official protection given to black marketeering, and both its author and publisher were prosecuted for their efforts. The case was eventually dismissed, but Girodias at least was not to get off so lightly, and he was again prosecuted, this time for publishing Jean-Claude Lefauere's French translation of Henry Miller's *Tropic of Capricorn* (1947). That case too was dismissed, but he was nailed for *Sexus* (1949) which was banned in any language. Soon after this disaster he lost control of Éditions du Chêne to the publishing conglomerate Hachette who, having acquired at the same time the Obelisk Press

imprint, continued to issue reprints of Henry Miller's 'Paris' books and, ironically, were to publish the first English language edition of Miller's *Nexus* (1960), the final volume of the 'Rosy Crucifixion' trilogy.

For two years or so, Girodias struggled to stay afloat until, as we have seen above, he joined forces with the Merlin editors and contributors and the Olympia Press was founded.

Olympia's first publication, in April 1953, was *Plexus*, the second volume of Henry Miller's Rosy 'Crucifixion' trilogy, which like *Sexus* was issued in two volumes in a limited edition. In May, the first integral English editions of the marquis de Sade's *Justine, ou les Malheurs de la vertu* and *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* were published. The translations had already been done by Austryn Wainhouse and were originally intended to have been issued under the Merlin imprint, but it was felt that they were more in keeping with Olympia's objectives and so appeared there. Later in the same year came English versions of Apollinaire's *Les Onze mille verges* and *Les Exploits d'un jeune Don Juan*, and of Georges Bataille's *Histoire de l'œil*.

The Olympia/Merlin publishing alliance also began in 1953, first with a slim volume of verse by Christopher Logue called *Wand and Quadrant* and with Samuel Beckett's novel *Watt*. Three other titles would appear before Merlin left the scene, a translation by Bernard Frechtman of Jean Genet's *Journal du voleur*, Austryn Wainhouse's novel *Hedyphagetica* and finally, in 1955, James Broughton's *An Almanac for Amorists*.

In 1954, Girodias started the Atlantic Library, the first of several subsidiary imprints. Ten titles in all appeared, including *Helen and Desire*, by 'Frances Lengel,' (Alexander Trocchi) and *An Adult's Story* by 'Robert Desmond' (Robert Desmond Thompson) who, together with 'Marcus van Heller' (John Stevenson), were to become the mainstays of the Olympia stable of writers. The poet Christopher Logue assumed the identity of 'Count Palmiro Vicarion' for a novel called *Lust* that also appeared in the series, and later, under the Olympia Press imprint, edited two volumes of obscene limericks and bawdy ballads.

In February of the following year, the Traveller's Companion series was founded and with its famous green wrappers became the most iconic element of the Olympia Press. The first title to be

published was *The Enormous Bed*, a wonderfully comic novel by 'Henry Jones,' a pseudonym of the English journalist John Coleman. This was followed by *Rape*, the first of the 'Marcus van Heller' titles, after which appeared a further ninety or so novels, a number of which have become much sought after in the modern first edition market, including J.P. Donleavy's *The Ginger Man*, William Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*, *The Soft Machine*, and *The Ticket that Exploded*, and Gregory Corso's *American Express*.

The year 1955 also saw the first appearance of Vladimir Nabokov's *Lolita*, a further example of Girodias' ability to spot good writing when he saw it. Although appearing first in two volumes with green wrappers very similar to those of the Traveller's Companion series, it didn't form part of the series until a reprint was published in November 1958.

Many of the titles appearing in the Traveller's Companion series, while certainly unpublishable in the United States and the United Kingdom, were of a distinctly literary tone, or otherwise, not the typical erotic novel sought by foreign visitors to Paris. In part to subsidize them, Girodias started three other series in which more conventional pornographic fare could be found. But even here quality tended to creep in, and among the offerings appearing under the ægis of the Ophelia Press was *The English Governess* by 'Miles Underwood,' a pseudonym of the Canadian poet John Glassco, and an anonymously executed translation of *Trois Filles de leur mère* by Pierre Louÿs, one of the most extraordinary erotic novels of the twentieth century, here rendered as *The She-Devils* by 'Peter Lewys.'

Girodias' early brushes with the authorities following the war resulted in continued tribulations for years afterwards. While other Parisian publishers of pornography at the time remained for the most part untouched, the Olympia Press suffered constant harassment, and title after title was put on a list of proscribed books. Girodias responded to this by reissuing them with different titles and rewritten first pages of text. Thus, *Candy* by 'Maxwell Kenton' (Terry Southern and Mason Hoffenberg) was reborn as *Lollipop*, and *The Woman Thing* by 'Harriet Daimler' (Iris Owens) became simply *Woman*.

This sort of thing can be amusing, but eventually the constant battles in court and with publishers in America and England seeking to

relieve him of his less incandescent novels grew burdensome, and in January 1966 the last book to be published by the Olympia Press in Paris rolled off the presses. Curiously, it was a new printing of the third volume of Sade's *120 Days of Sodom*. Shortly afterwards, Girodias moved his business to New York. Censorship, which he had fought so hard against in France, had effectively disappeared in the United States. Strangely, the freedom that this created seemed to act against him; although by comparison with other American erotica publishers he put out many good novels, he was never able to find authors of quite the stature of some of those he published in Paris.

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## ORGY

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In ancient Greece, the *orgia* were religious rites that induced the participants into a sacred delirium where they either worshipped the gods of the material world, Demeter, or Dionysus. The Dionysus cult orgies, dedicated to god of drunkenness and immoderation, could be described as licentious, due to the consumption of wine, their phallophoria or phallic processions, and naked and ecstatically convulsing bacchantes. King Demetrius and Alexander the Great indulged in prodigious orgies (reported by Plutarch and Quintus Curtius), as they considered themselves to be the God Dionysus. The ancient Greeks, who actually invented the orgies in their initial sense, did not leave us with any literary description. However, Pierre Louÿs—a skillful Hellenist—wanted to shed light on this matter. In his novel *Aphrodite*, he describes an orgy at the courtesan Bacchis' residence in Alexandria, where the guests would get drunk and have sex with the female dancers and female slaves during a sumptuous dinner.

The Romans started to desecrate the orgies and transfigured them into pure debauchery,

mainly consisting of food excesses. The first orgy described in Latin literature is the banquet of Trimalcion in Petronius' *Satyricon*, during Nero's time. One would find information on the orgies organized by the Roman emperors in the works of historians like Dion Cassius, and mostly by Suetonius, whose *Life of the Twelve Caesars* cited the debaucheries of Caligula, Tiberius, Domitian, Commodus (the latter would even go as far as incorporating coprophilia fecal fetishes). For example, he recounts that Tiberius, in his Capri residence, had a specific hall where he had young girls and epebes having sexual intercourse in front of him. Lampride dedicated a book to the Emperor Heliogabalus' orgies, who considered himself the son of the Sun. Christianity did not end these pagan customs. Burchard, chaplain of Pope Alexander VI Borgia, relates in his *Diarum [Diary]* (1696) the orgies organized by the Duke Borgia, where fifty courtesans had sex with the majority of the male invitees, and where rewards were given to those couples who excelled in their performance. Buchard specifies: "The Pope, the Duke and

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Lucrece, his sister, were all present and observed.”

The Romantic poet Gérard de Nerval said once that “a good orgy has always two levels: above and below the table.” In modern terms, the word orgy designates the paroxysmic nature of group sexuality. It does not just imply food excesses, but sexual acts carried out under the effect of the orgy’s atmosphere. Some might slide under the table because their legs will no longer support them, having drunk too much; but others would descend to fornicate. The history of orgies is not limited to Europe. Those of Tang Ti, Emperor of China, murdered in 618, were the subject of an anonymous book, *Milow-ki, souvenir du Palais labyrinthe* [Milow-ki, *Memoirs of the Labyrinth Palace*] although European countries were the ones that continued the orgiastic tradition of Greco-Roman antiquity.

The most extraordinary orgies in literature were those depicted in French novels from the eighteenth century that, accordingly, were inspired by true events and expressed an ideal of freedom of behavior, Philippe, Duke of Orléans, being and Regent of France during Louis XV’s childhood the main instigator. His dinners at the Royal Palace, accompanied by his favorite aristocrats, ended in bacchanals where he invited expensive prostitutes. The *Philippiques de Lagrange-Chancel* [*Philippics of Lagrange-Chancel*] constitute a series of satirical poems about the orgies of the Regent. As a mere imitation, the Duke of Richelieu and the Duke of Lauzun had “small residences” where they held libertine parties. The orgies became so fashionable that the writings opposing the religious establishment, like *Le portier des Chartreux* [*The Carthusian’s Carrier*], sent the most uninhibited women to the convents. The novels written by the marquis of Sade—*Justine* and *Juliette*—depict a series of monstrous orgies where all sorts of wicked instincts are exposed, in order to illustrate his pessimistic philosophy where he would propose that human nature is vicious and that the only purpose of sex is to satisfy its own viciousness. The subject of *120 journées de Sodome* [*120 Days of Sodom*] is the methodical organization of everyday orgies at the Silling castle by four “villains” (as he defines them), indulging in an escalation of depravities. On

the other hand, Andrea de Nerciat, describes in *Les Aphrodites* [*The Aphrodites*], and *Le Diable au corps* [*The Devil in the Body*], a series of refined and enjoyable characters who take part in marvelous orgies filled with humor and sensual pleasure (like his friend the Prince of Ligne). In English literature, the most beautiful orgy was depicted by John Cleland in *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, when Fanny Hill, Emily, and Harriett offer themselves to a baronet and to his friends, customers of Mrs. Cole.

During the nineteenth century, there was an orgy in almost any available erotic novel (one would refer to them in the twentieth century as “partouze” or *gangbang*, a French word invented by Victor Margueritte in *Ton corps est à toi* [*Your Body is Yours*]). The novel of Alphonse Belot, *La Canonisation de Jeanne d’Arc* [*The Canonization of Jeanne d’Arc*] (1890), recounts the most sensational orgy of the 3rd Republic, organized by the Duchess of Liancourt and her mother in her Parisian apartment. After a ball, where all the women danced naked, wearing a wolf-styled velvet mask, they would pick the names of that night’s lovers from a vase. Nothing compares to this scene, even the one in which the nymphomaniac Régina throws herself into *La bourgeoise perversie* [*The Perverted Bourgeoisie*] (1930) by André Ibels. In this case, the orgy is a meal that lasts the entire night, and during the event the guests get undressed, and the lights are turned off. Next morning, Régina asks herself: “Who has taken me?”

There has even been a philosopher of orgies, Charles Fourier, the social reformer (whose ideas about sexuality were put into practice by the American Fourierist John Humphrey Noyes). In *Le nouveau monde amoureux* [*The New World of Love*], Fourier described the orgies of the future, when humanity will live in harmony. These will consist of sex combined with art, and harmlessly favoring all the passions. This book is so provocative that the French disciples of Fourier did not dare to publish it even after his death, appearing only in 1966. *Le nouveau monde amoureux* will remain, for a long time to come, a reference book of orgies, containing the theory and the principles that make it attractive and stimulating.

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## OVID

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43 BCE–17 CE  
Roman poet

Ovid, who referred to himself as ‘the poet of tender loves’ (Tr.3.3.73–76), is traditionally regarded as ‘the fourth and final Roman elegist.’ His poems are divided in three groups: erotic, mythological, and poems of exile. With the exception of the *Metamorphoses* and a fragment from *Halieutica* (probably a spurious work), which are written in dactylic hexameter, Ovid composed in elegiac couplets. His love poems comprising the *Amores*, the *Ars Amatoria*, the *Remedia Amoris*, and the *Medicamina Faciei*, indicate the extent to which Ovid occupied himself with the composition of elegy, a genre which he essentially redefined by testing its boundaries to the extreme, in real Alexandrian fashion. His constant experimentation with elegiac themes drove him to meticulously reworking several of the conventional motifs of Latin elegy, often by inserting into the elegiac context well-recognized material from comic playwrights. A balanced approach to this tendency is essential as it lies at the heart of Ovid’s humorous approach to elegy and of the negative criticism his work has suffered since antiquity (Quint.Inst.10. 1.88, 98).

Ovid wrote erotic elegies and, although he later favored hexameters, he never ceased narrating in verse tales of erotic passion. The analysis of Ovidian poetry is often preoccupied with the numerous techniques the poet employs in

retelling the legendary loves of gods and heroes as well as his own amorous adventures. Despite their pedantry, such analyses indicate in depth Ovid’s stance towards love, as a poet and perhaps as an individual. Ovid’s *Amores* consists of forty-nine short poems initially arranged in five books and republished in 3 BCE in three volumes, an illustrative demonstration of Ovid’s tactic of reworking his own verses. The poems are largely dedicated to extolling the charms of the poet’s mistress Corinna. Her character is probably a synthesis of the elegiac mistresses featured in the works of Propertius and Tibullus, Ovid’s older contemporaries in elegiac composition, who devoted their poetry to Cynthia and Delia, respectively. The influence of the shadowy figure of Cornelius Gallus, whom Ovid mentions by name (Tr.4.10.53–54), cannot be doubted since he seems to have played an equally important role in inspiring all Roman elegiac writers as well as Vergil (Prop.2.34.91; Verg.Ec.10). In addition, the spirit of Catullus, whose Lesbia can be regarded as the prototype of Roman elegiac women, is also evident (cf. Am.2.6); in particular, Catullus’ sarcasm and sharp castigation of Roman social morals seems to have shaped Ovid’s familiar sense of irony, omnipresent in the *Amores* as well as the later *Ars Amatoria*. It appears that despite their feigned dedication to the principles of the simple farmers and hardy soldiers of Rome past, the noble Romans, especially after coming in contact with the lustful ways of the Greeks,



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embarked on endless revels and worship of beauty and love. The Latin elegists captured this Roman celebration of sexual liberation in their poetry, while carefully paying tribute to their Greek models, which inspired them to not only love passionately, but also to write passionate poetry.

The references to Ovid's literary models already foreshadow a major fault of his entire corpus. Ovid has been often classified as a representative of the so-called *Silver Age* of Roman poetic production, obviously in contrast to a *Golden Age* epitomized by Vergil's *Aeneid*. Since antiquity, literary criticism viewed Ovid primarily as a reader of classical poetry rather than as a composer; his work was diagnosed with lack of originality because his inspiration was too technical and rested excessively on his literary models. In contrast with Propertius and Tibullus, who often claim to draw their themes from personal experiences, Ovid is accused of borrowing literary patterns by previous literature. Brandt (*Amorum Libri Tres*) remarked that "[t]here is no motive of any importance in the *Amores* to which one cannot point out a literary predecessor," and many studies have repeatedly stressed his imitation of Propertian themes, especially with regards to Propertius' employment of mythological illustrations. It has also been argued that Ovid parodies Propertius' verses to the point where his own poetry becomes burlesque. His imitation of and irreverence toward literary models is considered to expand in parodying, apart from Propertius, the works of Hesiod, Lucretius, and even Vergil. His humorous style seems to encourage the impression that his elegies were superficial reproductions of the poetic flair of unrivalled predecessors. However, this inability to appreciate Ovid's poetry has been the result of constant comparison to the other elegiac poets, and the application of modern literary and aesthetic criteria to his work. Ovid consciously tried to overcome this parallelism by incorporating his predecessors' work into his as explicitly as possible. He exploited the typical elegiac themes over their limits and he even inverted several of them; it appears that through the systematic reversal of his models he hoped to distinguish his own poetic substance. In addition, Ovid's obvious employment of his literary predecessors forces the reader to think of elegiac loves as artistic products of talented creators; although

the erotic claims of Propertius and Tibullus are probably disqualified as poetic exaggerations, they nevertheless retain their value as representations of love in contemporary Rome, a city ruled by its courtesans and their expensive caprices, a city where rich soldiers win the girls over sobbing poets protesting with pathetic serenades. In the *Amores*, Ovid parades through a Rome that has special places where men can access the women such as the hippodrome; it has notorious socialites, and a new class of noble women who do not fear scandal. It is a true cosmopolis surrendered to carnal passions, and its streets witness every night the whimsical desires of its inhabitants.

Elegiac poetry projecting the most memorable urban characters of this era allows for some classification: the constant subversion that Ovid applied to his treatment of the elegiac lover was mainly directed against the established (until then) division between the figures of the learned poet and the ignorant lover. Conversely, Ovid appears as conscious of his poetic pursuits as he is of his erotic ones. He addresses the reader in the first person with an immediacy and frankness that removes the barrier between the poet and the object of his composition. In the *Ars Amatoria* as well, due to the admonitory character of the poem, Ovid reveals himself and his aims openly from the first lines of his work. By creating an epiphysis of personal experience, Ovid is able to convince the reader about the autobiographical character of his poetry, but this is simply his deconstruction of yet another elegiac motif. The poet is often keen to acknowledge the mind games he plays with his audience as this admission allows him to keep uncovering the imperfections of the elegiac lover and of his own poetic persona which he often treats with mockery. Ovid is able to laugh at himself both in the capacity of a poet and a lover, yet this level of detachment, particularly explicit in the *Amores*, indicates Ovid's confidence in the power and versatility of his poetry. In fact, he frequently referred to the sway of his poetry and he did not hide his ambitions for the renown of his work (Am.1.3; 1.15).

In the footsteps of their Hellenistic models, Roman elegists had further cultivated the typical image of an elegiac lover as being poor and endowed only with his art; as suffering the cruelty and infidelity of his mistress in desperation by spending long nights outside her threshold.

Above all, the elegiac lover was not allowed but short spells of happiness in love, doomed to meet with failure at all levels and even at his core quality as a lover. However, in Ovid's elegies the lover is often successful and his mistress easily accessible, almost too easily. Ovid confesses to addressing his poetry to the *admissus amator* and not to the *exclusus* as expected (e.g., Am.1.2). A point missed by modern critics is that Ovid, unsatisfied with regurgitating the conventional elegiac motifs, discovered in the continuous reversal of them, his own unconventional means of claiming his personal contribution to the elegiac genre. His loves are as rebellious as the real Roman lovers of his era who entertained any danger, any doorkeeper, and any social precepts in order to enjoy their mistresses.

Ovid's erotic poetry is characterized by a special ethos which was frequently misjudged. His explicit sexual descriptions were also understood as an effort to portray his personal experience rather than to entertain some established generic conventions of Latin elegy. His lustful descriptions which seem designed to cause the audience's discomfort are effortlessly turned to jokes and Ovid is able to laugh at his skinny figure, the result of being a tireless soldier in the ranks of Love (Am.1.6.1–6; cf. 3.7). Ovid's overstatement of elegiac motifs is in essence the reinvention of a generic rule. His erotic imagery is ruled by a bold and almost sarcastic mood which often renders elegiac passion facetious and even comical. The typical elegiac lover exhibits a tendency for uncontrollable melodramatic reactions. Elegiac poetry is rife with overemotional confessions of unending passion and exaggerations of the hardship the lover must withstand in order to win temporary affection by his pitiless and volatile mistress. Love is painted with the darkest colors as a horrible destiny of vain fighting against the winged god of Love, allotted only to those who can endure divine adversity (e.g., Prop. 1.1, 5, 8a, 9). Ovid's innovation lies in the fact that he shifts the focus of his poetry by emphasizing the detrimental aspects of love as a natural and social phenomenon leaving little space for the romantic overcoat of previous elegiac poetry. The contentment with which Ovid decides to give in to Love is characteristic of his disbelief of pompous statements a *propos amorous exclusiveness*

(Am.2.11b; 3.8). This light-hearted approach to love is also reflected in the relation that the elegiac couple aspires to achieve: unfaithfulness is no longer a reason for unrelenting misery and tearful suffering, especially as Ovid's Corinna appears to have been already married. Ovid, a lover devoted to lovemaking by his own free will and not because of the torrential yoke of a great passion, argues that the elegiac lover is unfaithful by nature. He knows the rules of the erotic game and expects his mistress to be kind enough to feign her faithfulness for the sake of his fancy (Am.3.3.1–2, 41–48). Cairns chose the term 'generic self-imitation' to describe Ovid's rebellious technique of representing elegiac love. Ovid exaggerates his statements only to prove that they are unrealistic. He follows the rules only to cancel them eventually. Ovid does not simply follow literary principles, but he criticizes them in a double capacity as a poet and reader.

Ovid's tendency toward hyperbole, a technique familiar to Roman writers of comedy such as Plautus and Terence, produces comic effects unparalleled in previous samples of Latin elegiac poetry. Therefore, in Am.1.7 he bitterly regrets being violent to his mistress during an argument. The poet sounds completely desperate and devastated by the boldness of his almost profane deeds, and he even compares himself to Ajax and Orestes, tragic figures of Greek mythology, who were haunted by their sacrilegious crimes. In an effort to exorcise his victim's anger, he praises her beauty, thus employing another typical elegiac motif. However, this mistress, compared here with Atalanta, Ariadne, and Cassandra (ll.1–18) is not beautiful while sleeping or while praying. Ovid's beloved is beautiful because she has been beaten by her lover, apparently in the fashion Greek heroines used to get bruises from their heroic companions. Ovid's wit is to be detected in his comparing himself to Homeric heroes who acted supposedly in the same way as this exasperated lover. His way of securing a place in the pantheon of heroes is not only an example of de-mythologizing classical champions, but a conscious endeavour to shape the character of the 'anti-lover' in Latin elegy. A sudden change in tone at the poem's concluding lines ensures that the audience is aware of Ovid's humorous mood; we are informed that the 'terrible abuse' the poet inflicted upon his mistress was a disarranged hair-do.

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Unlike the unbearably sentimental and gentle lover of Propertius and Tibullus, Ovid's lover behaves like a boor. Even in his regret he is able to rationalize the situation and appreciate the triviality of the event.

Ovid's originality is also evident in the treatment of the conventional comparison of the elegiac lover with a soldier; the contrast of the two characters was boisterous in Roman society which would reject by tradition the image of the elegiac lover, always consumed by his erotic troubles, never interested in pressing public affairs. The elegiac lover was typically presented as living effectively in a permanent situation of *otium* (vacation), pursuing predominantly what traditionalist Romans viewed as pastime, unlike the soldier whose excellence in the coordination of his *negotium* (professional activity) secured the glory and prosperity of Rome (Am.1.6.19–30). Although Propertius did try to balance out the disadvantages of being a hopeless lover (1.14.11–16), Ovid succeeds in totally equating the toils of a lover with those of a soldier by redefining the motif of *militia amoris*, the motif of taking up an expedition in love rather than an expedition in war (Am.1.9). The pattern was extensively treated in comic plays, albeit not exclusively (Plaut.Merc.24ff, 62ff; Most.133ff; Trin.646ff; Truc.141ff). However, comic writers adjusted military metaphors predominantly to the *paraclausithyron*, the bitter complaining of the lover by his mistress' threshold, a clue that did not escape Ovid's attention. In the *Amores* the lover is often described as acting like a soldier in peacetime; instead of besieging a hostile city he camps outside his mistress' threshold (Am.1.6.29–30, 57–58; 1.9.1–2, 19–20, 41–42). The motif is a direct borrowing from comic plays where it also enjoyed popularity (Her.2.63ff; Ter.Eun.771; Plaut.Pers.569ff, Bacch.1118; Ter.Ad.88f.). Another variation of the *militia amoris* summoned by Ovid is that of treating the elegiac *puella* as an enemy (Am.1.7.33–34). Although violence against the mistress is not exclusively found in comedy, comic plays use it profoundly. Ovid's celebrated attack on his mistress' hair is reminiscent of Philostratus' *Epistles* and of Terence's *Perikeiromene* (see Am.1.7 above; Phil.16, cf. 61). The representation of *the triumph of Love* in military terms is a third variation of the *militia amoris* motif, inspired perhaps by the Hellenistic idea regarding the cruelty of erotic attacks by a winged Eros

(Mel.12.101; Prop.1.1; Am.1.2.51–52); Ovid compares the triumph of Eros on him with the military triumphs of the emperor Augustus who had allegedly felt himself the power of love (Am.1.2.7–14; cf. Am.1.7.35–40). Although the military metaphor has been employed in comedy extensively this specific image has not been particularly developed (Plaut.Pers.2526; Ter.Eun.59–61). Moreover, by rallying his imagination Ovid enriches once more the motif of *militia amoris* in Am.1.7.36–41 by allowing himself to indulge in a vivid triumphal procession which consists of a single prisoner: his mistress.

An essential feature of Alexandrian and Roman erotic poetry is the *komos*, the wooing of a mistress by singing or complaining on her threshold alone or with a group of drunken revellers. The lover, who typically appears as begging for his admission, is often jealous of a rival whom the lady favored that night instead of him (Am.1.4.61–2). In most *komoi* the lover leaves his mistress' doorstep disappointed by her cruelty. Prior to his sad departure, he is seen shedding tears or leaving his komastic garlands on the steps where the dawn found him cold and lonely. Ovid contributes to the pattern by presenting the lover as addressing his supplications to the doorkeeper, a mean slave. Although, doorkeepers were regarded as the worse kind of slaves, Ovid treats him with flattery and respect, thus amusing his audience and inserting to elegiac imagery another motif of comedies, the only literary scripts in which slaves assumed central roles in the plot.

Ovid admits his indebtedness to comedy by openly suggesting Menander as an appropriate reading for the youth of both sexes (Ov. Tr.2.369–370); in the concluding poem of the first book of the *Amores* Ovid seems to indicate clearly which stock characters he has borrowed from the Menandrian tradition, namely the *fallax servus*, the *improba lena*, and the *meretrix blanda* among others (Am.1.15.17–18). Apart from Plautus, Terence, and their Greek models, Ovid was influenced by the mimes of Herodas, especially with regards to the treatment of the *komos* (cf. Pro Rab.Post. 35). Although mimes were considered as 'a trivial sub-literary form of entertainment, far beneath the notice of such highly sophisticated poets as the elegists' (McKeown), they were apparently appreciated by the Roman elite for their *doctrina*. Rough jokes and adultery appear to have been their

major forming parts and they also involved an elementary stage presentation. Mimes represent the low classes' perception of love, and in fact a more realistic image of everyday life and love in Rome, outside the villas of the elite. From this point of view, the introduction of mime scenarios and characters in elegies destined for the noble circles is revolutionary in presenting love as the force that makes a *matrona* act like a courtesan and the other way round. Moreover, Ovid might have been familiar with the mimiambs of Gnaeus Matius who composed his work in the steps of Herodas in the Sullan period (Aul.Gell.10.24.10; 15.25.1–2; 16.7.1; 20.9.1–3), as well as with comical epigrams. Ovid's introductory epigram of his republished *Amores* is comparable in structure and effect to the prologues of Roman comedians.

A well-recognized comic pattern that Ovid incorporated and further developed in his poetry is the so-called *Gebetsparodie*, the habit of addressing ordinary humans or even slaves by adopting the language and forms of prayers to gods (Am.1.3; 1.16; cf. Plaut.Cas. 137; Curc.88, 147f.; Men.Perik.724). The motif is usually included in poetic renderings of the *paraclausithyron*. It appears that liturgical vocabulary would be often transferred in a *komos* included either in an elegy or in a comedy. Ovid as well as Plautus parodies the high style of the prayers to deities, especially the exaggerated worship offered to the oriental deities that swarmed into Rome in the Augustan years. Ovid also largely employed in his verses personification of inanimate things; although not an exclusive feature of comedy, it is typically found in almost every comic play (Am.1.8; cf. Plaut.Curc.15–20, 88–90). Ovid even succeeds a variation of the *Gebetsparodie* by attributing a divine nature to inanimate things.

Another typical comic motif that Ovid seems very fond of is that of the *erotodidaxis* [erotic teaching]. Here again the influence of Plautus and of the mime is evident in the persona of the 'cultus adulter'; this figure comes directly from the so-called adultery-mime which was particularly popular in Ovid's time and involved a love-triangle outlined by McKeown like this: 'a suave lover, a crafty wife and a stupid husband' (Am.1.4.39–40; Am.2.5.29; cf. Plaut.Bacch.918). The scenario appears to suit perfectly the situation of Ovid, Corinna, and her husband, whom she is often encouraged to deceive (Am.1.4). In comedies the *erotodidaxis*

is usually uttered by the *lena*, an old, alcoholic procuress, and a comic stock character which Ovid decides to impersonate himself in his poetry (Am.1.4; 2.5.30; Plaut.Asin.775f., Mil.Glor.123–125, Ter.Haut.372f.). Treachery is a main feature of the *lena* employed by both Ovid and comic writers (Am.1.8.85–86; Plaut.Pers.243f.). The *lena* endowed with such an unpleasant character is often the receiver of curses by the lover; curses which are found abundantly in comic plays, also suit Ovid's humorous and vivacious style nicely (Am.1.8.113–114; Plaut.Asin.46f.; 127; Most.192; Mil.1038; Pers.483; Poen.1055; Ter. Phorm.519). Another comic motif traced in Ovid's erotic poems is that of receiving advice from the 'lena,' normally willing to act as a go-between for a rich client who has fallen in love with a girl or to express cynicism about love, often described as an 'investment' on behalf of the girl for her old age (Am.1.8; 3.3.21ff.; Plaut.Cist. 120, 149; Most.47ff, 157ff., 170f., 196f.; Asin.524ff., Pseud.308, Ter.Hecyr. 67ff.; Herod.Mim.1.37f.61ff.). Herodas' influence in Ovid's employment of the motif is highly probable. Ovid's affinity with the comic themes, especially regarding the *erotodidaxis*, could be also argued indirectly, through the work of later Greek authors of erotic verses. Lucian of Samosata, who has obviously used Menander for his *Dialogue of the Courtesans*, often employs motifs similar to those of Ovid and Plautus (Am.1.8.65f; cf. Plaut.Truc.; Amph.940f; Ter. Andr.555 and Eun.59ff.; also Luc.3 and 6 ad finem).

The unyielding *ianitor*, the doorkeeper of the mistress' house, is also a stock character of comedy which Ovid inserts in his poetry (Am.1.6.41–42; Plat.Curc. 153; Aul.721a; Epid.50; Pers.783f.). In comic plays the doorkeeper is typically presented as the main obstacle between the lover and the object of his desire, although he can usually be bribed or fooled (Am.1.8.77–78; Plaut.Asin. 241f; Pseud.255f.; however cf. Am.1.6.49–50 and Plaut.Curc. 20f.). Moreover, where the lover was usually expected to be tormented by the thought that his beloved is perhaps sleeping with someone else, Ovid implies that the doorkeeper experiences love himself, underlining once more the free man /slave role-reversal, so common in comedy (Plaut.Pers.25).

The *fallax servus* of comic plays, a cunning slave often acting on behalf of the young and

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inexperienced lover, also appears in Ovidian imagery (Am. 1.8.87–88). The *puella* that attracts the lover's interest is also often accompanied by a loyal servant. Plautus writes about Pardalisca in the *Casina*, Milphidippa in the *Miles Gloriosus*, Astaphium in *Truculentus*. This character appears to correspond to Nape, Corinna's clever hairdresser (Am. 1.11.2; 1.12.4). The old man who decides to find himself a young bride, known as the *senex amator* of numerous comedies also parades in Ovid's verses (Am. 1.9.3–4; cf. Plaut.; Asin.; Bacch.; Cas.; Cist.; Merc.; Stich.). The motif of the *avaricious puella*, a common topos of comedies, appears also in the *Amores* where Ovid implies that the entire family of his mistress is taking advantage of his generosity (Am. 1.8.89–92; Plaut. Asin. 181f; Men. 541f; Trin. 251f).

*Amatory fowling and hunting* are also two very common images in elegiac poetry and comic scripts, although Ovid excels at it (Am. 1.8.69–70; cf. Plaut. Asin. 215f.). Although a sexist view of love has often been suspected in Latin elegy, the alternate scripts where love now forces the lover, now the beloved, to succumb to his humiliating power, indicate once more the rebellious nature of Aphrodite's suave child. *Servitium amoris*, the enslavement that the lover suffers to his mistress, is again a general topos in Latin elegy freely employed by comic plays as well. Comedy depicted mostly the relations between prostitutes and their clients who are often compared with sheep ready for shearing, a motif also implied in the *Amores* (Am. 1.8.54–56; Plaut. Asin. 540ff; Bacch. 1121aff; Merc. 524ff; Cist. 76–79).

Ovid's vocabulary has also been influenced by comedy. He has famously introduced comic words in elegiac context, some of which were earlier found only in comic plays, usually in Plautus (see Am.1.10.35–36 for 'damnosus' which previously occurs only in Plautus[8] and Terence[1] and Am.1.10.43–44 for 'conducere' meaning 'to hire a prostitute' which is borrowed directly from Plaut. Amph.288, Bacch.1096). Word plays which are plentiful in comic plays, often in scenes of violence or threats of it to the slaves, are also employed in the *Amores* (Am.1.6.19–20, 64; Ter. Haut. 356; Ad.470; Plaut. Men. 978; Truc.112, Poen.446, 509, 1152; Aul.745; Bacch.87–88; Curc.1ff., Most.15f., Ep.121; Men.972f.). It has been argued that Ovid's words have a static function and that

his language is shallow. However, several times Ovid incorporates in his poetry other people's words and he 'pretends' to have a dialogue with them (Am.1.7.73–74) or he even lends them a voice to speak their minds (Am.8.21–24). It could be argued that his vocabulary is in keeping with the social status of his characters (cf. Dipsas in Am.1.8.21–24 and the doorkeeper in Am.1.6) whose phraseology could not have been very lofty. His language is not static but rather colloquial. It might sound from time to time somewhat theatrical, but this is a result of his characters' intense awareness of their conventional quality (Am.1.6.41–42). In several instances Ovid includes in his poetry asides which are obviously the result of his influence from the theatrical performance of comedy or mime. His asides, addressed mainly to himself, give to his speech a dramatic tone (Am.1.4; 1.6; 1.13) and are reminiscent of the stage directions Plautus included in his plays (Bacch.234; Curc.156f.; Men.523; Mil.154; Most.507; Cas.163).

In terms of structure, Ovid mostly favors the linear indication of images and arguments which renders to the poetic result more immediacy. A technique fond to the poet are the numerous rhetorical questions that are interspersed in his poems and can be addressed either to himself or the audience. In each case the queries are answered by the poet and their obvious aim is to dramatize the poetic speech. This technique is used by the other elegiac poets as well, but, not to the extent Ovid does (Am.1.13). Repetition of words or phrases is also employed by Ovid in his effort to create an atmosphere of agony and suspense (Am.1.6). A very interesting method which Ovid rallies for the composition of his work, obviously a remnant from his education in rhetoric, is to treat the same poetic theme from a different point of view in two separate poems which are placed in sequence. This tactic, traced in the other elegiac poets as well, seems to be employed more frequently and more expressively by Ovid (Am.2.7 and 8).

As mentioned already, Ovid also wrote the *Ars Amatoria* (Sen. Controv.3.7.2), a didactic poem in imitation of Alexandrian poetry, in three books, with complete instructions on how to acquire and keep a lover. The first two books, dated around the first century BCE, offer advice to men about winning the affection of women, while the third book attempts with arguable

success to address erotic matters from a female point of view or, as the poet puts it in the beginning of this book, to 'provide the Amazons with weapons.' The situations presented in *Ars Amatoria* owe much to previous elegies and the *Amores* to which it was designed as a sequence. In typical Ovidian manner the poet appears to explore the rules of love poetry as much as the rules of love in an attempt to break free from the conventional character of both. In the *Ars Amatoria* Ovid cultivates further the metaphor of love as art; the topoi of love as sport and as military conquest are also employed extensively, while the motif of love as madness leading to bestiality is also worked thoroughly. The sudden change in tone in book three which put emphasis on moderation has given rise to a number of arguments with regards to Ovid's possible literary and political shifts. In addition, much of the novelty of *Ars Amatoria* is achieved through a reversal of the implied roles of the poet and the reader: in the *Amores* the readers are invited to amuse themselves with the erotic adventures of the poet, while in the *Ars Amatoria* the poet appears entertained with the love troubles of the reader to whom he acts as an advisor.

In addition, Ovid is not afraid of depicting the social reality of his time accurately. He lived in the early imperial period and in a society that experienced the grand opening of Rome to the world. This is a society thirsty for power and pleasure, especially after the long and traumatic period of the civil wars. Moreover, the opportunistic character of the era had left its mark on the values of the individual in a time when nobility and class had become the apple of the eye of the unsophisticated rich nouveau. The Ovidian lover cannot ignore the frivolity of the world in which he lives and loves; his *Ars Amatoria* functions as a mirror that he turns towards his audience who can observe themselves for the first time. However, it has been implied that this revolutionary reversal that allows the poet to satirize social phenomena not in relation to himself or distant protagonists, but in relation to his readers might have offended the more sensitive of them. In addition, it could be argued that thus Ovid made himself an easy target for accusations of encouraging debauchery in his works which were put forward more overtly when his relation with the emperor turned sour (*Ars Am.*1.31–34; *Tr.*2.245–252). Another important aspect, in which Ovid

marked his progress from the *Amores* and towards his more mature works, is the fact that he chose to write the *Ars Amatoria* in elegiac couplets, against the instructions of tradition that associated didactic poetry exclusively with hexameters. Although his choice reflects the humorous and irreverent style of the *Amores*, especially towards the serious Lucretius (*De Rerum Natura*) and Vergil (*Georgics*), Ovid's didactic models, it also foreshadows his poetic experimentations in the *Metamorphoses*. In addition, in the *Ars Amatoria*, Ovid occasionally digresses from his main theme to narrate at length a mythological tale that serves to some extent only as an illustration of his argument, a technique which he mastered in the complicated structure of the *Metamorphoses*.

Sometime between the first century BCE and the second century CE, Ovid composed the *Remedia Amoris* (*Rem.*155–158), a kind of recantation of the *Ars Amatoria*. Here, the poet, convinced about the impropriety of falling madly in love, instructs his audience how to avoid passionate affairs and how to extricate themselves from desperate erotic situations. However, once more Ovid adopts a sarcastic mood and mocks pretentious castigation of sexual infatuation by offering long and detailed sexual descriptions. The *Remedia* appropriately concludes Ovid's early career in erotic elegiac experimentation.

The *Epistulae Heroidum*, mentioned as *Heroides* by Priscian (*Gramm.*Lat. 2.544) is an imaginary series of letters written by ancient mythological heroines to their absent lovers. The first fourteen letters are known as single in contrast to epistles 16 to 21, which are often referred to as double in the sense that Ovid also composed the replies to the initial letters. The authorship of *Her.*15, written allegedly by Sappho to Phaon, her mythical lover, is often contested. Although the historical character of Sappho is beyond doubt, apparently the erotic content of her poetry had given rise to several mythic traditions with regards to her love affairs. The letters which are characteristic of their argumentative character serve as a reminiscence of Ovid's rhetorical training. His tendency to give to the letters of his heroines the epiphany of court cases loaded with the frequent use of legal terms (*Her.*20 and 21, *Acontius and Cydippe*) led some critics to charge Ovid with plain enumeration that fails to convince the

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audience about the heroines' emotional sincerity; yet especially in the double epistles the refutation of the accusations that the lonesome heroines typically address to their lovers is necessary for the full appreciation of the dramatic situation between the protagonists. Ovid not only develops to the extreme his sophisticated ability of composing on a single theme from two different points of view (and here it could be argued that he is more successful in rendering the feminine thought in comparison with *Ars Amatoria* 3), but he also takes advantage of every opportunity to induce an intertextual dialogue between his epistles and a vast range of ancient literature. Therefore, Penelope, Briseis, Helen, Oenone, and Dido are immediately juxtaposed against their epic profiles in Vergil and Homer. Medea, Phaedra, Hypsipyle, Hermione, Deianera, Hypermestra, and Ariadne recall their tragic personas and momentarily appear as suffering more realistically than the previous heroines, although they are still distant from the immediate experiences of the Roman audience. This gap becomes perhaps smaller with the tales of Laodamia, Phylis, and Canace whose roles as mothers and wives might have been more appealing to Ovid's contemporaries, while the passionate romances of Leander and Hero, as well as of Cydippe with Acontius derive clearly from the Hellenistic background of Latin elegy and celebrate youthful love. The technique of inserting erotic monologues in elegiac context was already employed by Propertius (see 1.18 in imitation of Callimachus), who had also worked on the pattern of lovers exchanging passionate notes (4.3). The motif reappeared briefly in Ovid's *Amores* (Am.11 and 12) but in the *Heroides* Ovid appears very conscious of his effort to establish a new literary genre by raising the Alexandrian dramatic monologue to new heights (Ars Am.3.346). In rendering the most secret thoughts of his inamoratas, Ovid deftly adapted Euripides' psychographic analysis of female emotions and succeeded in incorporating the process of writing in the literary action.

Although the authorship of the double *Heroides* was doubted they are now accepted as Ovid's and it has been suggested that stylistic differences might be explained by a different compositional date (perhaps contemporary with the *Fasti*). The inspiration for these paired letters might have come from Sabinus, Ovid's friend, who is said to have composed replies for the

single *Heroides*, possibly written between the two editions of the *Amores* (cf. Am.2.18).

*Medicamina Faciei* is yet another didactic poem about the cosmetics for the female face which predates the third book of the *Ars Amatoria* (Ars Am.3.205–206). Only a hundred verses survive from this work which is, nevertheless, enough to indicate a strong influence from Nicander's *Theriaca* and *Alexipharmaca*.

The fifteen books of the *Metamorphoses*, the most influential poem of Ovid, belong to the mythological category. Written in hexameters, it is a collection of myths concerned with miraculous transformations linked together with a number of thematic associations that render to the work an illusion of cohesion. The poem was written in the years preceding Ovid's exile and it borrows material from classical and Near Eastern mythological traditions. The idea of collecting metamorphic myths was popular in the Hellenistic years; Nicander of Colophon, Parthenius, and the obscure Boios whose *Ornithogonia* was apparently adapted by Aemilius Macer, a friend and contemporary of Ovid (Tr.4.10.43), had all produced such collections, although none of them survived to this day. Undoubtedly, Ovid's poem exhibits a chronological framework which begins with the genesis of the ordered universe out of a chaotic mass of elements, he employs the Hesiodic myth of the five races which ends with Lycaon's sin and the irrevocable departure of the gods from the earth. Jupiter's disappointment with the human race drives him to the decision to obliterate humanity in an episode similar to the Biblical and the Mesopotamian flood (*Epic of Gilgamesh*). He spares only Deucalion and Pyrrha who are bestowed with the task of restarting the human race. From then on the poet relates unremittingly a great number of tales from Greek mythology starting with Apollo and his amorous adventures. Ovid continues with the love affairs of the gods until the first half of the sixth book, and then he turns his attention to the great heroes of ancient Greece from Jason and Theseus to the protagonists of the Trojan War. The retelling of the conquest of Troy by the Greeks is significant because it offers Ovid the chance to refer to Aeneas, his escape from his blazing city and his eventual arrival at the Italian peninsula. Obviously at this point Ovid reworks the theme of the *Aeneid* regarding the origin of the Romans from the Trojan refugees who

established themselves in Lavinium in the area of Rome. Aeneas' son Iulus, the ancestor of the Julian clan, built Alba Longa and united the scattered villages of the area to what would later become Rome. Ovid relates the early traditions of the Romans in the days of the Etruscan kings and concludes his work with the most glorious metamorphosis of all, the apotheosis of Julius Caesar who was transformed into a star, soon after his murder in 44 BCE (Met.15.745–879; Verg.G.1.25f.). This last transformation ensures that Augustus is the son of a god, indeed of divine stock himself. The poem was an obvious tribute to the emperor, and although in a rage Ovid threw it into the fire at the news of his own exile, other copies of his work were already in circulation, thus ensuring the survival of the work.

Although the poem starts with the typical epic invocation to the gods, Ovid certainly does not confine himself in epic themes and in fact a great proportion of the *Metamorphosis* deals with sexual misconduct. According to Otis who detected four main thematic divisions after the prologue to the work, books one to two as well as books six (from line 400 onwards) to eleven is dedicated to the passion of love, divine or heroic. Otis also distinguished the theme of avenging gods in books three to six, while the history of Rome to the deification of Caesar in books twelve to fifteen (Otis, *Ovid as an Epic Poet*). His outline presupposes a thematic movement from gods suffering like humans due to falling in love, to humans suffering divine wrath, to humans tormented by their passion for other humans to the possibility of humans becoming gods in an ongoing questioning of the boundaries between divine and human nature. Each section offers connections for future sections: therefore, the adventures of the Minyads in book four anticipate the third section on doomed love affairs; equally, Hercules' apotheosis in book nine foreshadows those of Aeneas, Romulus, and of Caesar in the last section of the work. Throughout the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid creates a complex chain of interconnecting themes employing various techniques such as having a hero to tell an anecdote or narrate a story for the sake of the company, thus putting a story within a story. On other occasions he follows the same character through different adventures or proceeds from one tale to narrating the story of a friend or a relative of his heroes, or moves geographically

from one location to a neighboring one and its traditions. It could even be argued that in the *Metamorphoses* Ovid exploits to perfection his tendency to provide variations of poetic themes within each of his more general thematic sections. The variety of themes and landscapes, of the narrative pace and of the numerous intertextual voices make the *Metamorphoses* an interesting reading, although the thematic links of the text soon surpass any pretext of chronological continuity. The poem's transitions and forced unity have been criticized already since antiquity (Quint.Inst. 4.1.77). In addition, despite the epic facade of the work, Ovid certainly deviated from traditional epic composition by inserting in his poem erotic tales as well as the tastes and techniques of his Hellenistic models. Hence, it could be argued that structurally as well as with regards to its interest in etiological myths, the *Metamorphoses* shares great affinity with the *Aetia* of Callimachus, this great master of Hellenistic poetry, despite the fact that Callimachus utterly rejected epic forms in favor of short, elegant poems. Although Ovid's powerful descriptions of landscapes, peoples, and emotions make the poem a memorable reading, the sheer accumulation of so many mythological details, poetic techniques, and generic inversions give to the whole work a superficial tone and reduce its dramatic effect. As implied, in the course of his work Ovid became more and more interested in the art of poetry than in the art of love: the *Metamorphoses* act as a boundary for his exploration of erotic sentiments since by this time he had covered the passions of everyday people, of heroes, and of gods. Erotic tales in the *Metamorphoses* tend to have didactic messages, above all the unhappiness caused by excessive love, and allow the reader a glimpse of ancient customs and beliefs about marriage and love.

Ovid's other works include the six books of the *Fasti*, a mythological poem relating legends and notable events of the Roman calendar with one book devoted to each month. The work is a syncretism of the Roman religious calendar, Julian Panegyric, and astronomical material regarding the risings and settings of the stars in relation to the Roman year. At the time of Ovid's exile it was incomplete, and only the first six books (January–June) survive; these show evidence of partial revision at Tomis, perhaps during the years surrounding the death of Augustus in 14 BCE (Fast.1.3, 4.81–84).



## OVID

Ovid appears to have abandoned any intentions of composing the remaining books, devastated by his sad existence in exile. At some point before Ovid's death in 17 AD the poem was rededicated to Germanicus, Augustus' younger heir, perhaps with renewed hope for his clemency that would allow Ovid's return to Rome. The poem's astronomical details (books 1–2) derive from Aratus' *Phenomena*, a mostly influential work which was translated both by Ovid and by Germanicus in Latin. The poem is also distinguished for its etiological approach to history and religion, especially in the first book, which bears the obvious influence of Callimachus. However, despite the fact that Ovid is openly indebted to his Hellenistic models, the distinctively Roman character of his material, which belongs to the tradition of Varro's lost *Antiquitates*, is not overshadowed. Moreover, the work was given much currency due to Augustus' interest in reestablishing the traditional Roman cults and religious sentiment which included his eminent calendar reform in 46 BCE (Fast.1.13–14). Through the stars Ovid introduces Greek mythic narrative into the Roman calendar so to fulfil the poem's 'elegiac agenda' of celebrating peace rather than war, and, of course, he substantiates the praise of the emperor, the generator of this newly found prosperity. As Gee explains, "Ovid's carelessness about dates is in reality a device calculated to give him the freedom to position his Greek star myths so they challenge the points of view encoded in the Roman material" (Gee, *Ovid, Aratus and Augustus*). The structure of the poem appears restrictive by the subject matter which is characterized by periodic repetition, while the fragmentation of the narrative material, which seems designed to parallel the structure of the *Metamorphoses*, has been given political gravity as a subtle protest on behalf of the poet against the unity which the Augustan calendar promoted (Fantham, *Fasti Book IV*). Ovid appears in his own poem as an enthusiastic antiquarian always eager to embark on a debate regarding etiological and etymological variants.

The five books of *Tristia* conveying the poet's despair in his first five years of exile and his supplications for mercy are dated between 9 and 12 CE. They consist of poems addressed by Ovid to his wife and to various unnamed persons in Rome. The *Tristia*, like the later *Epistulae ex Ponto*, function as open letters in which

the poet campaigns from afar for a reconsideration of his sentence. The second book of the *Tristia*, which is addressed to Augustus, differs in format from the other four in that it is a single poem of over 500 lines in which the poet adopts an overtly self-depreciatory tone perhaps under the grim prospect of spending his life in Tomis. In *Tristia*, Ovid attempts a profound self-reflection which allows little space for any colorful descriptions of the places and peoples the poet comes across; the gloomy atmosphere of the poem becomes even heavier with ominous metaphors as everything is turned into a negative sign of what the poet will face in exile. Hence, the ship that takes Ovid into exile is seen as the ship of his fortune (1.5.17–18). It has been suggested that from a post-modern point of view, in the *Tristia*, 'exile' can be read as the intellectual (at least) death of the poet, a notion that appropriates the use of the elegiac meter, initially reserved for funereal laments (Hinds, OCD s.v. Ovid).

In contrast with his tactic in the *Tristia*, Ovid addressed his *Epistulae ex Ponto* in four books, to friends in Rome, whom he tends to name (1.1.17–18). The poet claims that the letters of the first three books were gathered randomly into a single collection in 13 CE (Ep.3.9.51–54). It is likely that the fourth book 4 written in 16 CE, appeared posthumously.

*Ibis*, an elaborate curse poem in elegiacs, written possibly around 10–11 CE, was inspired by a lost work of Callimachus (Ib.55–62). The poet attacks an enemy whose identity is hidden under the name of a bird of unclean habits. Ovid explains his newly discovered thirst for revenge in dramatic terms as a result of the sudden disaster that befell him. A man broken by the unjust punishment that was imposed on him, he now seeks to achieve a new sense of peace and reconciliation with himself in hating his enemy.

Ovid also wrote a tragedy, *Medea*, from which only two verses survive (Quint.Inst.8.5.6; Sen.Suas.3.7). Equally from his hexametric translation of Aratus' *Phenomena* only two short fragments survived to this day. At last, the poems *Haliutica* and the *Nux* are suspected to be spurious works.

In conclusion, despite the negative criticism that Ovid's work received for his imitative tendency towards his predecessors, Ovid should be given credit for the genius treatment of his material. His comical treatment of the typical

elegiac themes also poses as a frequent reason that has led critics in the past to deny Ovid his poetic substance. To these reproaches some enthusiastic supporters of his talent compared him to Callimachus. Although Callimachus has been the initial model of all elegiac poets, Ovid is related more closely to him with regards to his fondness of paradoxical tales and his habit of challenging his poetic persona. Ovid's originality as an elegiac poet can also be argued with reference to his thematic innovations. Ovid attempted an unconventional reversal of the lover's adverse fate by allowing him easy access to his mistress. He interpreted elegy and its conventions through his own spirit and contributed to the understanding of the genre. He adjusted the Hellenistic vision of poetry to the needs of his age and of his temperament and managed to compose amusing and pleasant poems. His bold sexual imagery and sharp social observations deliver a vivid reflection of the social reality of Augustan Rome, while his employment of comic motifs render to his work the immediacy of a street performance.

Ovid exercised an overt influence on European literature, more than any other classical author. Dante, Boccaccio, and Chaucer in the twelfth century were among the first admirers of the *Metamorphoses*, soon to be joined by numerous artists of the Renaissance. Ariosto, Montaigne, Cervantes, La Fontaine, and Camoens were also impressed by his confident and light-hearted treatment of glorious poets of the past, by his energetic versatility and meticulous improvement of his own creations. Ovid devoted most of his career to writing elegy, so by the time of the *Remedia Amoris* he could already boast that 'elegy owes as much to me as epic does to Vergil' (Rem.Am.395–396). In the Anglophone world Ovid was mainly introduced by Dryden and Pope; Shakespeare's familiarity with Ovid's spirit survives in the verses of his *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Milton was allegedly fond of listening to the tales of the *Metamorphoses*. Later poets such as Keats, Shelley, Byron, and Browning were also acquainted with Ovid's talent.

### Biography

Publius Ovidius Naso, for whom our main source of information remains his own poetry, was born on 20 March 43 BCE in the Apennine city of Sulmo in Paeligne (nowadays Sulmona),

approximately 90 Roman miles away from Rome (Am.2.16.1; 3.15.11; Tr. 4.10). His father, a member of the equestrian class, envisaged for his son a future in Roman politics which required the ability of making public speeches. Consequently, Ovid came to Rome and excelled in rhetorical studies under Arellius Fuscus and Porcius Latro, before completing his education with a visit to Athens and possibly Asia Minor (Sen.Controv.2.2.8–12; Tr.1.2.77–78; Pont.2.10.21ff.). After his return to Rome he embarked on a legal career and held some minor judicial posts. However, with the support of M. Valerius Messalla Corvinus, he soon abandoned his political ambitions and joined the literary circles of Rome (Pont.1.7.27–28). His early erotic poems, the *Amores*, published for the first time between 25 and 15 BCE, earned him admiration from established poets like Tibullus and Propertius and he eventually attracted the attention of the emperor Augustus who remained an enthusiast for his poetry for almost twenty years.

However, the relation between Ovid and Augustus was not destined to have a happy ending. In 8 CE, the poet was exiled to Tomis, a Black Sea outpost, on the pretext of offending the moral principles of Augustus by composing the *Ars Amatoria*, a work full of adulterous, debauched imagery. Although the emperor was always keen to be seen as the restorer of Roman traditions and ethical values, the time that he allowed to lapse between the composition of the supposedly insolent *Ars Amatoria* and the unraveling of his wrath makes the explanation less credible. Ovid also refers in his work to an *error*, an indiscretion (Tr.2.103–108), which appears to have been the real reason behind his exile. It has been assumed that perhaps the poet unintentionally witnessed a scandal regarding Julia, Augustus' granddaughter. Despite his repeated plea to be allowed to return to Rome, Ovid died in Tomis in 17 CE. Several of his elegies from exile are addressed to his third wife back in Rome while there is also mention of a daughter and two grandchildren (Pont.1.2.136). His harsh treatment by Augustus and his successor, Tiberius, gave ground to an already rising belief in Ovid's anti-Augustan feelings. The issue, which is often debated in scholarship, seems to rely partly on Ovid's 'tongue in cheek' style and partly on his financial viability which allowed him independence unlike most other

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poets who relied on the generosity of Augustus and his confidants.

EVANGELIA ANAGNOSTOU-LAOUTIDES

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## OVIDIAN VERSE

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"Ovidian verse" is an ambiguous expression. Is it merely Latin verse composed by Ovid and later often called "Ovidian elegiac verse," or Ovidian verse understood as a metrical form with an erotic content. Or alternatively, 'Ovidian elegiac verse' as a genre?

It existed in the fifth century BCE Greece, a distich composed of a hexameter followed by a pentameter, itself always ending with two dactyles. The recurrence of the same ending on every second verse conveyed deep rhythmic effect, turning the poem into a gloomy threnody, as if the dynamic move initiated by the hexameter, a complete verse, was broken by a sob echoed by the pentameter, an incomplete verse.

This distich was described as elegiac. The elegy was originally used for gnomic, moral, political, patriotic, philosophical, as well as love poems. Later, from Augustus' reign on,

Latin poets associated the elegiac distich with the singing of love. Ovid was preceded by a number of elegiac poets, but he no longer sang of a quiet rural life or revelled in celebrating secular love in Augustean Rome.

As it appears from Ovid's *Amores*—Latin for *êrotika pathêmata*, love's passions, although *amor* does not include any idea of passive love like *pathêma*—the Ovidian elegiac verse is the product of the merging of a metrical form, the elegiac distich, and of an erotic content (s. Anne Videau's analysis).

In the first elegy of *Amores*, Book I, the epigram expresses a shift from equality to inequality, from epic parity to elegiac imparity. The rise of the epic hexameter, associated with the large number of *libelli*, booklets, is opposed by the fall of the pentameter, that asserts that the volume has been reduced to three books:

Qui modo Nasonis fueramus quinque libelli, / tres  
sumus  
We who of late numbered five books, are now but  
three

Such an æsthetics of reduction is adapted to the narrative of an elegiac transformation and opts for smallness and lightness, as opposed to the first heavy hexameter and to the poet's epic project:

Arma graui numero uiolentaque bella parabam  
edere, materia conueniente modis.  
Par erat inferior uersus ; risisse Cupido  
dicitur atque unum surripuisse pedem (I.1.1–4)

I was about to sing, in heroic strain, of arms and fierce combats. 'Twas a subject suited to my verse, whose lines were all of equal measure. But Cupid, so 'tis said, began to laugh, and stole away one foot]

This constitutes a mini-*recusatio* of the epic and analogically announces the surreptitious imposition by Cupid of the elegiac distich upon the poet, that is, another imparity and inequality. Cupid's unexpected and parodical interference so confers its mocking tone to the text.

The page's space is also concretely represented as an *inferior uersus*, a new page, *nova pagina*, which arises with the hexameter and then flatly falls back with the pentameter:

Cum bene surrexit uersu nova pagina primo,  
attenuat neruos proximus ille meos. (I.1.17)  
[Brave was the line that sounded the opening of my  
new poem, but lo!  
Love comes and stays my soaring flight.]

The *neruos* symbolize the hero's deflating male energy. Other distichs are still more explicit. An erotic image is underlying Naso's explanation for the passage from the hexameter to the pentameter:

Sex mihi surgat opus numeris, in quinque residat  
(I.1.27)  
Now let six feet my book begin, and let it end in five.

The distich imitates the desire's trials, from tumescence to detumescence. The verb *surgere*, which explicitly refers to the erecting organ and expresses love's furtive character, is to be found elsewhere, for example when the ring offered by Naso to her beloved turns into a male member:

Sed, puto, te nuda, mea mebra libidine surgent  
et peragam partes anulus ille uiri. (II.15.25–26)

[And yet, methinks, if naked I beheld thee, I should  
be consumed  
with desire, and that ring would like a man acquit  
itself]

or when the beloved fails to excite her lover:

Sed postquam nullas consurgere posse per artes  
immemoremque sui procubuisse uidet: (III.7.75-76)  
[But seeing that all her arts were vain, that my body,  
forgetful of its former  
prowess, would give no sign of life]

The elegiac pentameter, deriving from the epic hexameter, was meant to render love's rhythm as it goes, as well as to set a parallel and parodic love's epic against the hexameter, and the social power underlying it. Elegy consequently appears in Book III as a courtesan with one foot longer than the other, a limping woman, a personification of the uneven and unbalanced pentameter. However, epic is not opposed to elegy: *eros* is not to be dissociated from *eris*, struggle, and is integrated and intricated into the community's fate, whose heroes, preys to love, are the champions. That is why Ovid's narrator is also a soldier of love (I.9.1):

Militat omnis amans et habet sua castra Cupido;  
[Thy lover is a soldier, and Cupid hath his camp.]

The Ovidian verse is a metrical structure that gives love an intrinsic form, meaning, flavour and consistency, and partakes in Ovid's pervading subversion of poetic genres.

The Ovidian elegiac verse was often imitated in Europe. An example is John Donne's *Elegies* (1611), the opening verses of *Going to Bed*, which renders the elegiac distich's inflating and deflating process, as well as the play upon *eros* and *eris*:

Come, Madam, come, all rest my powers defie  
Until I labor, I in labor lie.  
The foe oft-times having the foe in sight,  
Is tir'd with standing though he never fights.

The Ovidian elegiac verse was held to be an adequate one to sing of love, but that didn't always result in a love's proper poetics, and the Ovidian elegiac verse became more of a stereotyped vehicle to express subversive ideas on love.

One ought not to confuse Ovid's elegiac verse and the Ovidian verse posterity resorted to for its nicety, variety, and dialectical virtue.

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## PALLAVICINO, FERRANTE

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1615–1644

Italian academician and satirist

### *La Retorica delle puttane*

In Italian literature, where most “pornographic” motifs originate, the prostitute or mistress often fashions herself a higher status by manipulating appearances. This active, self-crafting capacity is most fully explored in Pallavicino’s *La Retorica delle puttane* [*The Whores’ Rhetoric*] (1642), a mock-didactic satire that instructs the common whore in the arts of rhetoric, gesture, decor, music, and architecture—so that she can create a facade, both literal and figurative. As the old bawd explains to the young recruit, following the rules of this “rhetoric” will lift her above the rough subculture of the brothel and the street.

Pallavicino reveals passion itself as an “art,” both in the sense of fraud and in the sense of aesthetic achievement. He gives the courtesan the skill of an artist, able to fabricate sexual identities, even sexual experiences, while remaining coolly aware that they are “chimeras,”

fiction, trickeries, or *furberie*. Her education becomes a university course in rhetoric, the highly specialized technique used by poets and public speakers. Pallavicino follows the subdivisions of Cypriano Soarez’s school textbook *De Arte Rhetorica*, recast into 15 lessons that represent the 15-day cycle of the waxing moon. The courtesan must organize her seduction according to a step-by-step plan: the Exordium, in which she snares lovers by demure glances in public, “turning herself into a display apparatus or projection screen”; the Narration, in which she creates an intriguing and affecting home life to involve the client more deeply and render her yielding more plausible; the Confirmation, when the lovers actually go to bed; and the Epilogue, when the lover is sent off with promises of infinite pleasure (Coci: 36, 44, 46–51, 66; all citations are from Coci’s edition). The art of memory enables her to keep track of multiple lovers (stowed in a warren of small bedrooms), while Images, in the form of painted nudes and Aretinesque postures, help her to simulate rapture for those dull or repulsive clients who “think every woman melts for them” (83–5). In bed, figures of speech become “corporeal

eloquence”: metaphor, for example, is created by “translating, not the words, but the member from the proper place to the other improper one—improper with regard to natural laws but not with regard to pleasing the appetite.” As in *L’Alcibiade fanciullo a scola*, by Pallavicino’s fellow-incognito Antonio Rocco, sodomy is declared the pinnacle of the erotic art, “the most delightful metaphor” (ff. 88, 57).

Fashioning the erotic self in *La Retorica* involves all the arts, musical and plastic as well as verbal. Like a Renaissance sculptor, the whore must transform physical matter to “conform to the idea of Cupid” (93). The perversions constitute a “sublime art” which generates the maximum pleasure from those tastes and orifices that nature has made most disgusting (57). Transvestism and anal intercourse reveal her ability to “transform the serving-dish into the cup” and “feign oneself Ganymede the cupbearer of Jove” (81). The mirrors of her luxurious apartment allow her lovers to “enjoy the representation of those delights they also feel in the actual coupling” (94–5). The erotic painting on her bedroom wall—“the figures of Aretino gathered into a single picture”—serves as a “theatre” and as a musical score for her to play “a toccata on the organ of the senses” (85). Thus she creates “diversity, sole seasoning of earthly delight,” by “exquisite” performance and by “mutation of sex to find variety, mother of pleasures” (89).

All this artistry must be concealed, however. No longer the earthy whore, the seductress must simulate a respectable woman swayed by genuine passion. She evolves from a coarse trickster into a proto-novelist, “sweetening her narrative by weaving in fascinating incidents figured in her own person” (44). Gesture, voice, motion, interior decoration, and reading matter should form an “authentic” model that the gullible customer takes as a real person feeling sincere love for him and him alone (62–3). Though the man believes himself the instigator, the courtesan retains controlling power over the script and ownership of the means of seduction: her verbal and pictorial “figures” are the primary reality, her sighs and facial expressions “authenticate the words,” and the figures of Aretino “authenticate the force of her persuasion” (91, 84–5).

While the courtesan’s exterior is all simulated rapture, inside she must be “dead to the world,” like a nun entering the cloister, devoid of any response or feeling except the pleasures of

control, security, and profit. Imitating the sex object that men expect, she should paradoxically “not think of herself as being a woman.” The greatest danger for the professional seductress, as for the 18th-century libertine typified by Valmont, is to fall in love—Pallavicino’s speaker having been reduced to beggary because of such a mistake (86–7, 16, 82).

Where does the author himself stand in all this? Pallavicino gestures toward moralism by claiming to expose rather than condone prostitution, but this failed to convince the papal nuncio in Venice, who denounced the *Retorica*’s trickeries, or *furberie*, and fueled the persecution that soon led to Pallavicino’s arrest and execution (137). In his preface and in the “Author’s Confession” that follows the lecture, Pallavicino adopts wildly contradictory roles. Sometimes he “abhors” all prostitutes, sometimes he vents his spleen on a few individuals, sometimes he declares himself an “adherent” who has “dedicated his heart” to the whores (9, 126, 116, 4). On the one hand he argues that all sexual desire is “natural” (following the latest materialist philosophy), but on the other hand he exalts the “sublime art” and “nobility” of unnatural sex, in which “the perfection of art has supplemented the simple crudity of mere nature” (118, 22, 95). He claims to follow the golden mean but praises the most extreme kinds of desire: “even the excesses of lasciviousness are signs of glory” (5, 122). His own “lascivious genius” [il mio lascivo genio] likewise achieves “glory” by painting an abject subject so well (117, 6). Even the frauds of the courtesan have something admirable about them, since they resemble the “well-woven texture” of the novelist (8, 64, 87). At moments, erotic literature escapes morality entirely. Pallavicino envisages an almost Flaubertian role for the artist, whose responsibility is not to discriminate against abject and scandalous materials but to render them with supreme aesthetic power and “perfect execution” [“operazione perfettamente eseguita”] (6).

### *The Whores Rhetorick*

*La Retorica delle puttane* was reissued in 1673, and its influence was not confined to the loose English adaptation, *The Whores Rhetorick*, dedicated “To the most famous University of London-Courtezans,” published and prosecuted in 1683. A French imitation appeared in 1771,

and Italian echoes have been traced in Laura Coci's scholarly edition (lxxxix–xcii, 215–25). The English playwright William Wycherley followed Pallavicino by dedicating his sardonic comedy *The Plain-Dealer* (1676) to one of “the most famous Courtesans.” Like Pallavicino, he begins with a triple parallel of text, painting, and sexual career, and sarcastically praises the honor of a profession officially permitted “in the best governed and most Catholic cities” (Wycherley: 370–1) In Wycherley's version, Pallavicino's demand to “have free entry to [your] pleasures without charge,” in exchange for favorable literary treatment, becomes the principle that “a Poet ought to be as free of your Houses, as of the Play-houses.”

Wycherley also features in *The Whores Rhetorick* itself, which contains many more topical references than Pallavicino's original. The old bawd—now named as the notorious Mrs. Cresswell, frequently cited in English pornography, drama, and satire—contrasts the hard-nosed courtesan to high-flown “Romantick Ladies” like the idealistic heroines of “*Cleopatra, Cassandra, Pharamond*, and others of that nature” (65–66, 106). The ultimate goal is to marry the rich customer (a possibility only briefly entertained in the original *Retorica*, 34), and such romances come in useful when the courtesan has to simulate a lover pleading for a more legitimate relationship, “torn in pieces” by the conflict of love, shame, and religious guilt. But she must never actually *believe* in these “Romances, where constancy in love is cryed up as a vertue”; instead, she must train herself by reading “Modern Comedies,” where “you will find fraud and dissimulation called discretion and prudence, cuckolding Husbands, cheating Lovers, prudently styled Address and Wit” (150). Wycherley's *The Plain-Dealer* and *The Country-Wife* are cited as supreme examples of the kind (189), narrowing the gap between Restoration sex-comedy and pornography.

*The Whores Rhetorick* breaks up many of Pallavicino's structural devices, such as the systematic naming of rhetorical-sexual “figures” and the 15-part lunar lecture cycle, recasting *La Retorica delle puttane* into the dialogue form of *L'Escole des filles* and *The Wandring Whore*. The “rhetoric” idea becomes just one theme among many. Long stretches of intellectual ingenuity are cut and the space filled with extracts from Aretino's *Ragionamenti*, topical allusions to the

London sexual underworld, and satire against the Puritans. Pallavicino had introduced an element of social satire when he encouraged upper-class refinement in the prostitute (she must not sound and move “like a porter”; Coci: 93), but this class awareness is now sharpened by specifically English references: at one end of the social spectrum, the sexual adventures of Charles II and Monmouth; at the other end, the vulgarities of Bartholomew Fair and the dangers of Bridewell, where poor whores were publicly whipped (“Philo-Puttanus”: 182, 37). Even vaginal hygiene is treated with local London color, evoking the steps of a Thames boat landing: use a “drying Pessary” after each customer, since “the Stairs will be wet and the Passage slippery” (122–3).

In some ways, *The Whores Rhetorick* paints a broader canvas than the intellectually serious *Retorica delle puttane*, but in some ways it is narrower. The sex is certainly more limited. The “Italian” fascination with sodomy—for Pallavicino the goal and test of erotic art, the instrument on which the courtesan plays her *toccata*, the prime instance of “translation” and self-mutation—is either removed completely or explicitly rejected: the old teacher reverses the recommendation of *La Retorica*, warning that “*Aretin's* Figures have no place in my Rhetorick; . . . they are calculated for a hot Region a little on this side *Sodom*, and are not necessary to be seen in any Northern Clime” (“Philo-Puttanus”: 171). In Pallavicino the courtesan turns herself *into* Ganymede to please the man who secretly desires boys, offering her anus as a “cup” of divine nectar; in the English version she “makes herself Ganymede” in a different sense, imagining a beautiful but fictitious youth—called her “Ganymede”—while pretending to adore her ugly customer (166, 168). With this increasingly heterosexual focus comes a loss of interest in “sublime” perversity.

Having cut out the core of Pallavicino's work, the English author “Philo-Puttanus” [Whore-Lover] stuffs his book with all kinds of sexual lore and humor. Long passages are plagiarized from Aretino's *Ragionamenti*, including the blunt statement “A Whore is a Whore, but a Whore is not a Woman” (144). Political allusions give the satire an up-to-date feel. In the period when the Royal Society was promoting the Scientific Revolution, Mrs. Cresswell often “talks Philosophically,” citing Hobbes and



theorizing that “the whole series of carnal satisfaction does purely consist in fancy” (71, 85, 167). Medicine inspires an extraordinary parallel between pen and penis, a surreal fantasy on green quills, sheets tinted with syphilitic discharge, and venereal ink flowing with all the hues of the rainbow (ff. A3–v, A6–v). And science provides the metaphor that links the art of the courtesan to the power of the author: “a judicious writer, like an expert Chymist, will so order the most abject, the most indisposed matter, as to extract thence both pleasure and advantage” (f. A8).

### Biography

Pallavicino was born March 23 in Parma, a younger son of a major aristocratic family. Took classes at the University of Padua, then the center of radical new ideas in medicine and philosophy. Entered religious orders as a canon of the Lateran in 1632, in Milan, and moved restlessly around Germany, France, and Italy before settling in Venice, where he was welcomed into the freethinking and adventurous Accademia degli Incogniti [Academy of the Unrecognized]. Pallavicino’s short life was turbulent but incredibly productive. He published at least 20 books, in many different genres, but his outrageous satires were condemned by the papal authorities (eager to close down the free presses and anti-Vatican sentiments of Venice). He was imprisoned in 1641–2, then released (perhaps with the help of a well-connected courtesan), then again arrested in France. Cardinal Richelieu had recruited him to establish a French Academy for the study of Italian literature, but passing through the papal territory in Avignon he was betrayed by a friend and captured, with a valise full of scandalous manuscripts. Representatives of the papacy particularly condemned *La Retorica delle puttane* and *Il Corriere svaligiato* [*The Postman Robbed of His Mail Bag*]; he was also suspected (probably wrongly) of authoring *Il Divortio celeste*, in which Christ repudiates His Roman spouse. Tried and tortured, Pallavicino was beheaded on March 5, at the age of 28.

The character Ferrante Palla, in Stendhal’s *Charterhouse of Parma*, is based on him.

JAMES GRANTHAM TURNER

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# PANERO, LEOPOLDO MARÍA

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1948–  
Spanish poet

Leopoldo María Panero belongs to the group of 1970s writers, most of them poets, who began publishing around 1968 and who share an understanding and appreciation of pop culture in its broadest sense. Cinema, pop music, posters, and the sexual revolution are among those features. By no means, however, can it be said that Panero was loyal to all of the main trends of this group. Though he shares many of their sensibilities, he makes a personal use of them, distorting their meanings, images, or aims. Panero was an outcast in a group that was characterized by its nonconformism.

Panero's erotic poetry cannot be dissociated from his poetics. As I have already pointed out, Panero is heterodox, as a poet and as an individual, who holds radical views of life in the tradition of Antonin Artaud, Lautréamont, and Arthur Rimbaud. It is thus that his peculiar use of some literary motifs can be properly understood. They all revolve around the same idea of destruction of the old without a clearly stated interest in the construction of something new. This implies that Panero views them as illusions that people need in order to bear the unbearable reality of life.

Childhood represents the first of these degraded motifs. Generally associated with paradise and innocence, Panero writes of childhood as if it were a lost paradise and a time of cruelty and sadism, as can be read in "Unas palabras para Peter Pan" [A Few Words for Peter Pan]. Childhood foregrounds an elegiac tone. It is closely related to death and to the burial of the treasures of innocence, as reflected in "20000 leguas de viaje submarino" [20,000 Leagues Under the Sea], "Blancanieves se despide de los Siete Enanos" [Snow White Says Farewell to the Seven Dwarfs], and "Deseo de ser piel roja" [I Wish I Were a Redskin] There is also a slight

eroticism present in the poems dealing with the topic, as for example in "Unas palabras para Peter Pan" and "Blancanieves se despide de los Siete Enanos."

Another important topic that is violently attacked is the figure of the mother. Panero destroys a mythic figure that in his mind has become a taboo. Never can a positive or indulgent view of the mother be found in his writings. It is Narcissus' reaction to an image he finds in the mirror, since mother and son are not so different. But there is also a Freudian reading in which the womb would be equated to paradise, and consequently to innocence. Thus, birth is the loss of innocence, and the beginning of evil. The figure of the mother is regarded as a sacred, everlasting evil, as can be read in "Ma mère" [My Mother], probably because of the oedipal connotations that the relationship between mother and son has acquired through history.

The other parent, the father, is depicted as a symbol of power, who does not permit the development of the poet as a person. The poet's rejection is absolute. The relationship between father and son is accounted for in terms of sex and death. All social, moral, literary, and cultural codes are broken as the poet writes about incest and pedophilia, while the father changes his gender in the last lines of "Carta al padre" [Letter to Father]. In the end, eros displaces power.

Panero's poetics underlie all his creative writing. For him life is an illusion that is supported by a number of cultural institutions, in the manner of Freud's philosophy. Writing is an illusion, which main task is that of destroying the accepted meanings of society. It is an exercise in coherence if one follows Panero's thought; it is a result of his view of reality, society, and himself. Another obsession is that of naming, related to literature and to life. Not to have a name of one's own means to be free and offers one the possibility of wandering

through the mythology of names. A name imposes a fate on a person; it is a sort of sham. Another illusion—or better, another producer of illusion—is cinema, an art form not unlike literature. It represents another escape from life and the possibility of living in the realm of modern mythology. It also presents an erotica of death, symbolized by Marilyn Monroe. Another illusion is Paris, or at least the image people have of it. For Panero it is the city of Paul Verlaine, Rimbaud, and Baudelaire. It is a city of bohemians, *clochards* [tramps], and marginality. Dreams are also illusions, though it must be said that the poet's dreams have turned into nightmares. Finally, sex is grouped among the illusions. Love is regarded as impossible; besides, sterile love is the only ethical option.

Sex is represented in Panero's poetry as a form of transgression, in close relation to writing. The reader will find incest, coprophilia, homosexuality, necrophilia, sadism, masochism, and all variants of sexual deviations. For Panero the commonly accepted sexual relations reproduce systems of power. His rejection of society makes him choose alternative social codes that exist on the fringe of normality. I have pointed out the Freudian aspect, but we should remember too Marcuse's assertion in *Eros and Civilization* that fantasy is the last realm of childhood, and that it can be enjoyed via sexual perversions. What I have been saying is exemplified by two of Panero's poems. The first one is "Storia," about a love affair with a beggar. The affair is a purification, since the other lover has to overcome nausea, the mechanisms of rejection, and the Manichaeic dichotomy of these conflicting concepts. Thus, both lovers can enter paradise, though a degraded one, naturally. The other poem is "Shekina," an ambiguous poem about a child who gives his mother a gift for her love; his own corpse, remarking that freedom comes always after death.

Panero was the author of a few short stories dealing with the same themes, and he translated any writer whom he considered, for any reason, marginal.

## Biography

Leopoldo María Panero was born in Madrid, the son of an important Francoist poet. The details of his life are virtually unknown, except that he spent periods in a mental hospital. He is the last of the Spanish marginal poets.

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## PAZ, OCTAVIO

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1914–1998

Mexican poet and essayist

One of the collections of Paz's poetry in English is entitled *Configurations*. This word perhaps more than any other indicates the central unifying theme both of his life and of his work: configurations between places—between Mexico and India by way of Europe, in particular—and between people and ideas. And these configurations are founded in eroticism. Paz, perhaps in a more intense way than any poet or thinker since Novalis, experienced the universe as a whole held together and energized by sensual experience. We can see this most clearly in the poem that is probably his finest and indeed may be considered one of the greatest sustained pieces of lyrical writing of our time. This poem, "Piedra de sol" [Sun Stone], based on the Aztec calendar, has a cyclical structure with no beginning or end. Endless transformation through openness to the world of experience is its theme, in which love is the transformative force *par excellence*, transgressive of the restrictions of social life but in accord with universal flow:

. . . and the world is changed  
 if two people shaken by dizziness and enlaced  
 are fallen among the grass: the sky descending,  
 the trees pointing and climbing upward, and space  
 alone among all things is light and silence,  
 and pure space opens to the eagle of the eye  
 and it sees past the white tribe of the clouds,  
 the body's cables snap, the soul sails out,  
 now is the moment we lose our names, and float  
 along the border-line between blue and green,  
 the integrated time when nothing happens  
 but the event, belonging, communicating . . .

This theme of the tension between (1) the unbound quality inherent in eroticism and the loved relation and (2) the social need to control both is central to the whole of Paz's work, explored in multifarious ways. Paz's poetic journey took him a long way into the passionate ties by which we are bound to other people and to the world; this was a journey of the senses, in which the erotic becomes a kind of moral touchstone

for the relation between the person, as a limited entity, and the vastness of the universe. Paz was a poet who took seriously Rimbaud's demand for a poet to "possess truth in one body and soul."

But if Paz is a poet of erotic transformation, he is equally an essayist, the vitality of whose writings is maintained by configurations of place and time. As a Mexican who has lived in Europe and India, he had a cosmopolitan spirit that nevertheless remains rooted in a Mexican sensibility, which he extensively explored in two books, *The Labyrinth of Solitude* (first published in 1950) and *The Other Mexico: Critique of the Pyramid* (1969). The first of these books has been highly influential, and in its final chapter, "The Dialectic of Solitude," Paz first explored the theme of love in relation to identity, something that runs through all of his work.

Paz visited India in 1951; he returned in 1962 as Mexican ambassador, a post he retained until 1968, when he resigned in protest over the massacre of students by Mexican government troops. Meditations of aspects of Indian culture as Paz experienced it provide a central thread in his work, explored in *The Monkey Grammarian* (1974), an account of a journey to the ruined city of Galta, and the more recent *Vislumbres de la India* [*In the Light of India*].

In *The Monkey Grammarian* (in some ways a companion volume to *The Labyrinth of Solitude*), Paz uses the image of the journey to anchor an exploration of perennial themes of solitude and loss and of movement and fixity through India as experienced by a Mexican imbued also with European ideas. It may be said that the sensual image Paz gives us of India is overly exoticized, but it is an India as imagined by a Mexican in a way that may be said to constitute an erotic relation. And this is an important aspect of understanding Paz's work: eroticism is threaded through it as much in the relation between phenomena and ideas as it is through the relation between people.

His most extended meditation on the erotic relation is a late collection of essays, *The Double*

## PAZ, OCTAVIO

*Flame* (1993, translated in 1996). Eroticism and love are forces of energy uniting body and soul, heaven and earth, life and death; they are the double flames the title refers to, interrelated through sexuality. In distinguishing among these three elements, Paz emphasizes their indissolubility: "Love and eroticism always return to the primordial source, to Pan and his cry that makes the forest tremble," writes Paz. From out of the primordial fire of sexuality rises the red flame of eroticism, which in turn feeds the blue flame of love.

In *The Double Flame*, Paz quotes Hegel: "Love excludes all oppositions and hence it escapes the realm of reason. . . . It makes objectivity null and void and hence goes beyond reflection. . . . In love, life discovers itself in life, devoid now of any incompleteness." This is a key element to Paz's conception, in which necessity and freedom are held in tension, "love is the involuntary attraction toward a person and the voluntary acceptance of that attraction."

If sexuality is attraction necessary to the life force and differentiation, simultaneously seeking unity and the reproduction of the species, eroticism is specifically human longing that emerges from our awareness of mortality, while love is a passion, born from life itself but transcending it. It is in the tension between these different motivations that, for Paz, our relation to the world is founded.

### Biography

Octavio Paz was born in Mexico City. He spent several years living in France and India and also lived in England and the United States. As a young man, he witnessed the Spanish Civil War firsthand; he was a member of the Surrealist group in Paris; he was a poet, diplomat, writer on a vast range of themes, and founder of one of the most important literary journals in Mexico, *Vuelta*, which he edited between 1977 and 1997. Paz was awarded the 1990 Nobel Prize for Literature.

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## PEDOPHILIA

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Alongside matrimony, whether polygamous or monogamous, pederasty is one of the main modes of erotic organization in civilizations dominated by the principle of male superiority. In such societies, segregation of the sexes institutionalizes homoeroticism, but taboos surrounding sexual passivity in adult men reduce the available field to young boys. Relationships between men and boys are rendered safe by being socially sanctioned and, therefore, subject to close inspection. The well-established economy of gift exchange for sexual favors is obviously in need of scrutiny if young male citizens are not to be turned into prostitutes. An erotic etiquette is developed, governed by close attention to facial and bodily hair—that is, to the physical development of the boy.

The institutionalized practice of the love of boys in ancient Greek culture was informed by the precedent of Zeus' relationship with Gany-mede. Of mortal human men, Orpheus was said to have been the first to follow the god's example and make love to a boy. The most complete analysis of the Athenian ethics of boy-love was Plato's *Symposium*. In Greek society a pair of lovers were, respectively, the adult inspirer [*eispenelas*] and the adolescent hearer [*aitas*]. As these two terms suggest, the nature of the

relationship was essentially educational, where the social purpose of man–boy love was the leading out (*education*, as it would later be termed in Latin) of (male) children into man-hood. Male lovers inducted and initiated the next generation of citizens into their useful participation in the *polis*. Since this process was so clearly central to the security and continuance of the state, love between men and boys was circumscribed by rigorous rules and conventions in ways that woman–girl relationships were not.

The main act of homosexual expression was intercrural intercourse (the insertion of the man's penis between the boy's thighs). That is not to say that other acts were not indulged in and enjoyed, but they were subjected—as they have been since—to stricter taboos. The boy's sexual pleasure was subordinate to the man's; indeed, strictly, the boy was not expected to seek pleasure other than that of giving pleasure. In practice, love was often more mutual in its practices than the rules allowed.

The richest source of Greek pederastic verse is *Mousa Paidiké [Pederastic Poems]*, compiled by the poet Strato and later absorbed into that incomparable resource of over 6,000 epigrams, *The Greek Anthology*. Most such texts refer to a narrow window of desirability between the first

## PEDOPHILIA

tender shoots of puberty and the more tenacious furze of the beginnings of manhood. Pederastic literature is almost always elegiac, for obvious reasons intensely attuned to the passing of time. Conventionally, the poet courts a boy; the reluctant boy resists him but eventually succumbs, often tempted by promises of gifts; he is teasing and unfaithful, however. When puberty kicks in and the boy becomes hairy, he officially ceases to be desirable. The poet looks elsewhere, and the boy duly turns his attention to younger boys and to women. The poet often expresses the hope that the boy will suffer the same pangs of unrequited longing that he once put the poet through.

Most of the major Roman poets wrote love poems to boys as well as women; none was solely interested in boys. Horace, Catullus, Propertius, Vergil, and Tibullus all manifest a bisexuality which is balanced in terms of their strict understanding of social conventions. Even the epigrams of Martial, which cheerfully celebrate many sorts of sexual desire but show a distinct preference for the masculine boy, include advice to married men to give up boys and attend to their wives. For his own part, Martial says he would prefer any boy to a miserable woman (XII, 75).

The Greek tradition resounded throughout the European Middle Ages and Renaissance, most productively, where literature is concerned, in the unreformed seminaries and monasteries. References to Jove and Ganymede are common in Latin poetry by Christian monks. This may explain why Dante, when seeking the personification of virtue in a child, chose not a boy but a girl, Beatrice. However, not until the concerted campaigns of Victorian sentimentalists was childhood most decisively sanctified. Dickens used the epithet "little" (as in Little Nell and Little Dorrit) to connote not only vulnerability but also an undeveloped physicality that characterized the young person's moral sanctity. He liked to thrust such children into the arms of a personified moral threat: Nell with Quilp, Oliver Twist with Fagin. A similar sentimentality about childhood pervades the work of the British "Uranian" poets of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, who emerged from the public schools into a nostalgic haze of regret for the lost institutions of the male palestra and the Socratic academy.

Anthologies show that there was a market for pederastic literature in other sex-segregating

societies: for instance, in China the Ming collection *Records of the Cut Sleeve*; and in 17th-century Japan *The Great Mirror of Male Love*. In Arabic literature in the 13th century, Ahmad al-Tifashi produced *The Delight of Hearts*, which includes works by Abu Nuwas, most famous for his poems celebrating the pleasures of wine (*khamriyyat*) and boys (*mudhakkarat*). Nuwas is especially well known in the West through his appearances in the *Arabian Nights*, where he is generally engaged in either the pursuit of boys or the justification of that pursuit. The *Arabian Nights* and the works of such poets as Hafiz had many translators and imitators in 19th-century Europe. In Victorian times and since, European culture finds its visions of erotic pleasure with the young in the South and the East—that is, in poorer countries, and often in countries where the sexes are segregated as they were in ancient Greece.

In France more than elsewhere, pedophile writers have maintained a position of cultural power. Merely to name André Gide is to cite pederasty close to modern French literature's center of gravity. Gide's *Corydon* is a defense not of homosexuality, as is often claimed, but of pederasty. Henry de Montherlant and Roger Peyrefitte both tried to reconcile a classically based, idealized pederasty with a right-wing, Roman Catholic orthodoxy, the former by cloaking physical desire in claims of spirituality, the latter more willing to adopt a pose of being above scandal, but thereby laying claim to a class-based immunity from scandal's consequences.

Such strategies were superseded by the radicalism of Tony Duvert, whose fiction unashamedly celebrates boys' sexuality from what he constructs as their own point of view. As the cases of Duvert, William Burroughs, and Dennis Cooper confirm, modern fiction about boy-love is at its best when, instead of sentimentally laying claim to an understanding of boys' emotional needs, it deliberately sets out to be transgressive in both content and form.

GREGORY WOODS

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## PÉLADAN, JOSÉPHIN

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1858–1918  
French novelist

This writer—given the nickname of “the Balzac of occultism,” due to his epic *La Décadence latine* [*Latin Decadence*—is the first representative of erotic mystique in modern literature. Never before had a writer had the boldness to display so consistently the powers of sexual magic in his novels and his essays. Having failed as a student in conventional education, Péladan directed was toward the sciences of the occult by his brother, Adrien. Reading Eliphas Lévi's *Dogma et rituel de la haute magie* [*Transcendental Magic: Its Doctrine and Ritual*] had a crucial role in his evolution.

In February 1881, Péladan came to Paris and maintained a relationship with Henriette Miallat, a mystical erotomane that Huysmans wrote about in his satanic novel *Là-bas* [*Over There*], referring to her as Mrs. Chantelouve. Péladan wrote a biography of Marion de Lorme, a courtesan of the reign of Louis XIII; followed by the *Livre du désir* [*Book of Desire*]; he then began *Passionate Studies of Decadence* while he was seeing Barbey d'Autrevilly. At the same time, he created his doctrine aiming at the renewal of Catholicism by introducing notions

of Chaldean magic. He later taught his ideology in the seven essays of his *Amphitheater of Dead Sciences*, of which the first two were: *Comment on devient mage, éthique* [*How to Become a Sorcerer, Ethical*], and *Comment on devient fée, érotique* [*How to Become a Fairy, Erotic*]. The sorcerer must follow the example of the sorcerer kings of Chaldea; it is this way that Péladan discovered that he was the descendant of Merodack-Baladan cited in *Livre des rois* [*Book of Kings*]. With respect to the second work, his advice to the woman who wanted to become a fairy was to train on a daily basis so that she could develop her innate powers.

His novel *Le vice suprême* [*The Supreme Vice*], in 1884, made quite an impression because of its main character, the sorcerer Merodack, who, in the Parisian foyer of Léonora d'Este, a virgin and a pervert, enthralls her guests with his words and actions. He has superhuman powers: his science of magnetism allows him to put to sleep an opponent or to push him back with liquid substances coming out of his fingers. He is capable of attending an orgy and remaining impassive, without suffering the contagious nature of the others' sexual delirium. In the first chapter, he recounts how he freed himself from sex: not by depriving himself from the act of sex,



like a monk, but by reading erotic books and by admiring naked women, to the point that it no longer had an effect on him. This would be a principle that Péladan would invoke ceaselessly: to become asexual or androgynous by experiencing all forms of sexual excess.

*Le Vice suprême* enthused the occultist Stanislas de Guaita, who became Péladan's friend; together, they restored the esoteric Order of the Rosicrucians. Soon after, though, he came to a disagreement with Guaita, who attacked Catholicism in the name of the Kabbalah; then, Péladan founded in 1890 the Order of the Catholic Rosy Cross "brotherhood of the intellectual virtue," of which he was the self-acclaimed "secular cardinal." It had its sixth and final salon in March 1897. Péladan became Sar Mérodack J. Péladan (*Sar* means *king* in Assyrian), organized art expositions, theatrical plays, appeared in eccentric outfits (which Léon Bloy mocked), and mostly was "the unrivaled teller of lyrics and great ideas" (as he says about one of his main characters) of *La Décadence latine*. He wrote his manuscripts on yellow paper—"solar paper"—without pausing, and sometimes without rereading his drafts; this is how certain he was of his thoughts.

*La Décadence latine* is an *éthopée*, a rhetorical term meaning "drawing of mores and human passions," according to Littré. The title suggests that the Latin countries (France, Italy, Spain, and even Russia, "Latinized Slavic") are in states of decadence, having lost the principles that invigorate esoteric Christianity. Péladan's intention is to describe at the same time the vices of those subject to this degradation and the virtues of the sorcerers and the fairies opposed to the latter. The 21 novels of the *La Décadence latine* were published in the following order: 1. *Le Vice suprême* (1884); 2. *Curieuse!* [*Curious!*] (1886); 3. *L'Initiation sentimentale* [*The Sentimental Initiation*] (1887); 4. *A coeur perdu* [*In a Lost Heart*] (1887); 5. *Istar* (1888); 6. *La Victoire du mari* [*The Husband's Victory*] (1889); 7. *Coeur en peine* [*Heart in Sorrow*] (1890); 8. *L'Androgyne* [*The Androgyne*] (1891); 9. *Le Gynandre* [*The Gynander*] (1891); 10. *Le Panthée* [*Panthea*] (1892); 11. *Typhonia* (1892); 12. *Le Dernier Bourbon* [*The Last Bourbon*] (1895); 13. *Finis Latinorum* (although set in Rome during the election of a new pope by seven Rosicrucians, it still recounts sexual perversities) (1899); 14. *La Vertu suprême* [*The Supreme Virtue*] (1899);

15. *Pereat!* (1901); 16. *Modestie et Vanité* [*Humbleness and Vanity*] (1902); 17. *Peregrin et Peregrine* (1904); 18. *La Licorne* [*The Unicorn*] (1905); 19. *Le Nimbe noir* [*The Black Nimbus*] (1907); 20. *Pomone* (1904); 21. *La Torche renversée* [*The Knocked-Over Torch*] (1925). Of course, all of these novels are more or less well crafted and of interest to a general erotic readership, but they reflect the ideas of the Order of the Catholic Rosy Cross, and some of them are exceptional testimonials of mystical eroticism.

In the trilogy *Curieuse!*, *L'Initiation sentimentale*, and *A coeur perdu*, the painter Nebo undertakes to free the Russian princess Paule Riazan from temptations of vulgar love. Nebo takes Paule to cabarets and brothels and to socialite circles of the capital so that she can see vice in all of its forms. He takes her to "The Erotic Office: where men prostitute themselves": a poet sells himself to her for one night. In the next novel, Nebo presents to Paule couples who appear to love each other but whose unions conceal the worst selfish judgments. Pleasure or love, as practiced by the uninitiated, is abominable. Paule believes Nebo to be an archangel and offers herself to him in order to experience sacred eroticism. *A coeur perdu* has the subtitle of "Erotikon," because therein one can see all the rituals employed by the sorcerer to acquire highest pleasures. In his apartment, transformed into temple, dressed in an Adrinople red robe, Nebo subjects Paule to "formidable excitement without satisfaction." Nebo only kisses Paule in the "little salon of kisses, empty of furniture" and seeks only the contact of their skin: "hugging nude made them touch each other's soul." Nebo celebrates an "Erocy" (referring to a ritual of the cult of Eros), by reciting hymns and fumigating. When she begs him to possess her, it happens in a red room, where even the bed has purplish red silk sheets. This very ardent room becomes "a forge where flesh strikes flesh with the breathlessness and the moaning of the pounders." Their sweat forms a "mist of love" over them. This supra-erotic experience takes Paule to the verge of insanity. Nebo asks for the help of Merodack, who plunges the young girl into a hypnotic sleep, so that she forgets this session. Paul Valéry wrote to Pierre Louÿs that *A coeur perdu* was "the masterpiece novel of this era."

Other novels of this cycle carry through Péladan's ideas on transcendental sexuality. In *Istar*, which inspired in Péladan his "platonic

flirtation” in Marseille with a married woman, Clémence Couve, novelist Nergal regularly visits Istar Capimont, to whom he says: “In a higher place than sex, well beyond desire, resides a religious sentimentality, and we are both examples of it.” Their sexual relationship consists in sitting across from each other “without caresses, without kisses, nothing else than sparks of tenderness.” Their connection in “ecstatic love” was not about orgasm: “A kind of euphoria was born, a blissful euphoria with no preoccupation, very close to the seraphic state.” On a stormy day, “they glowed onto each other,” charged with psychic electricity, when “suddenly drawn from their reverie by loud caterwauls, they saw the cat, intoxicated by their sexual discharges and filled with love, rolling on the carpet, a victim of two nervous streams subjecting it to a flaming emanation.”

In *La Victoire du mari*, two newlyweds, Adar and Izel, go to Bayreuth during their honeymoon, where they experience “the correlation of sound wave and erotic wave” by attending Wagner’s operas. Izel, daughter of a defrocked abbot, says: “I am a mystic of love. . . I can never have enough of your gaze, of your kisses, of your caresses.” After each opera—deeply moved by the music—they hug and become acquainted with “the nirvana of love”; a kind of death from which one returns regenerated: “In one month, they got to the edges of sensation.” After Bayreuth, they go to Nuremberg to meet Doctor Sexthenthal, “the maleficent saturnian,” who has the power theosophists bragged about: “to exit in astral,” meaning that his soul exited his body to visit the other world. Sexthenthal says that he has the power to send his spirit (or astral body) far off to fulfill his desire. While his body is in lethargy before Adar, his spirit rapes Izel, who has stayed in their bedroom. She confesses with desperation to her husband: “I made a temple of my body where only you officiate: it has been desecrated.” This case of “sidereal debauchery,” where a woman is subject to an elusive rape, is unique in literature.

*Coeur en peine*, a “symphonic novel” without action, starts off with the reverie of Bêlit, leaning on the balcony of a cabin on the oceanfront. She is under the impression that the sea makes love to itself: “The waves must love each other, given their evanescent embraces. . . . This wave rising and collapsing on the preceding wave, could it

be a spasm ending up breaking on the pebbles?” Bêlit learns from Merodack that she is predestined to be “a lover of charity.” In fact, there is a sacred form of prostitution, and the woman practicing it is a saint. In *La Vertu suprême*, one sees Bêlit prostituting herself for noble causes. Deputy Rudenty has to make a speech before the Chamber of Deputies in order to send an expedition to Sou-King, in Indochina, running the risk of slaughtering the local inhabitants. He desires Bêlit, and thus she asks him to meet her in his bed before the (parliament) session; although she finds him repugnant, she lavishes him with such caresses that he forgets time. He does not intervene at the podium and the murderous expedition does not take place.

In his two novels on homosexuality, *L’Androgyne* and *Le Gynandre*, Péladan intends to show that “erotic asceticism” allows for liberation of the self. Samas, the main character of *L’Androgyne* is a student at the high school of Avignon, over whom two boys, Tanis and Agür, fight; the former for a platonic relationship, the latter for a physical relationship. Samas feels troubled, but across from his room a teenage girl undresses herself in front of the window in order to seduce him. Each time, she shows him a different part of her body, until the moment she appears naked: “He becomes initiated to a sexual experience without contact.” Samas will never touch this girl, Stelle de Senanques; however, he becomes familiar with the feeling of desire for a woman more effectively than by direct contact: “Samas began eroticism through his eyes. . . . Now eroticism is in his imagination, next it will be in his flesh.” Following that, Samas loses his virginity to a virgin girl who is in love with him, and this will be “the death of the androgyne”; in other words, the effeminate that existed once no longer is.

*Le Gynandre* is the oddest novel ever written on lesbians by a man who associated with them and loved them. Péladan was the only man admitted to the Club of the White Carnation, founded by a painter, Louise Abéma, for the women of the lesbian society of Paris. They considered him their “chaplain” and their “confessor.” In this novel, young Tammuz, infatuated with the lesbian princess Simzerla, wants to free her from this sexual preference. In vain, Nergal makes a mockery of his mission of “reformer of deformed love.” Tammuz establishes relationships with all kinds of lesbian women

without criticizing them: “He sympathizes with these women as a thinker and an emotional doctor.” He becomes a regular of the Atelier d’Aril (just as Péladan did of the White Carnation club) and of its friends, Carmente the queen of orchids, Ennar the red-haired, Nundi the diabolic whisperer. Finally, Tammuz disguises himself as a woman in order to board the yacht Sapho, where the homosexual women of the Royal-Maupin are on a cruise, with the intention of converting them to heterosexual love.

In 1900, following his divorce, Péladan fell in love with one of his old admirers who came back to him, Christiana Taylor. He wrote the 136 erotic poems of *Livre secret* [*Secret Book*] for her: “Every day Péladan improvised ardently on a piece of paper that the courier would deliver the following day to the one who had inspired him,” wrote Victor-Emile Michelet, adding that those “pages of love” made regrettable the fact that Péladan left unfinished his *Traité de la volupté* [*Treatise of Voluptuousness*]. In poems entitled *Rite d’admiration* [*Ritual of Admiration*], *De la chair à la chair* [*From Flesh to Flesh*], *Tout en toi* [*Everything in You*], *Tu es un monde* [*You Are a World*], etc., he celebrates “the solemn works of hedonism” and claims that “voluptuousness is nothing but music.”

Following his marriage to Christiana Taylor in February 1901, he attempted to teach men how to be sure that they were in a good marriage. His novel *Pereat!* presents the story of Maurice Trainel, who finds himself split between two women and marries the one he should have run away from. In 1902, Péladan’s treatise on practical magic, *L’Art de choisir sa femme d’après la physionomie* [*The Art of Choosing His Wife Following Physiognomy*], describes with pictures the types of women following the esoteric Tradition, in such a way that the candidate groom will know what to expect from any woman. Soon after, Abbot Mugnier, who advises him “to write for young girls,” influences Péladan, who proceeded to write the three novels of *Drames de la conscience* [*Dramas of Conscience*], and the last novels of *La Décadence latine*, less original than the previous ones, with the exception of the Erotikon *Pomone*, a most beautiful book on conjugal eroticism in mature age.

In that book, Claude Tillières, a misunderstood musician at fifty years old, retires to a country house with his wife, Colette, forty

years old (this was the age difference between Péladan and Christiana), thus saying farewell to society. After having surprised his wife in her toilette, he realizes that “she is built to live naked, like a goddess.” He decides to compose “the plastic sonata of femininity,” on the piano by watching her undressing on the sofa in front of him. For seventeen nights, Colette shows to her husband all of her body, part by part: the arms, the breasts, the legs, the knees, by varying her poses. The musical composition follows, from andante to adagio: “Similar to towers, the thighs, magnificent columns, carry the architrave of the mysterious belly.” This sight inspires in Claude “a hieratic largo where powerful notes succeed almost equal notes.” The buttocks, “figure of joyful geometry,” fascinate him, but he does not want to go further: “I have not backed down. . . . I hesitated before obscenity.” Claude resists: “The flesh is sacred because of its splendor, it illuminates our poor ephemeral moments.” What follows is a fight between the couple, then a passionate dialogue, where Claude justifies himself: “It has been fifteen years that I have slept with you without obligation, without meditation, superficially. The idea—brilliant, I think—come to me to make of your body a musical score, to become a musician of voluptuousness.” Everything he writes on voluptuousness is to be admired: “Voluptuousness, Colette, is not an exact act, it is rather a state where the most indifferent act becomes delicious.” Colette, in despair after having disappointed him, climbs one night onto a mossy pedestal in the garden, and the moment he passes by she lets fall the cloth draping her and appears naked: “She is a statue, but a vibrant, trembling statue.” He gazes at her, fascinated, and when a ray of moonlight illuminates her sex, he thrusts himself upon her and they make love on the stone. This is the “work of autumn” that lovers can only accomplish in their maturity.

After Péladan’s death, his widow Christiana published first of all *Le Livre secret*, in 1920; then in 1921 his novel *Les Dévoles d’Avignon* [*The Winners of Avignon*]. In that book, the writer Ramman, in love with young Emmezinde de Romanil, believes himself to have been bewitched by her and proceeds to effect a counter-spell, which works, and she loves him back. Through vows of chastity, Ramman behaves like Emmezinde’s dog and lies down in front of

her feet. They start kissing and embracing each other under the supervision of Adélaïde de Pierrefeu, Ramman's landlady. The synthesis of mysticism and sexuality is pushed to its extreme. In the documents of the Péladan Fund at the Bibliothèque de l' Arsenal in Paris, one can see that *Les Dévoles d'Avignon* should have a sequel. This was the first volume of a trilogy, of which *En paradis* [In Paradise] was on marriage, and the third, *Le Grand oeuvre sexuel* [The Great Sexual Work], was on procreation. If he had lived longer, Péladan would have continued to glorify sacred eroticism.

### Biography

Joséphin Péladan was born on March 2 in Lyon, into a family that intended him for the apostolate (his father, Adrien Péladan, was a Catholic fundamentalist whose works on the prophecies of the saints earned him the appointment of Knight of Saint Sylvester by Pope Leon XIII). During his studies in Nîmes from 1871, Péladan was expelled from three schools due to his lack of discipline, was unable to obtain his baccalaureate, and had to rely on the support of his older brother, Dr. Adrien Péladan Jr., initiator of homeopathy in France.

In 1881, Péladan came to Paris, found a job at the Crédit Français, and married the rich young countess Constance-Joséphine de Barde; in 1899 she accused him of having ruined her with his extravagance, and a divorce was granted in 1900, when Péladan began a second marriage with Christiana Taylor. He traveled in Italy, Romania, and Egypt and wrote tragedies such as *Sémiramis* and *Oedipe et le sphinx*. Péladan died of food poisoning in Neuilly, on June 27, 1918.

SARANE ALEXANDRIAN

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## PERCEAU, LOUIS

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1883–1942

French poet

Louis Perceau was a multifaceted political journalist, well-known newspaperman, songwriter, storyteller, and bibliophile. As a young journalist, he published *Contes de la Pigouille* [*Stories of La Pigouille*], which were ghost and werewolf tales told by a peasant in patois, pertaining to the folklore of Perceau's native Poitou. But Perceau is best remembered by posterity for having become the greatest connoisseur of erotic literature, both ancient and modern, of his day. With Guillaume Apollinaire and Fernand Fleuret, he edited the catalogue of the "Enfer" [Hell, inferno]—the section for forbidden books—of the Bibliothèque Nationale. The catalogue first appeared in 1911 in the *Mercure de France*; and in 1919, after Apollinaire's death, Perceau published a revised edition.

Afterward Perceau collaborated with Fleuret on erudite works of eroticism, which they signed "Chevalier de Perceflour" (a contraction of Perceau and Fleuret) or "Dr. Lodovigo Hernandez" (i.e., Louis Fernand in Spanish). This was a strange association of two authors so unlike each other. Perceau was a leftist, engaged in social action. Fleuret was a right-wing conservative who always wore a handgun, which he fired on the pigeons of Paris (under the pretext of feeding them) and who would end up in the Sainte-Anne psychiatric hospital. However, it was Fleuret, spending whole days sorting through the manuscript cabinet of the Bibliothèque Nationale, who found the most rare and curious artifacts the two published. Thus, in the "Livre du Boudoir" collection (founded by Perceau) (1920) can be found *Les mémoires de l'abbé de Choisy, habillé en femme* [*The Memoirs of the Abbott de Choisy, Dressed as a Woman*], and *Cheveu* [*Hair*] by Simon Coiffier de Moret, with comments by the Knight Perceflour, whom they presented as an embassy attaché in Constantinople who committed suicide in 1855 in the Sultan's harem. According to them, the notes of

those editions were those that the knight, a member of the Ladies' Academy, used to write "in the margins of his favorite books."

Perceau and Fleuret used their real names to publish their critical editions of Ronsard's erotic poems (*Le livret des folastries* [*The Coltishness Booklet*], 1920; *La bouquiniade et autres gaillardises* [*Bookshopping and Other Cheerfulness*], 1921). But it was Dr. Ludovigo Hernandez who published *Le procès inquisitorial de Gilles de Rais, maréchal de France, avec un essai de réhabilitation* [*The Inquisitorial Trial of Gilles de Rais, Marshal of France, with a Rehabilitation Attempt*] (1921); *Le procès de sodomie au XVIe, XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles, publiés d'après des documents judiciaires conservés à la Bibliothèque Nationale* [*Sodomy Trials in the Sixteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth Centuries, Published According to Judicial Documents Preserved at the National Library*] (1923); and *Les procès de bestialité au XVIe et au XVIIe siècles, documents judiciaires inédits* [*Bestiality Trials in Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries: Unseen Judicial Documents*] (1929). For the historian of social mores, these are seminal publications.

Perceau flourished following his separation from Fleuret. In 1930 he published two large volumes of his *Bibliographie du roman érotique du XIXe siècle* [*Bibliography of the Nineteenth-Century Erotic Novel*], an unparalleled critical resource which, according to its subtitle, gives "a complete description of all novels, short stories, and other works in prose, published secretly in French, from 1800 to date, and of all their reprintings." He procured most of these books from secondhand booksellers, as these books were in no public library: "Twenty years of research has enabled me to establish a collection that is perhaps unique. . . . My desire is to see it one day reunited with that of the Enfer of the Bibliothèque Nationale." Rectifying the errors of his predecessors, Perceau could flatter himself for having done "the first serious bibliographic essay on erotic works."

Also making an inventory of the erotic writings of the pre-1800 past, Perceau published *Le Cabinet du Parnasse* [*The Cabinet of Parnassus*] (1935), “a collection of free, rare, or obscure poems, serving as a supplement to the so-called complete writings of French poets.”

Through a clandestine printer, Maurice Duflou, Perceau published erudite editions of the erotic classics, which were at that time forbidden in bookstores. He signed his introductions and his notes “Helpey, bibliophile from Poitou” (a signature based on the transcription of his initials, L.P.). Among the twenty or so books presented by Helpey, there was *Anti-Justine ou les délices de l’amour* [*Anti-Justine, or the Delights of Love*] by Restif de la Bretonne, in a “new edition founded for the first time on the original text of 1798,” and *Histoire de Dom Bougre, portier des Chartreux* [*History of Dom Bougre, Doorkeeper of Chartreux*], also in a “new edition revised from the original text and containing all of the fragments removed in all modern editions.” It is impossible to make an accurate study of erotic literature without referring to Louis Perceau. It is he who published 65 erotic letters by Théophile Gautier, in *Lettres à la Présidente et Galantries poétiques* [*Letters to the President and Poetic Gallantries*] (editions of the Secret Museum, 1927), a book “the annotation of which required several months of thorough research” and which bibliophiles look upon as “the most beautiful volume published secretly in a century.”

Besides his works of erudition, Perceau wrote erotic poems under the pseudonym “Alexandre de Vérineau.” These collections included *Douze sonnets lascifs* [*Twelve Lascivious Sonnets*] (1925), on the libertine watercolors of Gerda Wegener; *Au bord du lit* [*By the Bedside*] (1927), illustrated leaves by Luc Lafnet; and *Le pis-seuses* [*The Females*] (1934), which Perceau would recite once a week at “Lapin Agile” in Montmartre. Being interested in erotic humor, Perceau composed *Le keepsake galant* [*The Gallant Keepsake*] (1924) in the style of the romantic almanacs, with erotic advice for each month. *La redoute des contrepèteries* [*The Treasury of Puns*] (1934) was a book of obscene puns. Finally, in order to celebrate the Gallic spirit,

this time under the guise of “an old journalist,” he collected salacious intimate anecdotes in *Histoires raides pour l’instruction des jeunes filles* [*Stiff Tales for the Instruction of Young Girls*] (1938).

During the Nazi occupation of Vichy France, officers of the Wehrmacht came calling on Perceau’s widow to confiscate the books of his erotic library, the existence of which they had learned of. However, the collection had been locked away in cases and hidden outside of his apartment. Hence, it remained intact for some time after the war, when it was finally dispersed.

### Biography

Son of a tailor and a dressmaker of Coulon, in the Poitou, Louis Perceau was born September 22, 1883. His parents wanted him to be a school-teacher, but at the age of sixteen, he joined the Socialist Federation of Deux-Sèvres and began devoting himself to poetry. In 1901 he went to Paris, where he joined a group of so-called revolutionary poets and songwriters, and the staff of Jean Jauré’s newspaper *L’Humanité*. Perceau died in Paris under the German occupation.

SARANE ALEXANDRIAN

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## PERI ROSSI, CRISTINA

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1941–  
Uruguayan poet, novelist, journalist, and essayist

Cristina Peri Rossi's collection of stories *Indicios Pánicos* [*Panic Signs*] (1970) foreshadowed the repressive state that was to govern her country and force her into exile. The government in Uruguay was threatened by a rise in socialist sentiment while its economy continued to decline in the early 1970s. Consequently, the government moved progressively toward a repressive military state, which officially took power in 1973. Peri Rossi was acutely aware of the connections between bourgeois values and authoritarianism in her country. Her narration of these connections did not help her country to avoid full-scale dictatorship; it only caused her to flee into exile. Peri Rossi's early work was openly political, and her notoriety as a political writer would have been enough to lead to her exile. Nevertheless, it was only after personal loss that Peri Rossi decided to flee her country. In March of 1972 Peri Rossi gave refuge to a young student, Ana Luisa Valdés, who was being pursued by the secret police. On the one day that Ana decided to venture out of the house she was picked up and never heard from again. It was then that Peri Rossi began to realize the extent of her dangerous situation and she made plans to leave Uruguay, arriving by boat in Barcelona in October 1972. In 1974, the military government in Uruguay withdrew her citizenship. She left for Paris and later returned as a Spanish citizen to Barcelona, where she continues to reside.

Peri Rossi has published eight collections of short stories, six novels, and a collection of essays, and her work has received numerous awards and prizes. Passion, desire, and the erotic flow throughout her works. From the beginning of her career to her most recent published works, the erotic has been a central element of her writing. While it is possible to mark shifts in her literature, certain common themes run throughout her literary presentation of sexual

desire and passion: Peri Rossi is especially interested in producing literature that breaks down traditional gender categories, and her writing challenges the hegemony of patriarchal, heterosexual society. Another common theme is the association of the woman's body with language and of writing with sex.

One of the fundamental strategies that Peri Rossi uses to destabilize gender identities is multiple-gendered narrative voices. She often writes her poetry and short stories from ambiguous gender positions that allow the reader to imagine either a male or a female speaker. Since her poetry clearly has the female body as an object of desire, this ambiguous gender identity allows the reader to receive the poem as an example of either heterosexual or lesbian love. Peri Rossi rarely marks the narrative or poetic voice as female, and it is interesting that she often adopts a male voice. Some critics find this practice to be disturbing, since it may suggest her avoidance of openly lesbian literary representation. Others, of an opposing opinion, caution that the reader is always aware that the author is a woman. According to this position, the practice of adopting a male voice is transgressive, because it destabilizes preestablished notions of gender identity.

One way that Peri Rossi's works challenge traditional gender relations is through the depiction of impotent and/or antipatriarchal male characters. In her novel *La nave de los locos* [*The Ship of Fools*], the protagonist, Ecks (X) is an exile as well as a symbol of all marginalized segments of society. The novel critiques authoritarianism, patriarchal society, Christian ideology, and heterosexism. Each of these is intertwined within the narrative, suggesting that to address only one of these axes of oppression is insufficient. Ultimately, the novel suggests that the end of male domination and of phallogocentric control of the symbolic order is the necessary beginning of social change. The protagonist is not only socially marginalized; he is impotent. Ecks dreams that the way in which

patriarchy can be destroyed is through men's renunciation of virility as an act of love. If all men gave the women they loved their virility, then patriarchy would be destroyed. Hopeful and pessimistic, celebratory and critical, this novel is full of contradictions and fragments, all of which revolve around the central dilemma of how modernity is predicated upon centralizing systems of power, especially patriarchy and Christianity. The novel demonstrates how Peri Rossi uses literature to destroy phallogentrism and the hegemony of traditional heterosexuality. In a similar vein, *Solitario de amor* [*A Loner in Love*] has an unnamed protagonist, who, while capable of sexual intercourse with the woman he loves, is effectively impotent. He tells the reader that he is a man without a "key" (109). Like Ecks, he is nameless and marginalized. His only identity is his obsession with a woman who has rejected him.

Just as Peri Rossi eschews a stable subject position and critiques patriarchy, she also refuses fixed categories of desire. Desire and identity are fluid and interconnected. Peri Rossi draws attention to the fact that fixing identity and containing desire are ways of controlling and repressing society. Her multiple narrative and poetic voices are combined with myriad forms of sexual desire. Peri Rossi also describes passion and desire as feelings that resist narrow definitions. For instance, her collection of short stories *Una pasión prohibida* [*A Forbidden Passion*] includes many different descriptions of human desire. The theme throughout the collection is that identity and desire are inseparable and that social forces have always tried to limit and control them. Many of the stories focus on the ways that desires have been brutally restricted, causing great suffering. Alternatively, other stories focus on the ways that desire coupled with power often results in the marginalization and oppression of others. Peri Rossi emphasizes that desire almost always relates to issues of power: The one who desires is either powerful or powerless over the object of obsession. While her writing tries to free those whose desires have been repressed, she also challenges the use of power to forcefully control desire. For instance, she often describes lesbian love as a social transgression and even refers to the love between women as wonderfully incestual, in an effort to disrupt social norms and taboos. *Lingüística general* [*General Linguistics*] ends with two

clearly lesbian poems that are celebratory and playful. Both highlight the way that same-sex love simultaneously rejoices in sameness and difference. In contrast with her celebration of lesbian desire, Peri Rossi associates military dictatorships and authoritarianism with rape and the violation of humanity's freedom to desire. Three of her collections of poetry written during exile, *Descripción de un naufragio* [*Description of a Shipwreck*], *Díspora*, and *Europa después de la lluvia* [*Europe After the Rain*], narrate desire as loss and represent fear as the inability to connect and love. In these collections Eros implies power which can lead to corruption, objectification, and alienation. Yet in other texts, Eros is also about adoration, celebration, pleasure, and harmony. Peri Rossi describes an eroticism unbound and examines the dark as well as the beautiful aspects of desire.

Peri Rossi's only published essays, in the collection *Fantasías eróticas* [*Erotic Fantasies*], focus on the history and variety of erotic fantasies. She traces a broad array, including bestiality, inflatable sex dolls, rape, prostitution, hermaphrodites, and gender bending. One of her principle interests is in tracing the equation of sexual fantasies with violence. For instance, she describes how members of the military conducting torture during authoritarian regimes reported that they had incredibly intense orgasms. In contrast, she describes lesbian desire as idealistically rejecting the connections between sex and violence (107). The collection is driven by the notion that the saddest confession is to admit the absence of fantasies. Once again, Peri Rossi equates identity and existence with desire, passion, and fantasy.

The images of women that reappear in her poetry and prose are often similar to traditional icons of women. She associates the female body with a utopian refuge (focusing on the womb), and women are connected to nature, especially water. Contrasted to these traditional images in which woman's body occupies the center of desire and is celebrated as a source of passion and pleasure, Peri Rossi also depicts the female body as violated and vulnerable. These images are especially recurrent in *La nave de los locos*. The novel describes the defibulation (splitting of vulval skin in female circumcision) of women and the experiments performed on Jewish women during the Holocaust. The main character (Ecks) watches a movie in which a woman is



raped by a machine; he befriends an aging prostitute; and he falls in love with a woman who has a clandestine, painful abortion. In addition to these images, Peri Rossi's writing depicts women who are resistant and who refuse to submit to the system and to be victims of the desires of others. In *Solitario de amor*, for example, the protagonist is in desperate love with a woman named Aída. She is alternatively described as a welcoming, nurturing figure and as a strong and self-sufficient woman who steadfastly rejects the protagonist.

Focusing on language and desire, Peri Rossi equates writing with sex and language with women. In this way she links the aesthetic with language. These themes are particularly noteworthy in her poetry. Her first collection of poetry, *Evohé*, caused a scandal when it was published in Uruguay in 1971. Beginning with a quote from Sappho, the collection is a passionate, sensual series of poems about the female body, at times equating the female body with a temple and love with prayer. Peri Rossi draws on the tie between the collection's title, which comes from Euripedes' play, *Bacchae*, in her exploration of passion unbound. The Bacchae were the female followers of Bacchus (Dionysus), and "Evohé!" was the cry uttered at the end of their celebration of freedom from civilization. Consistent with her critique of Christianity and of confining systems of social organization, this text demonstrates the way in which lesbian love challenges the prevailing system of belief. Woman and word are equal symbols, and the poet/lover interacts with woman through words and the sensuality of language. In *Babel bárbara* [*Barbarous Babel*] Peri Rossi continues to work with sensual, lesbian-oriented poetry. In this collection, the concept of "woman" is likened to the Tower of Babel, where the multiplicity of meaning in language and in the female body are equated. The result is a highly ambiguous fusion and confusion of sex and language. In *Otra vez eros* [*Eros Again*] Peri Rossi continues to explore sensuality, language, pleasure, and the female body. The title, again, refers to Sappho's poetry, in which she describes the untying of desire. The collection continues to exalt lesbian love, passion for the female body, and the ties between sensuality and language, but Peri Rossi also includes relatively newer themes, like the effects of

science, technology, and AIDS on contemporary passions.

### Biography

Born in Montevideo, Uruguay, November 12. Peri Rossi's mother's side of the family were Italian immigrants, and her father's side is Basque and Canarian. In 1947, at the age of six she began her studies at José Enrique Rodó, a public school named after a famous Uruguayan essayist. At university she studied music and biology, receiving her degree in comparative literature at the Instituto de Profesores Artigas in 1964. During this same time she began teaching at university and writing for the leftist magazine *Marcha*. Peri Rossi has taught at a number of universities, including the Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst in Berlin in 1980, and the University of Barcelona and the University of San Sebastián in Spain. She has participated in conferences in the United States, Canada, and Europe.

SOPHIA A. MCCLENNEN

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## PERSIAN

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### Definitions of Erotica

Erotic literature in classical and modern Persian is not an independent genre. There is no stable term for this type of writing in the language. In his survey of erotic writing, Khaleghi (1996) uses both the neologism *tan-kame-sarai* ["body-gratification composition] and the borrowing *erutik*. In an essay about the romantic epic *Vis-o Ramin* by Fakhr al-Din As'ad Gorgani (11th century), the literary critic M.A. Eslami Nodushan (109) speaks of a *nafkhe-ye kh v alesh*, or "puff of desire" that "rises from its pages." He explains that it is this air of indecency which has given the work its unwholesome reputation. M. San'ati (1: 71) uses the more clinical *havas-kamane* [pleasure-fulfilling] in his

analysis of the modern writer Sadeq Hedayat (d. 1951). Regardless of what terms they use, scholars of Persian generally distinguish erotic writing from what is generally called *Aifiye va shaifiye* works. The latter owes its name to a pornographic work (now lost) whose roots lie in Sanskrit sex manuals (Qazvini in JTe\_mi 'AruQi: 178). *Aifiye va shaifiye* works use eroticism to arouse lust, or *shahvat*, which directly violates Islamic legal and moral standards. By contrast, many feel that truly erotic poetry and prose have aesthetic goals that are less morally problematic. This article is a survey of the erotic in Persian in its broadest sense; it includes the high and low ends of the moral spectrum and everything in between.

### Persian Anti-Eroticism

To appreciate how poets and other writers approach sexual themes in Persian, one needs to understand why they do so with trepidation. In many cases, the strong sociocultural bias against eroticism influences the ways in which it emerges in Persian literature. Besides the obvious religious prohibitions against explicitly sexual expression, there is a general tendency to negate the physical and dwell on the soul. This tendency is especially strong in works of Sufism or Persian mysticism. According to the Persian commentary to the sayings of the 11th-century mystic Baba Taher ‘Oryan, “true ecstasy is the obliteration of bodily preoccupations and attainment of spiritual qualities” (Maq\_ ud: 775).

Perhaps the most influential theologian of his time, Imam Abu Hamid Ghazali (1058–1111) preached moderation when it came to sexual pleasure in his Persian treatise *The Elixir of Happiness* (2: 55). According to Ghazali, lust has one purpose: the continuation of the species. Accordingly, the Ghazalian threshold for excess in matters of the flesh is very low by Western standards. In his view, any place where men and women can see one another is fertile ground for the “seed of corruption” (2: 61). This horror of *na:plr* or *ne?iir6* [wanton glance, gaze] explains not only the protective artifice of Persian eroticism but also certain features of dress and architecture in places where the language is a medium of literary expression (Iran, Mghanistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan, India). To guard against the stray stare in public places, women spectators wore, and in some places continue to wear, fine masks (Arabic: *neqab*; Persian: *piche*) and veils (I; Jejiib) and to sit behind windows with prophylactic screens made of carved wood or alabaster.

Ghazali’s theology also extols procreation and frowns upon physical attractiveness for the lust it may cause. In support of his argument, he appeals to popular wisdom, which says that it is better to marry an ugly but fertile woman than a barren beauty (1: 303). Besides encouraging procreation, the pleasures of intercourse have an otherworldly purpose: they offer a foretaste of heaven’s rewards (1: 304). In both cases, sensuality and sexual pleasure are never ends in themselves; they must lead to a greater good. There is no place, then, for eroticism as such in Ghazali’s theology.

### Classical Erotic Literature

The moralistic tendency to interpret the erotic as mystical was very strong in the classical period of Persian literature (late 9th to 19th centuries) and still influences contemporary criticism and exegesis. “Wine” cannot be wine, but the ecstasy of beholding or joining the divine; “eyebrows” don’t merely rim the eyes but indicate divine attributes (Rypka: 86). While these interpretations are often valid, sometimes they are intended to subvert the erotic, to sublimate its earthiness and direct it toward loftier (aesthetic, moral) goals.

One of the most common places to find the erotic in classical Persian literature is the introductory part of the *qa{ide* [ode], known as the *tashbib* [youthfulness; analogous to the idyll], in which poets often demonstrated their mastery of erotic description. These celebrations of spring and love use the same images again and again to describe the lover’s beauty: e.g., his/her (Persian pronouns have no gender) lips are ruby or sugar; his/her stature is a cypress tree; his/her face is the brightest, fullest moon set off by the darkest mole; her (most likely) breasts are pomegranates or lemons. The formalism does not please Western critics, who expect originality (Rypka: 85); however, to aficionados the art of the *tashbib* lies in its “conventional” inventiveness.

Rather than singing the praises of particular lovers, court poets competed for patronage by idealizing beauty itself with images that ranged from the conventional to the bizarre. To illustrate this, one need only take a short inventory of hair conceits. Abu al-Hasan of Lavkar (11th century) begins an ode by contrasting the blackness of the lover’s curled tresses and the whiteness of his/her body and face: “On jasmine s/he has ring mail of ambergris / On the moon s/ he has curls of hyacinth” (Foruzanfar: 35). In a flight of alphabetic imagination, Ma’rufi of Balkh (mid-10th century) uses two Persian letters, *Jim* and ‘*ayn*, to evoke the look of his lover’s hair (Lazard: 134): “Twist on black twist, tresses like ‘*ayn* upon ‘*ayn* / Curl on black curl, locks like *Jim* within *Jim*.”

The nested letters reproduce the endless folds of hair with their tails, while the cascading letters provide dots that punctuate the cheeks with the requisite moles. Addressing his lover, ‘On\_ori (d. 1039/40) complains: “Your hair lies as flame on your head, yet I am the one roasted”

(Foruzanfar:121). Finally, Manuchehri (d. ca. 1040) compares the beloved's coiled tresses to "silkworms" (138).

As it developed, the *tashbib* became a vehicle for poets' erotic yearnings. Typically they demand the requisites of passion: *bus* [kissing] and *kenar* [caressing/hugging], and, just as typically, the lover coyly resists. The opening of one of Farrokhi of Sistan's (d. 1037/38) odes expresses the conventional impatience with this reticence. The conceit is Marvell-like ("Had we but world enough, and time / this coyness, lady, were no crime": "Enough excuses, blame no more! / This be not love, my dear, but war" (Farrokhi: 191).

Erotic monologue occasionally blossoms into a full narrative that describes the poet/lover relationship. Sana'i of Ghazni (d. 1130/31) writes of the visit of his lover, a drunken boy (256–8). But, though one might expect a specific debauchery, standard erotic imagery prevails. Black down deposits "camphor" on the boy's face, and his tresses are "disturbed" by "thrice-distilled spirits." The boy is about to bypass the door of the poet, who cries out in despair and love: "Have you no fear of God, forsaking me in this state?" The boy acquiesces, but when the poet caresses his waist [*kenar*], the strong wine foils his plans. In consolation, the poet, like a "parrot," spends the night feeding on the "sugar" produced by "kissing" [*bus*] the unconscious boy's lips.

In the romance about Queen Vis and her lover and brother-in-law Ramin, erotic narrative breaks free from standard *tashbib* imagery. When Vis, who has been imprisoned in a walled garden by her much older husband, learns that Ramin has secretly entered the palace grounds, she cannot contain her passion. Vis's mad dash to her lover is a methodical striptease that, as eroticism for its own sake, offends the Ghazalian standard of modesty and decorum: first, she removes her slippers to scale the large tent that blocks the palace portico; second, the leap from porch to canvas unveils her face; third, her earrings break; fourth, her *chador* catches on something and falls away as she jumps from the wall; fifth, her skirt rips to shreds in the fall; and last, the rope belt that holds up her undergarments breaks, revealing her thighs (Gorgani: 278–9).

When the two lovers finally meet, the narrative becomes less inventive and more predictable,

reverting to *tashbib* and other types of received imagery. Exhausted by the ordeal of reaching her lover, Vis falls asleep in the garden. She appears to Ramin as a "newly blossomed flower," with "violet-dark tresses" and "narcissus face." Like the narrator of Sana'i's night of thwarted passion, Ramin takes his dozing lover by the waist and feasts on her sugary lips. The erotic becomes alphabetical when the lovers kiss: "the lips of the two like [the letter] *mim* <r) on *mim*."

### Homoeroticism

Homoerotic Persian literature generally features two actors: the poet and a beardless youth, or *amrad*, whose love, like that of the courtesan, is often for sale. The *amrad* is a "mercilessly pretty boy" (Sprachman), on the cusp of puberty with cheeks dusted with fine hair—metaphorically like down, elegant calligraphy, camphor, etc. His cupola-like buttocks are "rounded mounds of silver" (Farrokhi: 4), and with the exception of breasts, he is endowed with all the attributes of feminine beauty. The *amrad* can also be a Ganymede-like figure [*saqi*]: "A cuddly cupbearer, so sleek and coy / No houri ever mothered such a boy." In this line, Anvari (101) refers to the Qur'anic heaven inhabited by *fIIU*, "female companions with eyes whose whites and pupils are sharply contrasted" (Qur'an 52: 20), and *ghelmiin*, "handsome boys as precious as pearls" (Qur'an 52: 24).

Homoerotic literature in Persian is often about the *amrad*'s hairy passage from adolescence to adulthood. A few of the stories in the *Go/estan* (chapter 5) of Sa'di (b. ca. 1213–19) and the mock-treatise *Rishnam e [Book of the Beard]* (*rish* = "beard" in Persian) of 'Obeyd-e Zakani (ca. 1300–72) are about that tragic turning point. Zakani's work begins at night, which is eroticized: "when the ashen sighs of lovers befogged the mirror of the sun and the smoldering love in each longing breast inflamed the face of day: They combed the night's long locks so dark. They overwrote the day with sin's black mark" (*Suppressed Persian*: 63). The narrator pines for his boy-love in traditional *tashbib* imagery, complaining that he is "[m]ore twisted than [his love's] coiled hair / More wasted than [his] eyes' hypnotic stare." Coyness is the common topos in the beginning: "Although the age belongs to your sweet face / Beware: past marvels fade without a trace"; "He with no beard

has something we could desire / But bearded boys can do nothing but retire.” However, the reader soon discovers that this introduction is no ordinary *tashbib*. Instead of the lover, a fabulous creature called Beard—ironically, “father of beauties”—appears. There follows a highly inventive and allusive debate in which the narrator, who is implacably anti-*rish*, trades barbs with and ultimately defeats the intruder. The essay ends by cautioning: “[May] the day never come when your face is seared / With the kind of misery they call the beard.”

Zakani not only turns the serious essay (*resale*) into homoerotic pastiche, he also deflates the Persian national epic *Shaname* with sexual wordplay. In his mock moral treatise, *Akhlaq Ashraf* [*The Ethics of the Aristocracy*], the most accomplished warriors of Persian literature, Rostam (also known as Tahmtan) and Human, trade favors:

As soon as Tahmtan had undid his belt,  
Like smoke Human whipped out his great upright.  
He battered Rostam harder and harder.  
Human then turned and bared a mighty rear.  
He lanced Human with such a rocklike staff: Behold!  
Two champions, their arses worn.

Before Human the noble hero knelt;  
The very way that Godarz ruled he might.  
Till Rostam’s rectum smoldered with ardor.  
A lion, fierce, Tahmtan displayed no fear;  
That Human’s behind was nearly torn in half  
Became the greatest heroes ever born.

(*Suppressed Persian*: 58)

Zakani’s technique of taking serious poetry out of context and providing it with an ironic meaning is common to many forms of classical erotic literature. Just as hair, lips, letters of the alphabet, etc., can be imbued with erotic meanings, so can entire lines of poetry that had been free of such associations when first recited. *Rostam al-tavarikh* [The Rostam of Histories] uses the technique to spice a passage about the rampant immorality of early-eighteenth-century Shiraz. The passage (A\_\_ef: 344) describes how Khosrow Khan, the governor of Kurdistan, after a night with a boy of surpassing beauty and knowledge of poetry, reached for his “lithe charmer” in the morning, and the boy awoke and recited this line by Ijafé: “At dawn when Khosrow of the East [i.e., the sun] planted his banner on the hills / My love knocked on the

door of the hopeful with the hand of favor.” The boy changes the poem’s original intent (i.e., to be a panegyric, Ijafé: 1: 314): the great king’s standard becomes phallic, the landscape erogenous, and the motion of the royal hand foreplay.

### Autoeroticism

For the many writers who could not afford to keep costly courtesans and beardless boys, there was a solitary alternative. One of the first masturbatory odes in Persian was known as *jalqname*, or “book of maturbation.” This was a poem by Jamal al-Din Kashi (c. 1265–82), whose purpose was essentially literary (al-Jajarmi:2:919–23). He used autoeroticism to deflate the pretensions of the classical Persian poetic form, known as *tarji’ band*, which consists of several stanzas, each of which ends with a couplet. In the hands of ‘Obeyd-e Zakani, the form becomes socially satirical, a genre in its own right that one might term “onanistic.” In his *jalqname*, Zakani adopts the persona of a *rend*, or free spirit, a renegade, which gives him license to say the most outrageous things. For example, he seems to advocate masturbation, which Islam strongly condemns; however, he is actually skewering religious hypocrisy. His targets are mystics (Sufis) and preachers (*khatibs*) who claim that the road to union with God begins with the denial of physical pleasure, vanity, pride, greed, etc., but who at the same time pleasure themselves because they lack the funds to buy love. The Persian language itself abets Zakani’s exposure of sanctimonious mystics: *jalq*, or “jerking off,” happens to rhyme with *dalq*, the thick woolen cloak worn by novice Sufis. These two words are rhymed in the refrain. Surrounded by the obscenities of Zakani’s harsh social criticism, traditional *tashbib* imagery seems wildly out of place. Here is the third stroph:

We are vulgar toughs from Kalmuk land,  
Bohemian buzzards, a thieving band.  
With beloveds we plot all night and day,  
With lovers months and years we while away.  
For sugar-mouthed darlings we’d gladly die;  
We’d give our souls for boys with jasmine thigh.  
We are the bane of tedious preachers;  
Against two-faced Shaykhlings and false teachers.  
We’ve given cunt and ass a goodbye kiss,  
Although the both of them we’ll sorely miss.  
So listen, brother, if you’ve half a brain,

You'll heed this onanist's timeless refrain:  
 Let's masturbate, for jerking off's a ball;  
 It's fun to whack it 'neath a woolen shawl!  
 (*Suppressed Persian*: 51)

The fourth strophe is typical of Zakani's three-fold approach: attacks on the cloaked novices' drunkenness and solitary vice, the undermining traditional erotic language, and recapitulation with the *jalq/d£11q-rhyming* couplet:

All night, all day, around the town we go,  
 Searching for distilleries, high and low.  
 We're drunken fools, alive and courageous,  
 Smitten by moon-faced beaus and outrageous!  
 Their lasso locks have bound our minds and hearts;  
 Their eyebrows have pierced our body parts.  
 We are immune to time's unkindly ways,  
 Exempt from malevolent and wicked days.  
 No cunt? No ass? No worries or alarms;  
 For we're bohemians with mighty arms.  
 So have a seat and pull out that big thing,  
 And masturbating, we'll happily sing,  
 Let's masturbate, for jerking off's a ball;  
 It's fun to whack it 'neath a woolen shawl!  
 (*Suppressed Persian*: 51–2)

Zakani is a perverse follower of Ghazalian principles. He avoids eroticism for its own sake, using it instead to scourge the hypocrisy of corrupt clerics and self-indulgent seminarians.

### Modern Eroticism

One of the most striking differences between modern Persian eroticism (starting in the late 19th century) and the classical is the emergence of women's writing on the topic. Scholars mention one bona fide woman eroticist of the classical period: Mahsati of Ganja (12th century). Though very little is known about the poet (Meier), anthologists and literary biographers attribute to her a cycle of bawdy quatrains (rhyme scheme: a, a, b, a) in which she expresses her needs to her "husband" in the crudest terms:

I'm Mahsati, the fairest of the flock,  
 O preacher's boy, you good-for-nothing bum,  
 For beauty famed from Mashhad to Iraq;  
 We're through if I've no bread or meat or cock!  
 (*Suppressed Persian*: 3)

Very few other women dared to express their sexual desire so bluntly in Persian until the early 1950s, when Forugh Farrokhzad (1935–1967) wrote "Gonih" [Sinning]:

In arms burning and hot I sinned a sin that utterly  
 pleased me  
 I sinned in his arms, and burning iron-strong and  
 avenging was he

In that dark and silent meeting  
 the eyes I saw were full of mysteries  
 My heart in my breast shook, anxious to answer his  
 hungry eyes' pleas

In that dark and silent meeting  
 I rested in his arms, undone  
 From his lips desire poured into mine and my wild  
 heart's gloom was gone

I chanted the story of love in his ear:  
 I want you, O life of this life of mine  
 I want you, O life-giving embrace  
 You—O mad lover of mine!

Passion struck a flame in his eyes  
 In the cup the wine danced red  
 Against his breast my own body shivered drunk in the  
 yielding bed

I sinned a sin that pleased me utterly in arms that  
 trembled with ecstasy  
 In that dark and silent meeting  
 O God, whatever happened to me?  
 (Farrokhzad: 127–8)

The difference between the language of lust in this poem and stock *tashbib* imagery of classical eroticism is marked. Instead of the conventional "kissing and embracing" and "sugary lips," the poet speaks of palpably "burning and hot arms" [*agbushi garm-o atashin*]. Farrokhzad also pictures a specific act of passion with a series of prepositions: pouring the story of love *down into* her lover's ears *on* a bed, *within* its yielding softness. The shock of this specificity has not worn off; and the debate about the literary merit of the poem continues (Katouzian). For her open affront to propriety, many critics have classed Farrokhzad with the *A/fiye va shaljiye* authors of old (Langaroodi: 2: 193).

But Farrokhzad was much more imaginative than such a dismissive judgment suggests. She fashioned a vocabulary from nature that was well suited to the expression of her own particular yearnings. In "Union," the narrator's lover is a murky figure, sometimes liquid, sometimes fire:

I saw him breaking over me in waves like the red  
 glow of fire  
 like a watery reflection  
 like a cloud tremulant with rains  
 like a sky breathing summery warmth . . .

## PERSIAN

The hour flew  
The curtain blew off on the wind  
I had pressed him  
in the aura of the flames  
I wanted to speak  
but strang\_  
the shadowing weight of his eyelashes  
streamed from the depths of darkness  
during that long reach of desire  
and the shuddering, that death-tainted shuddering  
down to my roots.

(Farrokhzad: 34–5)

Simin Behbehani (b. 1927), Farrokhzad's contemporary, occasionally uses a classical form, the *ghazal* (ode), to explore erotic themes. About the same time as Farrokhzad's "Sinning" (1956), she wrote "Naghme-ye ruspi" [The Prostitute's Song], which is typical of the modern tendency to write erotically from the point of view of the object of affection. The poem approximates the thoughts of Banu Mahvash, a famous entertainer and prostitute (Behbehani: 128):

Pass me the rouge,  
so I can add some color to my colorlessness.  
Pass me the ointment,  
so I may revive my face withered from sorrow.

Pass me the perfume,  
to give my flowing hair the scent of musk.  
Pass me that tight-fitting dress,  
so people may hold me tighter in their embrace.

Pass me that see-through shawl,  
to make my nakedness twice as enticing in its folds,  
to add to the allure of my breasts and legs. . . .

How tiresome he was, how repulsive, my companion  
last night.

But when he asked me, I told him,  
I had never seen a man as handsome.

In the short story *Safar-e 'E-mat* [*E\_mat's Journey*, or *The Passing of Innocence*] by Ebrahim Golestan (b. 1922), an ironically named prostitute visits one of Shiite Islam's holiest shrines in an attempt to regain her purity. As she prays near the sepulchre of the Imam:

memories of the nights at the house were swept away, the smell of sweat vanished, and the terrible bloodstain at the end of her anguish. The drunkenness and the nausea were dispelled. The man whose breath failed him, the man with a heavy body, the man smelling of manure, the man whose manliness under his round, balloon-tight stomach dangled like the last autumn leaf from the hollow trunk of a tree, panting in useless desire, unable to reach her. (Golestan: 149)

Another significant trend in modern Persian is the increasing divergence of domestic and expatriate erotica in the language. After the Iranian revolution of 1979, the number of expatriate users of the language increased markedly. Some writers living abroad in relatively uncensored exile have produced a wide variety of works that can be called erotic. There is even a journal called *Shahrazad* that regularly publishes original Persian works and translations that address such taboo topics as clitoridectomy, homosexuality, and pre- and extramarital love. Because the prevailing sociocultural climates of places where Persian is an official language are to one extent or another "anti-erotic," expatriate writing on sexual matters has proliferated in reaction.

Bijan Gheiby, who is also a scholar of classical literature, has produced something quite novel in Persian: erotica for its own sake, without any socially redeeming value. His description of an exotic dancer follows the modern inclination toward specificity, not one eyebrow is bowed, and instead of being pomegranate or citrus, breasts are pneumatic:

Past 11:00 at night, one of the towns of the American west, in a bar. A girl dancer, half naked, half conscious. She says her family on one side goes back to the Indians, and for this reason she brags about her American origins. Her face is young and thin, and doesn't go at all with her tubby figure. She is wearing a strapless, one-piece bathing suit, which has a map-of-the-world pattern on it; the Indian Ocean covers her belly and between her legs, and North America takes up her ass. Sometimes she removes from a rack a large black cowboy hat that, she said, a man from Montana had given her, and places it over her breasts—now bared—and dancing this way, she bends over and straightens up without letting the hat fall off. At the table, in order to make her happy I asked with feigned amazement how she did it. She explained it to me, and with her hand demonstrated how she squeezed her breasts together and stuffed them down into the hat, and then released them so that they pushed in two directions keeping the hat from falling. (Gheiby, *Haft*: 14)

Though such writing was possible in Persian-speaking environments before the neo-puritanism of the Islamic Republic or of the Taliban in Afghanistan, one never encountered it in mainstream publications. The only type of literature in which such erotica might have found a home was social satire, where it might be considered socially redeeming. This makes such writing a

throwback to the mock-treatises of ‘Obeyd-e Zakani.

Perhaps the best satirical eroticist in the modern era is Iraj Mirza Jal’ul Mamalik (1873–1926), a prince of the Qajar dynasty. His 515-line *Arefname* (1921) begins with a complaint against the famous poet, pederast, and singer ‘Aref Qazvini. Iraj became enraged when he learned that the poet was in Mashhad with his lover but failed to pay him a visit and share the boy. This seemingly trivial slight inspired an attack on gender segregation, pederasty, and veiling that is full of obscene and erotic language.

Veiling and gender segregation were deplorable to Iraj because they led to widespread pederasty in Iran. He saw this vice on every level of Iranian society, from the lowly *amm* to his own circle, the *caret*, or “aristocracy” (a pun on his victim’s name that Iraj never tires of using):

O Lord, what this is this pedomania  
That plagues ‘Aref and greater Tehrania?  
Why is it only in this commonwealth  
That sodomy takes place with little stealth?  
The European with his lofty bearing  
Knows not the ins and outs of garçon-tearing.  
Since Iran’s haven to every donkey buck,  
Who else are these asses going to fuck?  
If anyone with reason knew this score,  
They’d surely yowl with a hearty *cri de coeur*:  
Until our tribe is tied up in the veil,  
This very queerness is bound to prevail.  
The draping of the girl with her throat divine  
Will make the little boy our concubine.  
You see: A cute and cuddly little boy,  
Who’s ready to become your fawning toy;  
Not seen: His sister, naked without her wimple,  
So there’s no hope of doting on her dimple.  
(*Suppressed Persian*: 82)

The most erotic part of the *Arefname* is its parable about a woman who is seduced but keeps her modesty, because she remains steadfast throughout the ordeal. This poem within a poem plays on the paradoxical nature of the veil. On one hand, as a covering or “curtain,” it is intended to preserve modesty, to prevent illicit stares. On the other hand, by cloaking the body, it fuels erotic interest in what is underneath, fetishizing parts of the female body that would not otherwise be erogenous. The prophylactic nature of veiling emerges at the end of the parable when Iraj draws his moral. He accuses

women who wear the full covering, or *chador*, and mask of impersonating vegetables:

Pardon me, but are you some onion-ball,  
A garlic in *chador* or praying shawl?  
You who’re the mirror of God’s Divine Splendor,  
A turnip sack of undetermined gender?  
Bound at both ends when down the lane you careen,  
Not like a lady—maybe aubergine?  
(*Suppressed Persian*: 89)

But in the parable itself, the *chador* is provocative. The narrator remembers the time when, as a youth, he heard the seductive *khesh-o fish*, or “rustling,” of a passing veil. It appears that the partial concealment of a woman’s throat, chin, and lips makes the ultimate object of his desire, her *kos* [cunt], even sexier. The seduction also incorporates polite *tashbib* imagery that clashes with the poem’s obscenities. It begins:

Those days when I was still a simple boy,  
I faced the door of a haramsaroy,  
Out came a woman with a rustling sound,  
Who made the blood in my veins jump around.  
I saw a bit of throat under her clip,  
A little chin and hints of lovely lip.  
These peeked out from behind her veil as might  
Slivers of the moon on a cloudy night.  
I approached her and politely salaamed,  
And said that someone had just telegraphed.  
Doubtful, the fairy-face tried to remember,  
Who could the bearer be and who the sender?  
(*Suppressed Persian*: 83–4)

The ruse works, and when the boy finds himself alone with the lady, he marshals every progressive argument he can to get her to *de-IJejab*. But like the courtesans and beardless boys of the classical period, she coyly resists:

The rascals in this town, I do declare!  
al-LAH al-MIGHTy, keep them very rare!  
Tell me to unveil—hardy har, and, HAR!  
The nerve! The brazenness! al-LAH akBAR!  
To hell with you! *Am I* some kind of whore,  
Who’d appear to the proscribed sans *chador*?  
The aim of this whole thing was my disgrace;  
I see it all now and spit in your face!  
Never would I’ve experienced husbandhood,  
Unless I had kept hidden to those I should.  
(*Suppressed Persian*: 85)

When the seduction actually occurs, instead of preventing adultery, the veil acts as an aphrodisiac. Because a woman’s honor resides in her *chador*, so long as it remains intact during the act of adultery, the lady can pretend that she has not



sinned. Instead of reciting progressive arguments for de-lejabization, the boy woos the lady with crisps. The new tack proves fruitful and, true to the realism of modern erotic writing, he narrates the progress of his love in specific detail:

My hands caressed that beauty with the love  
 A mullah showers on his rice pilav.  
 I tossed her on the carpet like a rose;  
 Frantic, I raced from her heights to her toes.  
 My nerves had made me clumsy by surprise;  
 My hands slipped from her ankles to her thighs.  
 My heart was racing as she'd buck and rear;  
 She talked and talked but I would hardly hear.  
 Her hands: clamped across the veil on her face;  
 My hands: busy exploring another place.  
 I said, "You guard the heights, keep the coast clear,  
 I'll get the bunker ready from down here."  
 Although her thighs were hard to penetrate,  
 I was soon staring at the pearly gate.  
 I saw a budding *kos*, new-blossomed red,  
 A jonquil cunt, half-asleep in its bed;  
 Outside, the lemon fragrance of Shiraz,  
 Inside, the honey-soaked dates of Ahwaz;  
 Brighter than the face of a believer,  
 Purer than the breed of a retriever.  
 Not depilated, but a hairless *kos*  
 That makes mouths water like sour grape juice.  
 The rarest cunt of cunts, the smallest bore  
 Against my cock its width engaged in war. . . .  
 But, since her purity was in her visage,  
 She kept it tightly veiled from start to finish;  
 The hold she had was two-fistedly good,  
 Lest she lose something of her "chastitude."

(*Suppressed Persian*: 87–8)

Despite its inventiveness and message of female emancipation, the *'Arefname* never appeared uncensored in the homeland of its creator, though many know it by heart. The current arbiters of the canon are as anti-erotic as their puritanical forebears. This means that the gap between domestic and expatriate literature will continue to widen until it becomes unbridgeable. Of course this prediction does not merely apply to erotic literature.

PAUL SPRACHMAN

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## PERSIAN: MEDIEVAL VERSE

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A gender/genre distinction exists in medieval Persian poetry: long narrative poems (epics, romances), insofar as they deal with erotic subject matter, are concerned almost exclusively with heterosexual relationships; short poems (lyrics, epigrams) are frequently addressed by an older male speaker to a preteen or teenage male, or refer to a relationship between such a couple. The lack of gender distinction in Persian pronouns renders the addressee/subject of many poems ambiguous, but it is probably safe to assume, unless there is internal evidence to the contrary, that many, and perhaps the majority, of short poems which take sexual desire as their theme are addressed by males to younger males. Long poems which are compendia of short anecdotes (these are often mystical in orientation, e.g. the longer works of Sanai, Attar, and Rumi) include both heterosexual and homosexual anecdotes apparently indiscriminately.

In addition to being a literary topos, pederasty certainly existed as a social phenomenon at the medieval Persian courts, where most poetry of the period was written. It is explicitly referred to, for example, in the *Qabusnameh* [*Mirror for Princes*], an 11th-century text by a local king for his son (the writer recommends that boys are best for the summer, girls for the winter). Attempts to suggest that this was due to the influence of central Asian Turkish mores (by the Iranian literary historian Zabiholla Safa) seem wide of the mark, as boy-love was a significant element of a number of aristocratic cultures, from the Mediterranean to India, from antiquity to the early medieval period (including ancient Iran; see Herodotus, Book 1, Section 135, who says that the Persians learned the custom from the Greeks), and for considerably longer in some areas (e.g., Safavid Iran).

Although pederasty as a literary topos predates Islam, it was modified by Muslim mores. In the work of the influential Arab poet Abu Nuwas (c. 750–815), for example, it is associated with wine drinking (forbidden by Islam) and a more or less blasphemous/contemptuous

attitude toward Islamic orthodoxy. Such associations are also to be found in Persian poetry, and an atmosphere of bibulous pederasty, centered on the beautiful *saqi* [cupbearer/Ganymedean figure] and existing in defiance of Islamic orthodoxy, is a given of much medieval Persian lyric and epigrammatic verse. Suggestions of heterodoxy are increased by the fact that the *saqi* is often a non-Muslim (a Zoroastrian, Christian, or, in Persian poetry written in India, Hindu). Despite this suggestion of interfaith sexual relations, it is never the case in such poetry that a non-Muslim adult male desires a Muslim boy. In keeping with the general ancient and medieval notion of sexual relations as basically power relations (signified by who is penetrating whom), it is always the older, active, speaking partner who is Muslim, and the younger, passive, addressed partner who may be of another faith. Although the poetry can imply the speaker's tangential or contemptuous attitude toward orthodoxy, only relationships that confirm Islam's dominant social position vis-à-vis other faiths are celebrated.

The association of pederasty with religious heterodoxy is also to be found in the considerable amount of mystical poetry (traditionally regarded with some suspicion by the orthodox) which refers to the topos, either literally or as a metaphor, of the soul's longing for God. The praise of Yusuf's (Joseph's) beauty in the Qur'an, and the interpretation by Sufis (Muslim mystics) of this as being emblematic of Divine beauty, gave apparent scriptural authority to mystical justifications for a preoccupation with male beauty. As Sufi literature's other major metaphor for mystical desire and insight is wine drinking and drunkenness, the details of such poems are often virtually indistinguishable from their secular counterparts. Such ambiguity was often deliberately cultivated (e.g., by Hafez, 1325–1389), and it is sometimes virtually impossible to decide whether the wine and the *saqi* of a given poem are meant literally, or as metaphors for spiritual experience, or both. In the same way that pederasty was a reality of

medieval courts, it was often assumed to be a reality in the all-male gatherings of Sufis, which were typically organized around a Sufi master in ways reminiscent of a secular court, with similar relationships of authority and subjection. Both detractors of Sufis and Sufis themselves warned of the possibility of the Sufi *pir/morid* (master/aspirant) relationship turning into a sexual one. The ritual (practiced by some Sufis) of using beautiful male adolescents as the focus of mystical contemplation was particularly frowned upon.

The work and career of the prominent Sufi poet 'Eraqi (1213–1288) may be taken as indicative of pederasty's ambiguous status in Sufi experience and literature. Many of 'Eraqi's poems can be read as declarations of passionate physical desire addressed to adolescent males: however, his *Estelahat-e Sufiyeh* [*Sufi Idioms*] is one of the first of many handbooks explaining the secular imagery, including erotic elements, of Sufi poetry as a series of metaphors for the mystic's longing for God. This might have decided the matter were it not that 'Eraqi's life was shadowed by accusations of inappropriate homoerotic infatuation, suggesting that his poetry's sentiments were not in fact solely metaphors for mystical aspiration. Paradoxically, pederasty was seen both as a scandal of Sufism (whereas it seems to have been accepted with much less anxiety as a part of court culture) and, in its metaphorical form at least, as a mark of spiritual

authenticity. This latter association is reminiscent of Platonic (as in the *Phaedrus* and the *Symposium*) and neo-Platonic teaching, although there is scholarly dispute as to whether a direct influence from neo-Platonism on Sufi spirituality is discernible.

In general we can say that pederastic references are common in Persian lyric and epigrammatic poetry during the medieval period and that in a courtly context they were presented as unexceptionable. However, when they occurred in Sufi poetry, they were sometimes viewed as more problematic and in need of an explication that denied their literal import.

DICK DAVIS

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## PERSIAN: VERSE ROMANCE

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The earliest examples of Persian verse romance were written in the 11th century and draw extensively on pre-Islamic (pre-7th century) material. The most significant is *Vis and Ramin* by Gorgani (c. 1050), a work which shares many features with the Tristan story of western Europe, and for which it may be one source. The most notable pre-Islamic feature of the tale is its countenancing of sexual relations considered incestuous under Islam but meritorious in

pre-Islamic Iran (e.g., between a brother and sister; Vis's first husband is her brother, Viru). This provides a frisson of transgressive sexuality for the tale's Islamic audience which was absent for its original, pre-Islamic audience. In Gorgani's work, carnality is represented for its own sake, and his poem refers to corporeal matters, especially as they pertain to women, with an unembarrassed frankness rare in contemporary Islamic poetry. Thus, Vis's menstruation, her

defloration, her and her lover's delight in one another's physical charms, and her husband's impotence are all openly represented. Extramarital female sexuality and desire are celebrated rather than demonized.

Nezami (1140–1203) drew extensively on Gorgani's work for the rhetoric with which he presents carnal love, but the origins of three of his four narrative poems are to be found in Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh* (completed in 1010), an epic poem recording the exploits of Iran's pre-Islamic kings. Two of these, *Haft Paykar* [*The Seven Portraits*] and *Khosrow and Shirin*, are romances involving erotic material. Taking a hint from Ferdowsi's Bahram Gur (the hero of Nezami's *Haft Paykar*, who at one point says, "Whether he's a prince or a warrior, a young man finds comfort and happiness with women. They are the foundation of our faith, and they guide young men toward goodness"), erotic love in these two tales is seen largely as an *education sentimentale* for the hero, who is guided by love to become a more chivalrous and ethically aware ruler. Since the emphasis is now on spiritual rather than carnal experience, in Nezami's romances unfulfilled love is as intrinsically interesting as consummated love. An important subplot of *Khosrow and Shirin*, for example, concerns the hopeless and ultimately suicidal passion of the stonemason Farhad, who is Khosrow's rival for Shirin's favors. Unfulfilled love and its attendant mental and spiritual states are also the subject matter of Nezami's one narrative which does not utilize pre-Islamic Persian material, *Leili and Majnun*. This originally Arab story concerns the interdicted love of the children of tribal enemies, and the resulting madness of the hero, Majnun (his name means "maddened," "gone mad"), which leads him, like the similarly maddened French Arthurian hero Yvain, to abandon civilized society for a life among animals in the wild.

The emphasis on the mental state of the male protagonist in Nezami's narratives gives them a didactic, allegorical, and at times mystical tone which is quite absent from the work of his 11th-century predecessors in the field of romance. The propensity for allegory and implied mysticism is clearest in the *Haft Paykar*, considered by most commentators to be Nezami's masterpiece. Although his romances abound in erotic situations and eroticized descriptions of female attractiveness, erotic activity per se is almost

always subordinated to ethical and chivalric considerations. Thus in the locus classicus of voyeuristic scenes in Persian poetry, when Khosrow catches sight of Shirin bathing, the poetry leaves us in no doubt of either Shirin's beauty or Khosrow's desire, but Khosrow turns away in order not to embarrass Shirin, and no sexual activity results from the encounter. Despite their male orientation, and the function of women in them primarily as beautiful educators, Nezami's works show a real sympathy with women's possible roles in a male-dominated world. The pervasive tenderness of their female portraits renders them generally free of overt misogyny and obvious women-directed male anxiety.

Matters are otherwise in the works of Nezami's best-known successor, Jami (1414–1492), whose primary concerns were Sufism (mystical and didactic), explicitly allegorizing erotic encounters in mystical terms, and whose works can easily be read as evincing both misogyny and a fascinated horror of female sexuality. His erotic scenes are both more explicit and more prurient than Nezami's (for premodern Iranian schoolchildren his works once had the reputation that Ovid's had for premodern European schoolchildren, as a source in respectable literature for the most excitingly sexy stories). Their baroque rhetoric can be seen primarily as an attempt to surpass Nezami, but the vehemence of their apparent emotional concern can seem neurotic (rather than purely literary) in intensity.

Like Nezami, Jami also wrote a *Leili and Majnun*, but his two best-known romances are *Yusof and Zuleikha* (which tells the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife as it appears in the Qur'an, which lays great stress on Yusof's [Joseph's] beauty), and *Salaman and Absal*. The erotic scenes in *Yusof and Zuleikha* are among the most sexually graphic in any medieval Persian romance. *Salaman and Absal* is an allegorical fantasy in which the concupiscent female character (Absal) represents the infinitely attractive physical world which the male, Sufi aspirant (Salaman) must renounce in order to attain spiritual insight. In both these works the purity of the beautiful young man is the focus of the author's didactic purpose, and the lust for him felt by the female protagonist is presented as simultaneously carnally arousing and morally questionable. A homoerotic subtext is arguably present in both tales, with the heroine's desire

## PETRONIUS ARBITER

for the beautiful hero standing in for the (male) reader's response: this desire can be seen as both validated (as the reader's, and male) and invalidated (as the heroine's, and female).

In the 400-year history (11th to 15th centuries) of the medieval Persian romance, a number of linked developments can be discerned: from the empirical to the allegorical and didactic; from the celebration of carnal experience to its devaluation except as a prelude to, or metaphor for, spiritual experience; and an increasing suspicion of female sexuality per se.

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# PETRONIUS ARBITER

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d. 66 CE

Roman author

There are several Roman persons of the name Petronius, but most scholars now agree that Petronius Arbiter, a senator at the imperial court of Nero and Master of the Revels (*Arbiter elegantiae*) is the probable author of the *Satyricon* (more correctly *Satyricea*, being possibly a wordplay on the Roman literary genre of satire and the sexual exuberance of satyrs, the unruly and lascivious attendants of the wine god, Bacchus). If this is so, then he can be identified as the pleasure-seeking aristocrat who eventually committed suicide by imperial decree as described by the historian Tacitus (c. 56–120 CE) (*Annals* 16, 18–19). It is highly unlikely that in revenge he intended the *Satyricea* as an unflattering attack on Nero. The *Satyricea*, of which only extensive fragments survive, appears to have been a lengthy novel in prose and verse. A humorous and sophisticated work, it satirizes the excesses of oratory and poetry of the time

of Nero and contains literary parody and burlesque.

Book 15, which was discovered near Belgrade in Dalmatia in about 1650, was first published in Padua (Italy) in 1664. It is virtually complete and constitutes the "Cena Trimalchionis" [Feast of Trimalchio], an extravagant satirical portrait of an ignorant, vulgar upstart, formerly his master's sex toy, who lives in luxury near Naples. The remainder of the extant portions of the novel consists of a series of substantial fragments described from the point of view of Encolpius, one of the major characters. Encolpius is traveling with his boyfriend Giton and two companions, Ascyltus (an ex-slave on the make) and Eumolpus (a lecherous poet and double-dealer). Part of the narrative describes the sexual rivalry between Encolpius and his fellow travelers for the favors of Giton. The rest tells of the encounters and adventures which these disreputable characters have as they wander through southern Italy (Campania and Crotona). Some critics, like Branham and Kinney,

see in the novel “a systematic and paradoxical inversion of Roman norms” (*Satyricon*); while others, like Ernout, assert that it is vain to attempt to discover any thematic structure in it at all (*Le Satiricon*). It is frequently asserted that a probable key is the section in the *Satyricon* devoted to the “Wrath of Priapus” (Priapus being the god of fertility, who had an enormous phallus). This would in some way be a subversion of Homer’s “Wrath of Achilles” (from the *Iliad*), or the “Anger of Poseidon” (from the *Odyssey*), for our unheroic hero Encolpius seems to have offended against the god in an earlier (lost) chapter and is now being punished by having become impotent.

In addition, it is quite possible that the *Satyricon* constitutes a parody of the standard romantic Greek novel (as, for example, Heliodorus’s *Aethiopica* [*Ethiopian Tale*]), in which a pair of heterosexual lovers finally achieve a chaste reunion after many tribulations. But these interpretations remain speculative. The *Satyricon* contains a variety of very lively erotic scenes. The brothelkeeper, Quartilla, obliges Encolpius, Ascyltus, and Giton to perform the rites of Priapus: as Giton consummates his “marriage ceremony” with the seven-year-old Pannychis, Quartilla gets excited while watching through a keyhole (16–26). She is a priestess of Priapus; as is the rather dilapidated Oenothea (134–8), from whom Encolpius will seek a cure for his impotence, only unfortunately to cause the death of her favorite goose, with its suggestively shaped neck. In this later part of the novel the whole of the Circe episode (126–141), which contains another parody of Homer by using the name of the enchantress in the *Odyssey*, centers on Encolpius’s ironic inability to service her sexually. Even punishment by whipping with nettles will not do the trick. Circe prefers degraded sexual objects, such as slaves or lovers in rags (she turns men into swine in the *Odyssey*), and this adds a further level to the sexual suggestiveness of the text. Ascyltus, who has lost his cloak in the public baths, is applauded for the size of his member (92); Encolpius, when impotent, castigates his cock for letting him down; Lichas, a sea merchant, who featured earlier in the lost part of the story, reappears and recognizes Encolpius by his genitals. And Lichas, in fact, has a wife, Tryphaena, who seems equally to have shared Encolpius’s favors in the past and is now expecting to make up for lost time. This married pair

are bent on sex and revenge, but an untimely storm provides them with a watery grave (103–113). Encolpius and Ascyltus quarrel over Giton (6–11), and later Ascyltus and Giton abandon Encolpius (79–82), with a joyful reunion of Encolpius and Giton to follow. A couple of false suicides satirize the commonplaces of romantic fiction by having rogues enact the parts of young lovers in despair: Encolpius, intending to hang himself, uses a rotten rope, which breaks; Giton threatens to cut his own throat with a blunt razor. Ascyltus eventually comes looking for Giton, who hides under the bed, like Odysseus clinging to the underbelly of a ram to avoid the giant Cyclops Polyphemus (97–99). A bed also features when Encolpius and Eumolpus are in Crotona: they are entrusted with two children by fortune-hunting parents when Eumolpus, posing as a sick but rich old man, has his bed humped up and down by his servant to service the girl, while Encolpius at the keyhole satisfies his own desires with the boy.

Two inserted “Milesian Tales” survive among the fragments. In the first (85–87), Eumolpus tells how a boy from Pergamum (Asia Minor) connives at his own seduction when promised a reward, but as the stakes rise higher and a horse is demanded, the deal falls through. In the second, “The Matron of Ephesus” (111–112), the standard theme of the weakness and lustfulness of women is amusingly exploited (alternatively it could be read as a realistic lesson in taking pleasure as it comes): a widow has vowed to keep watch over her husband’s corpse, but when a handsome soldier arrives, she soon recognizes the advantages of a live body. However, the gallows which he is supposed to be guarding is robbed during his assignation in the tomb, and so the husband’s corpse is hoisted up instead, as a sacrifice from the dead to the living.

In the past, the *Satyricon* was presented as a satire against vice, but nowadays we can more openly enjoy its realistic portrayal of gay low life.

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# PHILOSOPHY AND EROTICISM IN LITERATURE

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The idea of literature, in the modern sense of written works characterized by both beauty of form and emotional effect, is a category of relatively recent invention. To be precise, the exploration of philosophy and eroticism “in literature” in a Western context dates back to only around the seventeenth century, when the notion of literature began to take on its present significance. Nonetheless, prior to the development of literature per se, philosophical reflections on the meaning, function, and nature of erotic desire have often taken what modern readers would consider to be literary forms. Perhaps the best-known examples of this intermingling of philosophy and literature *avant la lettre* are Plato’s dialogues on love, among which the *Symposium* and the *Phaedrus* in particular have served as foundational texts for a Western tradition of the analysis of *erōs* (or erotic love) as playing a crucial role not only in the human experience of beauty but in the quest for philosophical truth.

The *Symposium* (written between 384 and 379 BCE) and the *Phaedrus* (375–365 BCE) examine the relationship between philosophy and *erōs*, a passion most perfectly and consistently expressed, for Plato, in the love of one man for

another (or, indeed, in the love of a man for a beautiful boy). In the *Symposium* as in the *Phaedrus*, the philosophical love of truth is reflected in the erotic love of earthly beauty. Both dialogues, with their imaginative re-creations of historical figures and settings as well as their emphasis on highly suasive speech, draw the reader into fictional spaces in order to illustrate the essential interconnectedness of erotic love and philosophy.

Furthermore, the *Phaedrus* explicitly links the pursuit of beauty and philosophical truth to the more literary art of rhetoric, which Plato reads as ideally enabling audiences to come closer to wisdom (just as erotic love allows the lover to develop a more complete understanding of Form). In a sense, rhetoric and *erōs* play similar roles: both give a privileged access to truth. In addition, both are a source of tremendous pleasure, which, in Plato’s terms, “directs the soul.”

Other early writings on eroticism investigate the connections between poetry, sexual love, and philosophical or analytic knowledge in more explicitly theological frameworks. The Old Testament Song of Songs, with its provocative imagery evoking the sexual love between bride and bridegroom, has long been read allegorically as

an illustration of the ideal relationship between God and the human soul (or the community of believers embodied in the Church). In this sense, the Song of Songs presents a theory of the nature of religious faith as an expression of (erotic) love. In a different context, the *Kamasutra* (written in Sanskrit in the third century CE) describes the cultivation of erotic knowledge as an essential component of experience. Here the poetic depiction of an erotic “art of pleasure” serves to demonstrate the full compatibility of processes of sexual and spiritual development.

What draws such disparate writings together is the way in which each one presents the poetic and philosophical exploration of erotic desire as in some sense profoundly connected to collective or communal truths rather than to the detailed depiction of human sexuality as necessarily private, intimate, or personal. In these early works, the expression of an erotic philosophy takes on poetic or rhetorical forms in order to transmit general or universal truths more effectively to diversely constituted communities of readers.

Around the eighteenth century, the collective or social function of poetic examinations of eroticism was significantly transformed with the development of the literary genre that has remained perhaps more devoted than any other to the intimate, individualized, and above all detailed portrayal of erotic love and sexual desire: the novel. The rise of the Enlightenment in Europe and the West more generally coincided with the heyday of the philosophical novel, which provided a highly malleable and innovative forum for the investigation of theories of material existence, the body, and sexuality. Philosophical novels (a genre which could include frankly pornographic writing) worked to persuade readers of epistemological and ontological truths through the sympathetic presentation of individual characters who solicit readerly identification with their positions (whether intellectual or sexual). John Cleland’s *Fanny Hill*, to take one example, is both the sexy tale of the experiences of a “woman of pleasure” and a polemic in defense of materialist philosophy. In *Fanny Hill*, sexual pleasure is portrayed as both natural and rational; a detailed rendering of sexuality sheds light, for Cleland, on the truth of human nature itself in a manner consistent with the tenets of an enlightened empiricism.

While Cleland’s work promotes a vision of sexual desire as joyous (and even egalitarian),

the most (in)famous eighteenth-century writer of philosophical novels took a different perspective. The marquis de Sade, also a deeply committed materialist, dedicated himself to the literary portrayal of a philosophical perspective centered around the notion of *erôs* as a destructive, albeit overwhelmingly natural, force. In his novels, de Sade shows with great expertise how the development of rational philosophical knowledge may coincide powerfully with the literary depiction of exemplary scenarios of instruction. His texts thus prevail upon the reader to see the fundamental resemblances between literature and philosophy as means of persuasion. Moreover, the most exquisite expression of his materialist philosophy is in the literary portrayal of the violent act of sexual intercourse as an allegory of universal aggression.

Modern writers of philosophical erotica (including, for instance, Georges Bataille and the surrealists) have often had to confront the lingering authority of the de Sadean oeuvre. Yet it may be the combined influence of the feminist and gay rights movements (whose relationship to de Sadean philosophy is often tenuous) that had the most visible and widespread effects on literary depictions of theories of sexuality in the twentieth century. Writers as varied as Dorothy Allison, Gloria Anzaldúa, Angela Carter, Ana Castillo, Hélène Cixous, Samuel R. Delany, Audre Lorde, Cherrie Moraga, and Edmund White have worked to transfigure readers’ understandings of sexuality and desire by examining the relationship between expressions of erotic longing and political, intellectual, and social liberation. In a sense, by illustrating poetically the way in which desires make and move individuals, these modern authors rework and rediscover the Platonic analysis of the pleasures of rhetoric, eroticism, and philosophy as profoundly and potently intertwined.

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## PIERRE, JOSÉ

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1927–1999

French novelist, dramatist, and art historian

José Pierre arrived in Paris in 1951, very quickly joined André Breton and the Surrealist movement, and began to participate in its activities and assemblies. He thus met Eric Losfeld, the future publisher of *Emmanuelle*, and saw in this encounter a sign of destiny. Pierre began to appear in Surrealist reviews, publishing articles on the history of painting and defending Surrealist theory of graphic art. Around 1965, he undertook his first novel, *Qu'est-ce que Thérèse? C'est les marronniers en fleurs* [*What Is Thérèse? She Is the Blooming Chestnut Trees*], which title is comes directly from the Surrealist game of questions and answers. The fundamental themes that Pierre would explore and extend in his subsequent novels are present in the first: initiation of a group into sensuality and libertinage, fascination for just-nubile girls, absence of sin and guilt, transgression of all familiar bonds, lesbianism. But his main problematic lies in the question of the frontier between love and libertinage. If erotic books and films intend to show that desire and love are the same, Pierre's characters, on the contrary, try to overcome and sublimate the difference between them.

In that first novel, Thérèse organizes initiations and dominations of young boys and girls. A large part of the novel takes place in a castle, a traditional place of orgy, but its originality is in

the large space given to philosophical conversations about pleasure and ethics, as in de Sade's novels. Thérèse is the incandescent point at which all desires converge, and her departure to Phnom-Penh at the end of the novel unravels all the relations of the little group. The plot folds in a dreamy, wonderful atmosphere of erotic heroism, each character "challenging destiny constantly without admitting to being overcome by his victories."

Thérèse appears again in *Les adolescences de Thérèse*, the only novel of Pierre's in which the narrator is the heroine. She tells with suavity the story of her deflowering by her father (preceded by mutual masturbation, fellatio, cunnilingus, and a delicious lesbianism) and the gradual techniques she invented to seduce both boys and girls. This narrative form is recurrent in several of Pierre's novels, in which the narrator becomes the initiator of young girls who always fall in love with him, confirming that libertinage cannot do without love.

### Blend of Styles

Pierre allowed himself to try a number of different styles. In *Le dernier tableau*, he uses the style of American pulp thrillers of the 1930s–40s; in *La fontaine close*, he chooses the narrative structure of a Gnostic novel; in *Femmes de braise*, he sets the plot in the world of whores and pimps in the south of France. For him, the

erotic roman favors these miscellanea, as de Sade did. In *Le dernier tableau*, the fusion is complete between an erotic/existential problem and an aesthetic one, set during the period of abstract expressionism in New York City in 1953. *Gauguin aux Marquises* develops a plot on three levels: the diary of a script girl working on a film about the painter Gauguin; the script, sequence after sequence; and Gauguin himself speaking of love and painting.

Pierre's originality lies in the plastic exploration of the erotic by mixing different types of narration and organizing the plot as a series himself giving up the idea of becoming a painter in the 1960s, the novelist writes as a painter draws, and builds his erotic arrangements of bodies as does a sculptor. His experience as an art critic can be discerned in *La haine des plages*, the plot of which tells of the initiation of a nymphet by the narrator, under the eyes and with the agreement of her mother, who takes pictures of their sexual acts. Then the mother covers up the genitals and breasts by colors or drawings. These photos look like puzzles that both reveal and conceal the tracks of passion between the protagonists, and reveal the jealousy of the mother. In *Les baisers de la femme fidèle*, the frolics unfold according to the 16th-century Mannerist style of the painter Domenico Beccafumi, the novel's wet kisses and caresses echoing of the curves and lushness of the Italian painter.

The writer doesn't deny himself philosophical or psychoanalytic thoughts. Freud is regularly mentioned in support of bisexuality or to explain the heroes' fascination with women smoking before fucking. In his evocation of agricultural and sexual communes in *Les barreaux du coeur*, Pierre refers to Charles Fourier, the French utopian socialist of the 19th century, especially his theory of harmony founded on the alternation of love and work.

Pierre's novelistic work is complemented by a number of plays in which erotic scenes are written as he would like them to happen. *Le vaisseau amiral* (Bordeaux, 1981, directed by Patrick Simon) represents a party involving two men and a woman. *Magdeleine Leclerc* (Paris, 1993, directed by Thomas Lévy) tells of the apprenticeship of reading, writing, and sexuality that constituted de Sade's last love. In this last of his published plays, Pierre wanted to paint the Marquis "in love like a beetle."

Pierre's writing is Precise and tender. He uses refined words and elegant syntax, for erotic novels are for him like fairy tales. He remains a Surrealist writer through his fascination for beauty, especially that of young girls, in which can be seen the future woman emerging from childhood. His characters are always in love and joyously share sensuality and pleasure. Elegant candor and gentle brutality alternate in a constant, and astonishing necessity of each other. As he writes: "Love [can be] anywhere. . . . It's the key to the world."

### Biography

Born in the French Landes. Contacted the Surrealist group in 1952 and frequented it until its dissolution in 1969. Published in many reviews. Professor of literature in 1955. Wrote several historical books about painting from 1966 to 1991. Organized many international exhibitions on Surrealism: New York, 1962; Paris, 1967; Cologne and Bari, 1983; Vilamoura, Portugal, 1987. Joined the CNRS (Centre national de la recherche scientifique) and worked on Surrealist flyers and posters. From 1974 to 1996, wrote erotic novels and theatre.

DOMINIQUE PAQUET

### Editions

#### Novels

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*La haine des plages.* Paris: Galilée, 1980.  
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*Les adolescences de Thérèse.* Cadeilhan: Zulma, 1995.  
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*Magdeleine Leclerc (Le Dernier amour du Marquis de Sade).* Chambéry: Comp'Act, 1995.

#### Art (Selected Works)

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*L'Univers surréaliste.* Paris: Somogy, 1983.  
*André Breton et la peinture.* Geneva: L'Age d'homme, 1987.  
*L'Univers symboliste.* Paris: Somogy, 1991.

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# PIERROT

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Pseudonym of author of French novel of seduction

*Une séduction* [*A Seduction*], an erotic novel signed by "Pierrot," appeared in 1902 and was sold discreetly out of the back of the bookshop of André Hal, a Parisian librarian and publisher. This work was published again, mainly for bibliophiles, in 1908, "sold everywhere and nowhere" and titled *Jeunes amours, au château, à la pension* [*Young Love, at the Castle, at the Boarding House*]. It became a classic of French eroticism during the 20th century. *Une séduction* is a beautiful tale about the initiation into sexual pleasures of a young man and a young woman from high society. The novel's style lacks crude descriptions, and settings and costumes are presented as most exquisite and, above all, extremely stimulating, owing to the intense passions boiling inside the young protagonists.

The story unfolds in Touraine, by the Loire River, at Messange Castle, owned by the marquis André, whose daughters Claire, eighteen years old, and Marguerite, thirteen years old, grew up together with Claude, an orphan adopted by the marquis, now twenty years old. While catching crawfish, Claude, hidden behind a bush, discovers Claire getting undressed. "Believing she was alone in that remote location, she opened wide her blouse to enjoy the wind's touch, and Claude, who had never seen anything more of her than just her face and hands, was able to admire the ravishing breasts of the young woman." He realizes that he loves her and that the goal of his life is to possess her. "The craziness of sexual passion and the intoxication of the flesh went through him like the wind blowing during a storm that sweeps everything out of its way. He felt he was defeated. He needed Claire at any cost. He would not rest until he had satisfied this lust frenzy that drove him, as vertigo anticipates the abyss." Claire loves him too, but her prude upbringing causes her to be scared away by the kisses he is able to snatch from her, and Claude has to seduce her gradually.

All these failed attempts only serve to his ardor, and he would have sickened of sheer frustration without Germaine, the maid, a piquant Parisian who was previously employed by a lady of dubious refinement who had numerous lovers. When Claude discovers Germaine in a barn making love to Jean, the coachman, "It was the wild brutality and superb strength of the coupling of the male and the female." He is obsessed by the desire to enjoy the body of the pretty maid, although he initially resists this obsession, "to avoid profaning his love for Claire," but he gives in to his temptation. In the course of a few nights of love, Germaine initiates him into all known ways of lovemaking. When, at last, Claire finally gives herself to Claude, he knows not only how to take her virginity, but how to teach her sensual pleasures that would transform her into a passionate lover who dares anything.

There are several initiations in this novel. The younger Marguerite is a precocious adolescent who spies on her sister's lovemaking and provokes Germaine and Claude with the sole purpose of discovering its pleasures. Sent to boarding school after summer break, Marguerite imparts sex education to her female companions in an astonishing way. During this time, Germaine, introduced to the delights of sapphism by her previous female boss, seduces Claire. When Claude has to leave for military service, the young woman consoles herself with the maid to avoid being deprived of carnal affection. But one should not forget that "[t]he two lovers proclaimed a touching farewell, by mutually promising to meet again afterward and to love each other forever." Nothing seems too corrupt in this book, either morally or in terms of the insistent beauty of the characters.

The anonymous author of this novel poses a literary enigma. The bibliography by Louis Perceau suggests "Dr. Brennus," who published *L'Art de jouir ou traité pratique des caresses voluptueuses* [*The Art of Enjoyment, or the Practical Compendium of Voluptuous Caresses*]

(1908), as a possible author. It was discovered at the Bibliothèque Nationale that Dr. Brennus was one of the many pseudonyms of Dr. Jean Fauconney, who, under the names of “Dr. Caufeynon” and “Dr. Jaf,” published several books on sexuality, such as *Histoire de la femme* [*The History of the Woman*], *L’Amour lesbien* [*Lesbian Love*], *Les Venus impudiques* [*The Indecent Venuses*], and *La Volupté et les parfums* [*Sensual Pleasure and Perfumes*]. In Fauconney’s *Scènes d’amour morbide* [*Morbid Love Scenes*] (1903), his heroine Emma is a prostitute whose specialty is the satisfaction of sexual perverts, and publication of the book was restricted by the publisher to “be sold under strict control and to persons of a certain age.” In *L’Hermaphrodite au couvent* [*The Hermaphrodite in the Convent*] (1905), Fauconney narrates the adventures of Paula d’Hestier, who becomes Paul, and therefore is able to “enjoy the role of the man and the woman during sexual intercourse.” In *L’Amour secret* [*Secret Love*], he teaches us how a man can initiate a woman into pleasure, the same subject as *Une séduction*. One might reasonably assume that Jean Fauconney, before specializing in popular sexology, started with this mundane novel.

However, the Dutel bibliography states: “Pierrot is the pseudonym of Roland Brévannes, who usually signed his works about sexuality under the name of Dr. Brennus.” Brévannes’s authorship can be equally argued. His collection *Les voluptueuses* [*The Voluptuous Women*] (1903–1910), published by the Parisian publisher Offendstadt,

consists of a series of small and comparatively polite novels: *Amante cruelle* [*The Cruel Female Lover*], *Amoureux caprices* [*Amorous Caprices*], *Charmeuse* [*Seductress*], *Corruptrice* [*Corruptress*], and *Courtisane légitime* [*Rightful Courtesan*]. In 1907, Brévannes created the *Almanach du déshabillé* [*Almanac of the Naked*] (with some suggestive illustrations), in which he described “Les 36 positions de la femme du XXe siècle” [The 36 Positions of the Woman of the 20th Century]. But is this enough to prove that Pierrot was Dr. Brennus, who wrote a compendium about premature ejaculation? It remains unclear, since there is no proof. Jean Fauconney and Roland Brévannes have at least one thing in common: they wrote books about black masses (Fauconney in 1905, Brévannes in 1908).

We will probably never know who wrote *Une séduction*. We can only read it as the work of Pierrot—perhaps the real author was thinking of the character of that name from the Commedia dell’arte and the *Theater of the Tightrope Walkers*, wearing a black cap and a white collar, a symbol of fantasy for the poets of those times.

SARANE ALEXANDRIAN

#### Selected Works

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## PIGAULT-LEBRUN, CHARLES

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1753–1835

French novelist and dramatist

Although Pigault-Lebrun’s first successes were achieved in the theatre, and a number of his novels spawned stage versions penned by others, his name remains identified with an

early-nineteenth-century form of comic fiction known as *le roman gai*, a genre of which he was the sole inventor. Composed in the later years of the Revolution and during the first years of the Empire, his risqué productions, which F.C. Green, following Saintsbury, described as “joyous coarse novels of adventure in the manner of

Smollett," exploit a hallowed tradition of Gallic humor that harks back to Rabelais and the prominent carnivalesque strain in French medieval culture. With the partial exception of the sentimental and moralistic *Angélique et Jeanne-ton* (1799), the title page of which suggested that mothers could safely allow the contents to be read by their daughters, the novels of Pigault-Lebrun's first period are licentious, picaresque fictions featuring episodes of sexual opportunism loosely strung together. The male protagonists, whether sympathetic young foundlings on the make or libidinous members of the clergy, possess an overriding inclination to find happiness through the pleasures of the flesh, while the representatives of the female sex are scarcely less inhibited. Alongside the multiple scenes of private sexual congress, characters regularly find themselves in involuntary states of public undress, to the delight of concupiscent onlookers. At all times, sexual appetite and its satisfaction are the subject of earthy amusement rather than a sophisticated exploration of erotic impulses. Although Pigault-Lebrun, as a man of the eighteenth century, was keen to allege a philosophical purpose, it was undoubtedly the proliferation of salacious and smutty detail that caused the success of his more notorious novels. The strong vein of anticlericalism betrays his Voltairean inheritance, as well as being the motive force behind his widely read assault on the Christian religion, *Le Citateur* (1803).

In his fiction Pigault-Lebrun does not merely delight in a transgression of decorum or in the conspiratorial relationship he establishes with his reader, but overtly relishes the fictionality of his creations. He makes extensive play with the far-fetched nature of the chaotic episodes in which the characters become embroiled and, in a manner reminiscent of Diderot's *Jacques le fataliste* (to which novel *L'Enfant du carnaval* [1796] is explicitly linked through the presence of the term "rhapsodies" in its subtitle), engages in a self-conscious questioning of the activity of novel writing. The tone of his compositions is set by the satirical subtitle of *Les Barons de Felsheim* (1798); by the spurious indication that *L'Enfant du carnaval* was published in Rome at the "Imprimerie du Saint-Père" (or "Papal Press") and *Le Citateur* in Hamburg; and by the title-page epigraph of *L'Enfant du carnaval*: "Valeat res ludicra" [Farewell to the comic stage]. Yet his novels also borrow elements

from contemporary Gothic scenarios in which the hero and/or heroine are thwarted by the malevolent actions of those in power.

Although *Monsieur Botte* (1803) has received plaudits for the way its depiction of bourgeois character prefigures the nineteenth-century French realist novel and Pigault-Lebrun's admirers have sometimes singled out *Les Barons de Felsheim* as his masterpiece, it remains *L'Enfant du carnaval* that gives the best idea of his basic formula. Echoing Fielding's *Tom Jones* and the works of Laurence Sterne (amongst other eighteenth-century classics), it depicts, in the first person, the life and adventures of the illegitimate son of a Franciscan monk and an aged clerical housekeeper, who is conceived, without premeditation, on top of a dish of spinach left out on the kitchen table (the omission of this scabrous scene from the third edition apparently aroused mass indignation). After a childhood involving a number of vicissitudes, Jean, or Happy as the character is philosophically renamed on becoming Lord Tillmouth's servant, acquires a social and artistic education. His lasting love for the nobleman's daughter is returned, though it is no obstacle to his enjoying other sexual adventures. The couple face various adversities, including imprisonment during the Revolutionary Terror, before Happy ends up as a prosperous London businessman.

The instant success of Pigault-Lebrun's novels was a striking example of a literary genre creating its audience rather than supplying an already advertised need, but in addition it was enhanced by astute promotion by his publisher, Barba. It has been claimed that the profitability of his writing was the result of a high rate of production rather than exceptional print runs, though the copies acquired by the newly founded lending libraries were instrumental in securing his reputation.

As Thomas Love Peacock observed, Pigault-Lebrun's novels are "impressed with the political changes of the day." The earliest of them represent a response to the desire for unalloyed pleasure that manifested itself in the years following the end of the Terror. The author's archetypal heroes of modest origins (the hero of *Mon oncle Thomas* [1800], a pirate who rules over an island on which marriage is banned, is the son of a prostitute) succeed in making their way to the top through their own initiative and even marry into noble families. Pigault-Lebrun's novels

periodically fell foul of the censor, both in the immediate aftermath of their publication and during the more conservative Restoration. A token 50 copies of *La Folie espagnole* (1799) were apparently seized in the year of its publication. In 1825, both *L'Enfant du carnaval* and *Monsieur de Roberville* (1809), which depicts a newly married couple's obsessive dedication to bedroom activity, were banned and Barba's publisher's license withdrawn.

The anonymous and unashamedly pornographic *L'Enfant du bordel* (1800) cannot be attributed to Pigault-Lebrun with certainty, but he is a more plausible author of this short narrative than Mirabeau. (The presence of a lecherous Franciscan friar provides undeniable continuity with *L'Enfant du carnaval*.) The adolescent Chérubin, a superficial echo of Beaumarchais's character in *Le mariage de Figaro*, is the illegitimate son of a sixteen-year-old royal page and a young girl espied by him in a shop doorway, who subsequently dies in childbirth. Chérubin is brought up in a brothel, which he, accompanied by his favorite inmate, Félicité, is later forced to flee in the first in a series of loosely linked burlesque adventures reminiscent of the *roman gai*, in which the threats of death or penury are never remotely real and are brought to an end by his being reunited with his father. The young hero's charms and vigor are found irresistible by the female sex, regardless of their age, class, or marital status. Although sexual deviance is present in the form of homosexual acts (male and Sapphic), troilism, and cross-dressing, these are largely for the sake of a comic "plot" that requires tricks to be played on the unwary (these include the far-fetched attribution to Chérubin successively of hermaphroditism and a giant clitoris). The work is essentially a paean to the delights of unrestrained heterosexual intercourse, though with a notable emphasis being given to reciprocal oral pleasuring and masturbation. If all these activities are directly described (the text includes bawdy songs in which slang terms for the sexual organs are prominent) and the female genitalia the focus of much celebration by the hero, the composition, arguably at least, recognizes equality between the sexes, through due insistence on the female characters' capacity for experiencing correspondingly high levels of sexual pleasure. The pornographic is, nonetheless, subordinated to the comic throughout and represents an attractive broadening of

the scope of conventional comic fiction rather than the creation of a specialized, more secretive, or illicit reading experience.

Pigault-Lebrun's novels were much imitated and were the subject of various spurious sequels. Existing bibliographical accounts of his work contain manifest errors of date and attribution, partly owing to the fact that no single library possesses a complete holding. Further, detailed research will be necessary before an authoritative bibliography of his work is possible. Accounts of his life have relied almost exclusively on the racy essay compiled by Barba the year after his death, the claims of which might usefully be checked against such archival evidence as exists.

Pigault-Lebrun's mantle was assumed by the soon equally prolific, but less philosophically or politically inclined, Paul de Kock, who astutely timed his first major assault on the popular market to coincide with Pigault-Lebrun's retirement from the *roman gai*. Balzac, whom Sainte-Beuve scornfully dubbed "the duchesses' Pigault-Lebrun," considered Pigault-Lebrun underrated and imitated his manner in one of his pseudonymous early fictions: *Jean Louis, ou la fille trouvée* (1822). Stendhal was a self-confessed admirer, and in 1821 had one of his fictional personae choose Pigault-Lebrun as his desert-island author. The lack of modern reprints has inhibited more recent appreciation of his work, which has also been the subject of less scholarly attention than it merits, though the poet Paul Valéry may be counted one of his more unexpected admirers.

### Biography

Born Charles-Antoine-Guillaume Pigault de l'Épinoy into a family of magistrates, Calais, April 8; educated by Oratorians in Boulogne. Worked for a merchant named Crawford in London before eloping with latter's daughter (who died in a storm at sea), 1769–71; held in prison on *lettre de cachet* obtained by his father, 1771–73; served in *gendarmerie du Roi*, Lunéville, c. 1773–76; imprisoned in attempt by father to thwart marriage to Eugénie Salens, impoverished daughter of a deceased merchant, 1776–78; abetted by jailer's daughter, escaped disguised as a woman. Married Eugénie in Holland, c. 1778; she died several years later. Actor and playwright in Low Countries, 1778–88.

Discovered father had secured annulment of his civil status; adopted name Pigault-Lebrun. Birth of son, Jean-Baptiste-Guillaume Pigault-Le Brun in Tournay, 1785. Returned to Paris, 1788. Success as playwright in Paris, 1788–92, notably with the autobiographical *Charles et Caroline, ou les abus de l'Ancien Régime*, 1790. Enlisted in dragoons; saw active service at Valmy, 1792. Read speech to Société des Amis de la liberté et de l'égalité de Saumur, May 26, 1793. Resumed career as playwright, 1794. Publication of first novel, *L'Enfant du carnaval*, 1796. Appointment as secretary to Madame Murat vetoed by Napoleon, as was his appointment as librarian to his friend Prince Jerome in Westphalia, 1806. *Chef de bureau* in French customs service, 1806–24. Abandoned novel writing for eight-volume history of France, 1823–28. Following the death of his son in a duel, moved to Valence to live with his daughter (married to lawyer Victor Augier; their son would become the playwright Emile Augier). Published *La Sainte Ligue*, an historical novel, 1829. Returned to Paris, 1830. Died at La Celle Saint-Cloud, July 24, survived by second wife, sister of the actor Michot.

MICHAEL TILBY

### Selected Works

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- Jérôme*. 4 vols. Paris: Barba, 1805.
- L'Homme à projets*. 4 vols. Paris: Barba, 1808.
- Monsieur de Roberville*. 4 vols. Paris: Barba, 1809.
- L'Enfant du bordel*. 2 vols. Attributed to Pigault-Lebrun. Paris, 1800; as *Les Aventures de Chérubin, l'enfant du*

*bordel*, Cythère [Paris]: À L'Enseigne de la Volupté [Maurice Duflou, 1924]; reprinted with introduction by Michel Delon, Cadeilhan: Zulma, 2002; and in *L'Erotisme au XIXe siècle*, edited by Sarane Alexandrian, Paris: J. C. Lattès, 1993.

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- Vie et aventures de Pigault-Lebrun publiées par J.-N. B [arba]*. Paris: Barba, 1836. According to Quérard, this was the work of Horace Raison and merely based on notes provided by Barba; but Quérard's editors indicated that he later changed his opinion and attributed it to the equally prolific Louis-François Raban (see J.-M. Quérard, *Les Supercheries littéraires*, 2nd ed. enlarged and revised by Gustave Brunet and Pierre Jannet, Vol. 1, 428, Paris: Daffis, 1869).

## PIRON, ALEXIS

1689–1773

French poet and playwright

### *Ode à Priape*

Piron's *Ode to Priapus* (1710–11) is dedicated to the Phrygian god of fertility in Greek mythology (son of Dionysus and Aphrodite), who was said to have huge genitals. It consists of a celebration of the sexual act, concentrating upon ejaculation and describing *le foutre* [ejaculate] as both the source of physical pleasure and "la source féconde / Qui rend l'univers éternel" [the fertile spring that makes the universe eternal]. Historical and mythological references abound, and the vocabulary is crude.

Described by Piron in the preface to *La Métromanie* as having been written in a moment of "brief distraction," the *Ode* was circulated in manuscript and seen by the procurer general of Dijon, provoking a scandal which was difficult to suppress and which needed the intervention of Piron's protector, Jean Bouhier, president of the parlement of Dijon. Printed copies of the *Ode* have tended to truncate it, giving only 12 of the 17 stanzas and removing the most salacious.

Described as "le délire et le dérèglement d'une imagination de 18 ans" [the delirium and disturbance of an 18-year-old imagination] by Dufay (*Oeuvres complètes*, x: xvi), this first immature work was regretted by Piron later in his career, and has been seen by some critics as a reason for his unsuccessful campaigns for election to the Académie Française. (On the *Ode*, see Verèb, 81–3.)

### *Oeuvres badines*

First published in 1796, the *Oeuvres badines* collects erotic songs and poetry from throughout Piron's career, as the presence of the much earlier *Ode à Priape* in the collection attests. It is also republished in the edition of Piron's works edited by Pierre Dufay, but has received little critical attention to date.

Different editions of the work present the contents in different orders, increasing the impression of a collection of diverse material, rather than a constructed volume. Some of the poems collected here have also been attributed to Jean-Baptiste Grécourt. One notable feature of the *Oeuvres* is the number of satirical references to Voltaire, which, even if toned down



by Piron for publication, are still clear. A note to “L’Anti-Mondain” describes it as the counterpart to Voltaire’s *Le Mondain* (1736). Similarly in “Le Tirliberly”: a young couple is separated when the man is called away to sea; when the young woman asks him to leave his penis (“le tirliberly”) as a keepsake, he throws it to shore, and the ensuing description of a passerby searching for it on the ground mocks Voltaire’s exaltation of Newton: “Tel un visionnaire / (Mons Arouet, suzerain de Voltaire) / Cherche le jour dans la nuit de Newton! / Ou, si l’on veut, tel un savant breton [Louis Moreau de Maupertuis] / Grand scrutateur de forme planétaire” [Like a visionary / (His Lordship Arouet, Master Voltaire) / Searches for day in Newton’s night! / Or, if you wish, like a Breton scholar [Maupertuis] / The great scrutinizer of planetary form].

A few references to the supposed homosexuality of the Jesuits also form part of Piron’s comic inclusion of contemporary topics, and the lubricity of the clergy is amply discussed as one of the literary clichés of the day (“Les cinq voyelles” [The Five Vowels], “Le carme et le diable” [The Carmelite and the Devil], “Le port du salut” [The Door of Salvation]). The well-worn theme of the lubricity of monks is developed in a series of “Licentious Epigrams” and in the final piece, “My Testament,” where Piron states: “Je veux qu’après ma mort, cent putains toutes nues, / Soient, dessus mon tombeau, cent fois par jour foutues, / Et que les cordeliers, en chantant leurs offices, / Aient tous les vits bandants dans le cul des novices” [After my death, I want a hundred naked whores, / Fucking a hundred times a day on my grave / And Franciscans singing their offices / With their stiff pricks in the cunts of novitiates].

More frequently, Piron’s references are to classical antiquity, which lends a ready stock of stereotypes—to mock the non-erotic nature of wives (in “Leçon à ma femme”)—along with such borrowed examples as Ulysses and Penelope, Hector and Andromaque, Jupiter and Juno, and Priapus (cf. the *Ode*), as in “Saint-Guignolé.” Some pieces are pure galant poetry with far less emphasis on physical sexual pleasure and pornographic description; for example, “Thélème et Maccare” and “Les Misères de l’amour.”

### Biography

Born in Dijon, Piron was the son of Aimé Piron, an apothecary and writer of satirical poems.

In 1719, after studying law in Besançon, Piron moved to Paris, first working as a copyist, then writing plays for the Théâtre de la Foire, where his *Arlequin-Deucalion*, a dramatic monologue in three acts, was performed in 1722, during a period of intense rivalry with the Comédie Française and increasingly stringent restrictions upon the material forms which the actors of the Fair companies were allowed to employ. His best-known play is a comedy, *La Métromanie*, performed at the Comédie Française in 1738. His literary work is both abundant and varied, comprising tragedies, comedies, comic operas, epigrams, poems, satirical works, and epistles. His rivalry with Voltaire was long-standing, and a number of his works attack the philosophe and his ideas (see Verèb, 13–71).

MARK DARLOW

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## PIZARNIK, ALEJANDRA

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1936–1972  
Argentinean writer

Alejandra Pizarnik was the author of a large corpus of poetry, as well as selected prose works, letters, and diaries. She is best known for her poetry and her short prose work *La condesa sangrienta*. During her time in Paris she became very familiar with French writers, especially the Surrealists, and her work was highly influenced by such writers as Georges Bataille and Antonin Artaud. The most common themes of her work are language and silence, dichotomy (paradox and contradiction), madness, and death. Many of her poems express a link between eroticism and language, as well as a subtle lesbian sensuality, while her major prose work, *La condesa sangrienta*, deals with sadism and power and their relationship to sexuality.

In Pizarnik's poetry, the body is often related to the word, and eroticism comes alive in and through language. This connection is made clear in the prose poem "The Desire of the Word" from *El infierno musical*, "Ojalá que pudiera vivir solamente en éxtasis, haciendo el cuerpo del poema con mi cuerpo" [Oh God if I might live in ecstasy, making the body of the poem with my body] (*Obras*, 300). This "desire" for and of language can also transform itself into lesbian desire, as in the poem "Tragedy" from the same collection, in which a young girl in her backyard has sexual thoughts about her music teacher. She imagines that "she has nothing on under her red velvet" and that she rides her bicycle nude, squeezing harder and harder on the seat until it disappears inside of her. Such overt sexuality is rather rare in Pizarnik's poems, however, as most deal primarily with the relationship between language and the body and the subtle eroticism at play between the two.

While many of her poems are concerned with eroticism, it is in *La condesa sangrienta* that Pizarnik most explicitly writes of erotic themes while simultaneously expressing all of the themes seen in her other works as well. *La*

*condesa* was first published in Mexico in 1969, but due to unavailability, the most commonly cited reference is the Aquarius Libros edition, published in 1971. In this work, Pizarnik self-consciously rewrites the 19th-century French writer Valentine Penrose's novel *La comtesse sanglante* [The Gory Countess]. In fact, the first lines of the work mention Penrose specifically, "There is a book by Valentine Penrose which documents the life of a real and unusual character: the Countess Bathory. . . . The Countess Bathory's sexual perversion and madness are so obvious that Valentine Penrose disregards them and concentrates instead on the convulsive beauty of the character" (*La condesa*, 71). Both works tell the tale of the 16th-century Hungarian countess Erzebet Bathory (whose story has long fascinated writers such as Georges Bataille and Andrei Codrescu, as well as filmmakers). This real-life "female Dracula" tortured and killed more than 600 virgin girls, peasants from her kingdom, in the belief that the shedding of their blood would keep her forever youthful.

Pizarnik's version of this history is a short text which defies genre—it is broken up into twelve vignettes of poetic prose which detail Bathory's character and her many forms of torture. Each of these vignettes is preceded by an epithet by such male writers as the Marquis de Sade and Jean-Paul Sartre which sheds perspective on the scenes to follow. Throughout these vignettes, madness and death are intermingled with both sexuality and gender. In addition, paradox and contradiction are evident throughout the text in the description of the Countess's horrific acts of torture through a beautifully crafted, lyrical prose poetry.

While death is of primary concern in the Countess's history (she tortures and kills in an attempt to maintain eternal life), in Pizarnik's story the act of killing is explicitly sexualized in the sense of her mentor Georges Bataille's idea of the "continuous." She writes in the fourth vignette, "Classical Torture": "Sexual climax forces us into death-like gestures and

expressions. . . . If the sexual act implies a sort of death, Erzebet Bathory needed the visible, elementary, coarse death, to succeed in dying that other phantom death we call orgasm" (76).

Just as death becomes linked to sex, acts of torture also become sexual acts for Pizarnik's Countess. Her torture sessions are described as her "erotic convulsions" and include such acts as placing "burning paper soaked in oil" between the victims legs, burning their breasts with hot poker, or tearing at them in the "most sensitive places." Pizarnik even writes that the Countess "used to plunge a burning candle into the genitals of the victim" (81). Her victims were generally stripped naked, and the Countess would often bite at their flesh. Even the Countess's words during the tortures demonstrate their sexual nature: "More, ever more, harder, harder!" (75).

In addition, Erzebet's gender and sexuality are foregrounded in *La condesa sangrienta*, and are linked with her cruel acts. The fact that her sexualized acts of torture victimize only young girls marks her as a lesbian, to which Pizarnik alludes: "The rumors concerning her own homosexuality were never confirmed" (79) (a statement that could also be made about Pizarnik's sexuality). Her gender is foregrounded by Pizarnik in the seventh vignette, "The Melancholy Mirror": "She lived deep within an exclusively female world. There were only women during her nights of crime" (79).

Whether or not Pizarnik is condemning the Countess or recognizing and valorizing aspects of herself in this lonely figure has been held open to debate. Some critics have read the text as political allegory, some as autobiography, some as outright condemnation. However, one thing is certain about *La condesa sangrienta*: it is a text in which eroticism is a powerful presence which unites many of the themes treated by Alejandra Pizarnik's oeuvre as a whole. While some of her poems treat issues of eroticism, it is in this short prose poem that female eroticism and its links with death, madness, and contradiction are most fully expressed.

### Biography

Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, April 29. Studied philosophy and letters at the University

of Buenos Aires (1954–1957). Left school to study painting under Juan Planas. Lived in Paris from 1960 to 1964, where she worked for the publication *Cuadernos*, as well as several French journals. Translated works by Antonin Artaud, Henri Michaux, Aimé Césaire, and Yves Bonnefoy. Studied religious history and contemporary French literature at the Sorbonne. After returning to Buenos Aires, published three of her most important volumes of poetry, *Los trabajos y las noches* (1965), *Extracción de la piedra de la locura* (1968), and *El infierno musical* (1971), as well as her prose work *La condesa sangrienta* (1965, 1971). Won a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1969 and a Fulbright in 1971. Died on September 25 from a self-induced overdose of seconal.

TRACY FARRELL

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# PLATONOV, ANDREI

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1899–1951  
Russian novelist

From his earliest years as a journalist, poet, and short story writer in the Russian provinces, Platonov made sexuality one of the dominant themes of his work. Apparently influenced by the writings of Nikolai Fiodorovich Fiodorov (1828–1903), whose *Philosophy of the Common Task* [*Filosofiiia obshchego dela*] argued that all sexual feeling and reproductive activity should be sublimated in favor of the physical resurrection of the dead, Platonov wrote a series of articles between 1920 and 1922 arguing that the sexual instinct is a bourgeois holdover: true communists would find fulfillment in comradeship and the construction of socialism rather than in relations with women (for Platonov, the subject was almost always exclusively male). “Communist society,” he wrote in 1920, “is essentially a society of men. . . . Humanity is courage (man) and the embodiment of sex (woman). He who desires the truth cannot desire a woman.” Platonov’s views, though extreme, were very much in the spirit of his times. Although the 1920s in the Soviet Union saw an unprecedented relaxation of both the legal code and sexual mores, as well as an official emphasis on women’s equality, this so-called sexual revolution was counterbalanced by revolutionary asceticism, which stressed personal discipline and the careful husbanding of all one’s energies in order to create the new Soviet world.

By the mid-1920s, Platonov had retreated from his early revolutionary utopianism and had begun to reevaluate his approach to sex and the family. In 1926, he wrote a satirical sketch entitled “Anti-sexus,” which purported to be a brochure for a product designed to rid its user of all sexual feeling. In 1929, he completed his masterpiece, *Chevengur*, a novel that puts his early ideas about gender and sex to the test: twelve men and one woman (clearly the Judas figure) attempt to build socialism in one town, based on male comradeship rather than on the traditional family.

The Chevengurians initially feel that their virtually all-male town will be a comradesly paradise, but after the arrival of a contingent of “miscellaneous” people (homeless, leaderless men who have heard that life is good in Chevengur), the men start to demand the importation of women. The women’s arrival signals the end of the revolutionary experiment. Not long after, nearly everyone is killed by mysterious invaders.

Even as the protagonists espouse their revolutionary idealism, the novel is pervaded with a strong sense of homoeroticism, as well as necrophilia. One of the men who come to Chevengur toward the end of the novel has sex with a woman on his mother’s grave; Sasha Dvanov, the novel’s hero, experiences his first orgasm after he is shot and falls to the ground clutching a horse’s leg. Here as in the rest of Platonov’s work, sexuality’s denial is based on an implicit sense of bodily economy: if energy is released through sexual activity, it depletes body and spirit.

Platonov’s 1930 short novel *Kotlovan* [*The Foundation Pit*] continues the author’s skeptical, yet wistful reassessment of communist utopianism, although the sexual theme is less prominent. The only sensual feelings the male protagonists have toward a female involve a woman who dies early on, leaving behind her young daughter. The novel can be seen as a failed experiment in all-male group parenting: the entire collective of construction workers tries to take care of little Nastia, but the best they can do for her is provide a coffin when she dies. His 1937 short story *Reka Potudan’* [*The Potudan River*] features a young married couple who are able to consummate their relationship only after the husband’s failed suicide attempt. In 1946, Platonov once again shocked the censors with his short story *Sem’ia Ivanova* [*Ivanov’s Family*]. Also known as *Vozvrashchenie* [*The Return*], this story was premised on the scandalous idea that not all wives remained faithful while their husbands were off at war.

In his complicated transition from being a fierce opponent of sex and the family to having

## POGGIO

a guardedly positive outlook on matrimony, Platonov provides the reader with an invaluable perspective on sexuality in early Soviet culture.

### Biography

Born Andrei Platonovich Klimentov in Voronezh, September 1. In 1914, Platonov was forced to interrupt his formal education to help support his family. He served in the Red Army during the Russian Civil War (1917–1920) as both a soldier and a journalist, and graduated from the Voronezh Railroad Polytechnical Institute in 1921. He joined the Communist Party in 1920 but resigned from it in 1921 for ideological and personal reasons. He worked as an electrical engineer and land reclamation expert while beginning his literary career in the early 1920s. Married Maria Kashintseva in 1922, and had two children: Platon and Maria. By the late 1920s, Platonov was having increasing difficulties getting his work published. During World War II, he was a correspondent for the military newspaper *Krasnaya Zvezda* [*Red Star*] and had three novels and a collection published; but after the war his publishing difficulties resumed and he found himself vulnerable to official criticism. In 1938, his son had been arrested, dying in 1943, but not before having infected his father with the tuberculosis that eventually killed him, January 5.

ELIOT BORENSTEIN

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## POGGIO

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1380–1459

Italian humanist

Poggio's pursuits were typical of an early humanist: he was an avid and important collector and noted copier of manuscripts of ancient authors; he was famous for perfecting a clear and elegant italic script; he authored a number of treatises of his own; he engaged in extensive correspondence with humanists across Europe

and published this correspondence, including quarrels with several figures who are noteworthy for the art of obscene invective. To elaborate, Poggio's discoveries were numerous and significant: the first complete copy of Quintilian's *Institutiones*; several orations of Cicero, as well as Asconius's commentary on five orations of Cicero; *De Rerum Naturae* of Lucretius; works of Plautus; and fragments of Petronius and Tacitus; among many others. His own works

include treatises such as *De avaritia*, *De infelicitate principum*, *Contra hypocrites*; he wrote a *History of Florence* and a treatise often cited as the most important early Renaissance archaeological work on Rome, *De varietate fortunae*, noteworthy for its illuminated initial with a portrait of the author.

Poggio also sent forth volumes of his correspondence. Most of these are marked by the full range of interests of a humanist who traveled throughout Europe (including two years spent in England): sharing with friends the excitement of finding manuscripts, the difficulties of living away from Italy, the charms of the baths at Baden, questions of whether and when to marry, and the difficulties of secretarial employment. However, in other letters, Poggio enjoyed engaging in literary and scholarly controversies which in some instances showed him the master of obscene invective. In a series of attacks on his fellow humanist Filelfo, he characterizes Filelfo's assault on his friend Niccolo Niccoli as coming from the "feculent stores of his putrid mouth." He claims that Filelfo inherited his filthy nature from his mother, who was a whore, that he debauched his wife in order to force marriage, and that he later sold her favors, and he concludes his attack by proposing to crown Filelfo not with the laurel branch but with a pile of shit. And he hurls the ultimate Italian insult at Filelfo, calling him a cuckold several times over: Filelfo is a "stinking he-goat," a "horned monster," and one whose forehead is adorned with *i corni*. In attacking Filelfo in such terms, Poggio established a pattern in his use of obscenity in literary quarrels that other humanists were to follow, both in Italy and in England.

### The *Facetiae*

Poggio deserves attention in this volume chiefly for his compilation of the jokes that make up the *Facetiae* (1450). The jests were written in Latin, and by Poggio's own account they "flooded" all of Europe (in fact, several jests were added to the end of Caxton's edition of *Aesop* in 1484, one of the earliest books printed in England). Poggio claims that the jests were the product of frequent gatherings of the papal secretaries in a group he called the *Bugiale*, the place for telling tall tales. The jokes then are the product of a group of

learned men who enjoyed the combination of wit and bawdiness that is found throughout the jests. Given changing mores, we would certainly not categorize the jests as "dirty jokes," but Gershon Legman in his monumental study *The Rationale of the Dirty Joke*, is certainly right when he claims that Poggio transformed the longer *nouvelle* and *fabliau* into a shorter form, often (but not always) with a punch line. Taken as a whole, both in the context provided for the jests and in the details within them, the *Facetiae* gives us a partial picture of the world of the humanists in early Renaissance Italy.

Jokes have to do with the problems of the papacy; several relate to the Council of Constance (attended by Poggio) and the uncertain place of a humanist in a world governed by preferment. Some number of the 272 jests in the collection are bawdy and reflect typical attitudes of the times. The venality and wiliness of the clergy, especially as sexual predators, are prominent features (see especially 5, 6, 44, 45, and 230; all references are to the Hurwood edition). The stupidity of husbands who allow themselves to be cuckolded is a commonplace (1, 5, 156), as are the cleverness and sexual drive of wives (1, 6, 10, 42, 45, 156, and 230). Especially noteworthy are jests 110 and 111, reflecting as they do what Legman and Keith Thomas would call the anxieties of what was supposed to be a male-dominated society. Both jests turn not on punch lines but on the notion that the "marital act" is the "best remedy for all female disorders" (see 24 as well). With urbane wit and appreciation for the comic in sexual experience the *Facetiae* set the pattern both in form and subject matter for the many collections of jests and jokes that were to follow in Italy and across the continent throughout the Renaissance.

### Biography

Giovanni Francesco Poggio Bracciolini was born in Terranuova, near Arezzo, and educated in Florence by the leading figures of the new humanism: Manuel Chrysoloras, Giovanni da Ravenna, and Coluccio Salutati. Poggio served as a papal secretary (chiefly in Rome) from 1403 to 1415 and again from 1423 to 1452. From 1453 to 1458 he held the position of chancellor in Florence, where he died.

DAVID O. FRANTZ

## PORNOGRAPHY

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# PORNOGRAPHY

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Etymologically, *pornography* is a relatively young term dating from its 1850s medical usage, though deriving from the Greek *pornographos*, writing of or about prostitutes. In modern usage it encompasses any literary or visual materials designed to eroticize its audience, i.e., to stimulate sexual feelings and, presumably, desires in its audience. Pornography has been a troubled concept and, accordingly, a troublesome term especially in the last century. By the late 20th century the term had lost its lexical innocence and did not have a uniform consensus definition. One school of feminists argued that pornography was necessarily an agency of male dominance and that its depictions of women were necessarily degrading and in fact generated male violence toward females. This contention had legal implications by virtue of its designation of pornography as not so much a matter of speech (afforded maximal legal latitude in both British Common and United States Constitutional Law) but rather an *act* of violence against women and therefore prosecutable. In the United States this idea gained momentum especially in the 1980s via the vigorous promotion of an anti-pornography ordinance by certain feminists under the banner of Women Against Pornography, or WAP. But in the court proceedings, another school of feminists, designating

themselves the Feminists Against Censorship Taskforce, or FACT, challenged the assumptions informing the ordinance and its definition of pornography as a violent act rather than a legitimate mode of speech. Its primary rebuttal was that pornography was indeed a mode of speech that legally is and culturally ought to be as available to women as it is to men as an agency of self-exploration and knowledge, and its censorship would not only infringe upon free speech but deprive women of a valuable epistemological source. Whatever the merits of these arguments, higher courts in the United States have ruled that the ordinance's language did not meet First Amendment requirements and was therefore unconstitutional.

This decision resolved the legal issue of censorship, but intensive social discourse about the character and effects of pornography continued. To determine whether pornography had discernibly harmful effects, two commissions to study obscenity and its effects were convened in the United States, one in Britain, and one in Canada between 1970 and 1986. The 1970 US, 1979 British, and 1984 Canadian commissions essentially agreed that there was little or no evidence that obscenity caused social harm. The 1986 U.S. commission grudgingly agreed that evidence for harm from obscenity was scarce and problematic,

but nonetheless insisted that there was an “association” between the two. Still, the lack of data support and the court decision noted above dispersed activist censorship campaigns. By the last decade of the 20th century the usage of the term *pornography* had ranged widely, from the descriptively passive (pornography as the depiction of sexual acts and situations) to the editorially modest (pornography as such matter “intended to arouse sexual feelings” [*American Heritage Dictionary*]) to the editorially aggressive (pornography as “a demeaning and sometimes violent representation of sexuality and the body, typically the woman’s” [*Cambridge Encyclopedia*]). But there was effectually no consensus that pornography constituted a social harm.

Licentious, bawdy, and obscene sexual depictions have been extant and even notorious in both East and West since ancient times, but the concept of pornography as a socially transgressive phenomenon seems to have accompanied its Western development, at least from the advent of the printing press. Pietro Aretino’s light pornographic sonnets accompanying Giulio Romano’s drawings, called *Posizioni*, were published in 1524, about 50 years after the printing press came to Italy. They circulated throughout Europe and were the first popular “modern” pornography, in that they were broadcast via printing press and were self-consciously a breach of taste and manners. Their printer was jailed at the behest of the Vatican, and Aretino avoided the same by leaving Rome. His offensiveness to the Church, however, was not due solely to pornography. His *Dialogues* incorporated pornography with satirical depictions of priests, nuns, and the Church. Moreover, as David O. Frantz argues, Aretino integrated sexuality into the general humanistic concerns of his time. Further, Aretino’s satirical posture anticipated the deconstructivist spirit characteristic of such varied successors in the tradition as John Cleland, the Marquis de Sade, Aubrey Beardsley, Guillaume Apollinaire, D.H. Lawrence, Georges Bataille, and William S. Burroughs.

That there is a legitimate literary tradition of pornography suggests not only the customary distinctions between “soft core” and “hard core” pornography but also its aesthetic function. Hard-core pornography represents explicit sex, usually depicting genitalia in action and usually to the end of eroticizing its audience,

though it may also employ other, subordinate motifs. Soft-core pornography may represent explicit sex but usually within what is perceived to be an acceptable standard of taste and usually subordinate to other motifs, particularly sentimental or parodic ones. While hard-core’s principal functions are to evoke sexual obscenity and thereby encourage libido, soft-core tends rather to allude to these things and is consequently more restrained or decorous. These two forms are essentially commercial and are said to constitute an “industry,” one that is bigger in the aggregate (magazines, videos, films, photographs, books) than the film or record industries in the United States. A third form, which has been called artistic pornography, may represent explicit genital sex but integrates sexuality as a theme or rhetoric into a context for an aesthetic, usually transgressive, purpose.

All of these forms are sometimes confused with the erotic, but pornography and erotica are distinct. Erotic works evoke sex in the context of physical love, so as to subordinate the former to the latter. For example, Radclyffe Hall’s novel *The Well of Loneliness* is about sexual love, but it subordinates sex to love so as to be unequivocally erotic. Pornography of any degree functions in terms of the obscene—the more hard core, the more conspicuous the obscenity. For example, Pauline Réage’s novel *The Story of O* is about sexual love, but it so casts love in terms of an obscene sexual imperative that it is unequivocally pornographic. Some readers might well consider it hard-core pornography by virtue of its obscenity, but others have considered it at once hard-core, obscene, and artistic. The fluidity of aesthetic dynamics, critical judgment, and public discourse in the face of free-speech traditions and laws has made censorship of pornography via categorization problematic and in general unsuccessful.

In the early years of the 21st century, pornography may be theoretically equivocal but it is pragmatically pervasive as an entertainment industry in movies, television, journalism, pop music, paraphernalia, and books. The postmodern era of the 20th century manifested a radical change in public tolerance of obscenity and pornography, or at least in the ways it defined and/or understood these things to be. This change was very likely facilitated by the integration of mainstream aesthetics into a long-developing literary and artistic underground legacy of



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naturalism, vulgarity, obscenity, and pornography, as exemplified in works by Jonathan Swift, William Blake, the Marquis de Sade, Walt Whitman, Honore de Balzac, Emile Zola, Guillaume Apollinaire, James Joyce, and D. H. Lawrence. It asserted itself in novels (e.g., Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer*), poetry (e.g., Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*), movies (e.g., Bertolucci's *Last Tango in Paris*), theater (e.g., Richard Foreman's *Dionysus in '69*), etc. And in the last quarter or so of the 20th century a substantial body of critical commentary developed a discourse on the subject, along with an increasing body of creative work.

PETER MICHELSON

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# POSITIONS

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All civilizations have produced erotic handbooks. Whereas many cultural or religious traditions demand that the sexual act be conducted in the darkness of the night, *ars erotica* insists upon doing it with the lights on. The erotic handbook overturns the notion of desire as causing the subject to panic and lose his or her composure and to be thrown blindly into the ecstasy of possession (as in the Dionysian mysteries). On the contrary, it is about mastering pleasure, organizing the search for it, and methodically ruling over the torrid relations between the sexes.

A book on sexual positions can take many forms. It can be a compendium of anecdotes, a collection of love stories, a catalog of the world's resources, a gradual arrangement of the figures (from the basic position to the most complex), a book of wisdom, or a medical treatise. Each time, it appears as a reading of how a civilization

exposes itself, with its rites, beliefs, history, and imagination. The great *Kâma Sûtra* of Vâtsyâyana (who drew inspiration from ancient love codes, or *shastras*) teaches the 64 talents or arts of pleasure, the seven types of union, the three types of kisses a young girl asks for (nominal, shifting, and touching, to which four more are added), the four basic embraces ("ivy," "tree climber," "blend of sesame with rice," "blend of milk with water"), the different "passion marks," done with scratching or biting; and the eight types of screams that correspond to the ways of striking blows during lovemaking. To further the didactic aid in executing the positions, it classifies men and women according to the size of their sexual organs.

The *Tao-te Ching* seeks to promote the harmony between "the rod" and "the jade door." Li Tong-hsuan's *Tong-hsuan tze* differentiates between nine types of penetration (e.g., "like a

courageous warrior attempting to disperse the enemy ranks,” “like a flock of seagulls playing in the waves”) and four basic positions, from which 26 variations can be developed (e.g., “the silkworm spinning its cocoon,” “the mandarin ducks,” “the white tiger that pounces”). Japan has its “pillow books,” which list the many ways to do it, consulted by lovers before making love and given by courtesans to their patrons to read. Al-Jahiz’s *Book of the Respective Merits of Maidens and Young Men* is the most ancient treatise of Arab erotology, echoed in the 15th century by Sidi Mohammed el Nefzaoui’s *Scented Garden* and, a century later, Ahmed Ibn Souleimân’s *Return of the Sheik to His Youth for Vigor and Coitus*.

Ancient Greece has given us Astyanassa, Helen’s servant, who was well versed in the art of changing coital positions. It was Astyanassa who popularized the books on sexual positions by the maidens Philaenis and Elephantis; Paxamus’s *Dodecatechnon*, which, according to Suidas, lists 12 positions; and Cyrene, the famous hetaira, or sexual entertainer, nicknamed Dodecamechanos because she knew how to practice all 12. To these must be added the didactic, elegiac, or satirical “arts of love” from the Roman poets. Medieval European nouvelles contained many erotic figures, depending on the hero’s talents or geographical origins. It was with Aretino (1492–1556), however, that the catalog of sexual positions triumphed in the West. Beyond the *Sonetti lussuriosi* [*Lewd Sonnets*], Aretino’s *Ragionamenti* [*Discussions*] introduces a long series of educational talks in which appears “the teaching whore,” who transmits her knowledge to a young novice. Through the *Dialogues* that punctuated the history of erotic literature in the 17th and 18th centuries, the number of sexual positions increased from 32 to more than 50, all listed and annotated. In 1790 the French Revolution made best sellers of *Quarante manières de foutre* [*Forty Ways to Fuck*] and *Les travaux d’Hercule ou la rocambole de la fouterie* [*Hercules’ Works, or the Attraction of Fucking*], the last edition of which would bring to 15 the feats of the demigod.

Books on sexual positions triumphed in the 18th century because the Enlightenment believed in the sociability of pleasure, linked to the mechanics of the body. The sexual scene was

no longer archaic, terrifying, and primitive. It was in harmony with the general sharing of knowledge; it could be controlled and improved upon; there was a positivity of pleasure, to which was added the bliss of numbers (up to Sade’s *120 Days of Sodom*) and illustrations—for no book on fuck positions can do without illustrations.

Marcantonio Raimondi engraved *I modi*, a series by Giulio Romano, for which Aretino composed his sonnetti. Titian, Carracci, and many classical painters and engravers illustrated sexual positions. From the Japanese pillow books to the *Quarante manières de foutre*, engravings constituted an essential element. They picked up where religious or scientific iconography left off, to disseminate practical and anatomical knowledge. They were offered as an initiation and also as a stimulant, an incitement to act. Simple form and mental image, dynamic line and universal representation, the drawing of positions make up an alphabet. The representation of the sexes in their union introduced into the world a “schematic” perception, between reality and language, at the point of entry into the world of signs. The picture does not merely replicate the motion of the body, however; it portrays the vitality of the body during the burst of desire. The sexual tableau thus endows the body with the nature of a spectacle. The graffiti of a phallus, a vulva, or two joined bodies might have been the first “image” rendered by humans, to thenceforth be indefinitely conjugated by books of positions.

PATRICK WALD LASOWSKI

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## POTTER, WILLIAM SIMPSON

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1805–1879

English businessman, bibliophile, and writer

William S. Potter was the founding partner in a coal firm who shared a love of erotic books with Monckton Milnes (Lord Houghton), Sir James Plaisted Wilde (Lord Penzance), James Campbell Reddie, Frederick Popham Pike, Edward Bellamy, and George Augustus Sala. Rumor has it that their novel *The Romance of Lust* was written by these men in a round-robin fashion and then edited by Potter during a journey to the Far East. According to Peter Mendes, William Lazenby (alias Duncan Cameron and possibly Thomas Judd)—one of the main British pornographers during the 1870s and 1880s—published *The Romance of Lust* in four volumes between 1873 and 1876. Shortly after, he fled to Paris to escape a sentence of two years at hard labor for violating obscenity laws. *The Romance of Lust* stands as one of the most expensive pieces of Victorian pornography, costing upward of £10 in 1892, one of the longest at over 600 pages, and one of the best-known pieces of the period (running second place to *My Secret Life* in all categories).

It also has been singled out, quite unfairly, as one of the worst pieces of pornography from the Victorian age. Henry Spencer Ashbee believed that “it contains scenes not surpassed by the most libidinous chapters of *Justine*. The episodes, however, are frequently improbable, sometimes impossible, and are as a rule too filthy and crapulous” (Ashbee: 185). Henry Miles argued that “attempted ‘psychological interpretations’ may well be stumbling over bad grammar” and that “it takes a special sort of genius to create such a ludicrous situation in such a manner” (Miles: 48–9). Finally, Steven Marcus felt that it “could in fact only have been imagined by persons who have suffered extreme deprivation” (Marcus: 274). *The Romance of Lust* does not deserve the scorn, but neither will it win awards for craftsmanship; instead, as a novel it combines a Victorian attention to detail with an almost Malthusian attention to

geometric progressions. Whereas Malthus explained the geometric consequences of procreation, the *Romance of Lust* explores the geometric possibilities for copulation.

*The Romance of Lust* chronicles an adolescent boy’s growth to adulthood almost exclusively through his sexual awakening and activities. The narrator, Charlie, tells of his erotic history that began when he was fifteen years old and his father’s death left him to become man of the house. Although he is treated as a child and kept in the nursery, he lusts for his governess and engages in sexual play with his two sisters. He quickly receives a sexual education—oral, genital, and anal—from an older woman who eventually shares him with another female friend. He, in turn, enlightens his sisters. From there, Charlie’s sexual exploits begin to ramify, as every conceivable associate in a middle-class life—family friends, family members, servants, teachers, school chums, chance acquaintances—becomes a sexual partner.

In many ways, *The Romance of Lust* uses literary conventions typical of the Victorian novel, like the premise of the orphaned boy, the liminality of the governess, and the endless rounds of country visiting. While more standard Victorian novels use these conventions to explore tensions and ambiguities in a time of social flux, *The Romance of Life* sexualizes them, removing any complications or any need for change. Instead, the novel allows lust to be the only possible motive, a sense of gratified affection between characters to be the only bond or emotion, and sexual activities as the cure-all for all social problems. In doing so, *The Romance of Lust* offers a radically different view of Victorian life from that of mainstream literature but one that lacks any urgency or self-reflection.

Written as a series of vignettes tied together by the continuity in characters and settings, the book examines the sexual combinations available to the boy. The most banal of acts—walking on the beach, going to school, making new friends, talking with family—leads to intercourse, and all intercourse is equally pleasing.

Oral, anal, and genital stimulation give an interchangeable pleasure; pleasure can only be doubled, or tripled, with multiple acts. Incest, menage, anal intercourse, male–male relations, lesbianism, flagellation, wife swapping become commonplace, as the narrator describes them with little tension or reflection. Through sheer repetition, intercourse dominates the sexual, familial, and social world. Each vignette in the novel is composed of the introduction of a new character or scene followed by intercourse and orgasm, and in each case the process builds only to repeat itself. The text gives organs, individuals, social relationships, and locations meaning by their relationship to sexual pleasures. The proliferation of characters and sexual acts gives the novel a circus-like quality in some places, as it tries to detail who does what to whom with multiple partners and overlapping sexual acts. These orgies overwhelm the abilities of the writer(s), and instead of a clear narrative, the reader is left with a sense of disembodied organs tied together through a profusion of orgasms.

Steven Marcus sees the novel as divesting the sexes of difference; both men and women have the same passions and each enjoys the same pleasures. Dildos and enlarged clitorises make women capable of insertion, and anal intercourse allows men to enjoy being penetrated. In some ways, the paring down of gender and sexual differences through an equality of organs and acts makes this work subversive in the rights to pleasure that it authorizes. However, the circus-like quality, the cursory character development in which individuality is developed only through the size of one's bum, and the interchangeability of characters

throughout the work ultimately create a sense that women as well as men are mere sexual automatons. This perhaps is the work's most enduring feature and its most telling point about Victorian life. An addenda to the work includes letters from the Cavendish vs. Cavendish and Rochefoucault divorce cases (over which James Plaisted Wilde presided). The descriptive capacities of the letters are superior to that of the novel, but only slightly, hinting that perhaps the literary flaws of the novel are in fact a form of frankness about the lack of emotional attachment in Victorian sexual relations.

LISA Z. SIGEL

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## POUGY, LIANE DE

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1869–1950

French courtesan and novelist

Anne-Marie Olympe Chassaigne was born in La Flèche, a town some two hundred miles southwest of Paris, into a military family. A few days after

her seventeenth birthday, she herself was married off to a naval ensign seven years her senior, giving birth to a son in 1887. The marriage was not a success; within three years, Anne-Marie was installed in Paris, having been ignominiously divorced by her husband, who had caught her

*in flagrante delicto* with a fellow officer. In Paris, Anne-Marie would seem to have had the good luck to fall in with Madame Valtesse de La Bigne, a once-fashionable courtesan (the former mistress of Offenbach and Napoleon III and reputed to have been the principal model for Zola's *Nana*) who lived on the other side of the Parc Monceau. This borderland between the 8th and 17th arrondissements was one of the favored residential areas of the demimonde, and there can be no doubt that Anne-Marie, who had by now adopted her famous sobriquet Liane de Pougy, was intent on making her mark.

Among the various men who showered money and jewelry on her were Lord Carnarvon, the celebrated Egyptologist (whose interests were also rumored to include flagellation); Charles de MacMahon (nephew of the field marshal who earned fame in the Crimean War and the battle of Magenta); the Maharajah of Kapurtala (who, according to gossip, proposed marriage to her if she would return with him to India); Henri Meilhac, the wealthy playwright and librettist (about whom a story circulated that he paid her 80,000 francs just to be able to gaze on her naked body); Roman Potocki, a Polish count; Albert Robin, a society doctor (Liane's attempted suicide outside his home earned her further notoriety); Maurice de Rothschild, an eighteen-year-old member of the famous banking clan (who was quickly packed off by the family to England); several English lords (the future Edward VII was said to be not entirely immune to her charm); and, finally, around 1907, Henri Bernstein, a rising, but emotionally overwrought, young playwright. But this list is by no means comprehensive, especially with regard to relationships forged during her travels abroad. Toward the turn of the century, her conduct became even more scandalous as she embarked on a brief but passionate relationship with the American heiress Natalie Clifford Barney (1876–1972).

The fact that so much is known about Liane de Pougy's life explains her very popularity: she was, in essence, the product of her own celebrity. Early in her career, she had learned the value of publicity. Ephemeral periodicals such as *Gil Blas* and *Fantasio* trumpeted her initial conquests and triumphs. After a brief period of mutual misunderstanding, her friendship with Jean Lorrain (1855–1906), one of the main guardians of the Decadent flame, opened his widely read "Pall Mall" column in *Le Journal* to her, even

providing readers with the recipe for a fruit salad soaked in ice-cold champagne and ether that she is supposed to have served her guests (this is almost certainly a fantasy of the author, who was an ether addict). Though an indifferent actress (Sarah Bernhardt is supposed to have advised her to open her mouth only to smile), she appeared in a succession of spectacles, including Lorrain's *L'Araignée d'or* (1896), a short *conte féerique* [fairy tale] at the Folies-Bergère, which kept her in the public eye.

Last but not least, she also celebrated her life as a courtesan in a series of thinly disguised autobiographical novels. The first of these, and by far the most successful, was *L'Insaisissable* (1898), which recounts the amorous adventures of a courtesan named Josiane de Valneige with a sequence of lovers whose real-life counterparts were easily identifiable to a readership that had already followed the author's own exploits in the Parisian press. It was followed the next year by *Myrrhille*, which was serialized in *Gil Blas* prior to publication in book form. *Idylle saphique* (1901) rehearses Liane's affair (and its conclusion) with Natalie Clifford Barney (who become, respectively, Annhine and Flossie). *Ecce homo* (1903), despite its allusion to Nietzsche, contained little fresh material. *Les Sensations de Mademoiselle de La Bringue* (1904), her fifth and most densely populated novel, is also the least coherent. The work bristles with references to a perplexing variety of Parisian social groups, ranging from the demimonde (including real-life rivals such as Cléo de Mérode, who appears as Méo de la Clef) to the Sâr Péladan's twilight world of occultists (including scenes depicting a Roman orgy and a black mass) (see *Péladan, Joséphin*) to literary and theatrical circles. Finally, the series is completed by *Yvée Lester* (1906) and its sequel *Yvée Jourdan* (1908), which treat the subject of lesbianism in a quasi-mystical manner generally lacking in sensational elements.

Though Liane de Pougy obviously did not invent the *roman à clef* (and it is worth remembering in this connection that Valtesse de La Bigne had published an autobiographical novel called *Isola* as early as 1876), her utilization of the form for purposes of self-promotion was perhaps rivaled only by Willy, Colette's first husband. By the time the last of her seven novels appeared, Liane's career as a courtesan was almost over.

In the spring of 1908, she met Georges Ghika, a Romanian prince and a nephew of the queen

of Greece. At twenty-four, he was also Liane de Pougy's junior by more than 15 years. Despite the objections of Ghika's family, who were less than delighted at the prospect of welcoming a former courtesan into their aristocratic ranks, the couple wed in 1910. Curiously, this ill-assorted pair managed to weather most of the storms of life together for the next 35 years: through the First World War (Liane's son, Marco, an aviator, died in an accident toward the beginning of the conflict); the financial instability of the interwar years, during which time Liane's savings were constantly eroded; the excesses of travel and increasing ill health; and the search for a safe haven as the clouds of war mounted again in the 1930s. The couple settled in Switzerland; Ghika died suddenly of a cerebral hemorrhage in 1945. As was often the case with the men in her life, Prince Ghika was guilty of a number of sexual peccadilloes, involving voyeurism, exhibitionism, and onanism. Though Liane chided him for these singularities in her private diary, it was only when he began an affair in 1926 with Manon Thiébaud, a young artist whom Liane herself had befriended, that a rupture occurred, and even that was patched up the following year. After Georges Ghika's death, Liane became increasingly drawn to religion, donning the habit of Sister Mary Magdalene of the Penitence and entering a Dominican convent in Lausanne. In 1977, the publication of *Mes cahiers bleus*, Liane's intimate diary, provided considerable insight into her life during the interwar years.

With her marriage, Liane seemed to leave the old life behind; indeed, for some commentators, the event marks the end of *la belle époque*—with

its acquisitive courtesans and excessive displays of wealth and patronage—with as much finality as did the outbreak of the First World War four years later. Liane's reputation, however, outlived her withdrawal from Parisian society. Marcel Proust, who was by no means pleased to learn that Reynaldo Hahn, his lover, had passed a night of passion with her (an experience not renewed), modeled certain characteristics of Odette de Crécy in *A la recherche du temps perdu* on her. But Liane's presence may equally be seen behind several of Jean Lorrain's more bizarre female characters, as well as in works such as Gabriele d'Annunzio's *Il fuoco* (1900) and Colette's *Chéri* (1920).

TERRY HALE

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## PRITCHARD, MARK

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1956–  
 United States writer, activist, publisher

Mark Pritchard is known as much for his queer activism as for his erotic writing. Having spent his youth in the repression of Midwestern

suburbia, followed by two years in Japan, he embraced the sexual freedom of expression offered by San Francisco. Although he'd written for his college newspaper and created theater pieces as a student and young adult in Austin, Texas, his writing became more subversive

## PRITCHARD, MARK

through the 1980s, culminating in his decision to establish the small-press/underground magazine, or “zine,” *Frighten the Horses: A Document of the Sexual Revolution*.

The zine’s launch was only one expression of Pritchard’s burgeoning activism. Through his volunteer efforts with Queer Nation, Street Patrol, and San Francisco Sex Information (SFSI), he played a significant role in shaping San Francisco’s queer climate in the early 1990s.

He had been writing erotica since at least the mid-1980s, but suspected that its content was too transgressive and *outré* for most publishers. Partly for this reason, he founded *Frighten the Horses* in 1990. Pritchard’s intention was to publish transgressive sex writing alongside news and features that explored the way women and queer people continued the sexual revolution of the previous decades. “I had a vision of how sex fiction and real events informed each other,” Pritchard said.

Pritchard saw what sexual repression did to people and how misinformation about the GLBT (gay-lesbian-bisexual-transsexual/-vestite /-gendered) community often led directly to ignorance as well as hatred. His years of activism and writing reflected his desire to fight these misconceptions and ignorance and to ensure that disenfranchised voices were not only heard but respected.

One of the ways in which he chose to represent those disenfranchised voices was through more “honest” representations of the sexual experience in literature. Although he was heavily influenced by the Anaïs Nin version of erotica that was popular when his erotic consciousness emerged, he gradually became aware of the euphemistic treatment of sexual matters in such work. He sought to “call things by their own names,” he said.

In 1999, his first collection of short stories, *Too Beautiful*, was published by Masquerade Books (and later reprinted by Cleis Press). It presents an exploration of bisexuality, the “meaning” of penetration and anal play for heterosexual men, and the possibility of finding love and transcendence through open relationships. His blatant sexual writing was not limited to empty pornographic scenes but, rather, delved into a plethora of sexual orientations and the complicated, powerful emotions behind sexual acts.

Take this excerpt from his short story “How I Adore You,” in which one woman struggles

with showing her desire for another woman. Notice that the focus is not on the sex act itself but on the emotions and insecurities behind it:

She doesn’t really want you, I told myself, forcing myself not to grind back against her face. I made my hips dance a very light pattern as she put her tongue against my clit. She doesn’t want you, I said to myself over and over again, so don’t show her you want her.

“Oh,” I let myself say. It meant, Elena, your mouth on me is like the whole fucking ocean. Your mouth is perfect just to look at, and the thought of it, just the thought of your mouth, is enough to make me wet. Just the idea of it being against my pussy is enough to make me come. So what does it mean for you to actually be pressing your lips against me, sucking on my clit, making me do this?

I let my breaths tell the rest of it. My mind went somewhere where she was sticking long needles into my pussy lips in such a way that the pussy was not shut but pinned open widely, so that to be fucked would simply drive the needles deeper into me.

That’s the kind of thing I don’t let myself say or really talk about.

Writer Pat Califia’s work also inspired him to write more realistically about sex and about the people engaged in it. As the entire erotica genre entered a new phase of no-holds-barred sexual exploration, Pritchard began to make no distinction between pornography and erotica. In fact, he came to understand that the more honest—even transgressive—erotica became, the hotter it was.

His writing faces themes from incest to drugs to sadomasochism. In *Too Beautiful*, stories run the gamut from dominant/submissive fantasies to one particularly controversial piece called “Lizza,” the wild chronicle of incestuous siblings so obsessed with breaking taboos that they careen from downright fierce sex with each other to a violent crime spree. The stories are rarely autobiographical but are influenced heavily by the era in which his activism peaked. “I tried to capture the energy of a time and place, namely early 1990s San Francisco,” Pritchard explains. “In the same way that David Wojnarowicz and Kathy Acker captured the energy of the late ’70s and early ’80s New York City, I wanted to capture early ’90s San Francisco.”

Pritchard’s latest writing efforts are not erotica based, but he believes that erotica provided

a “very useful training ground” for him as a fiction writer. “I tried to use my erotica writing as an apprenticeship to fiction, learning how to construct a story, learn timing and pacing, how to write dialogue, how to write descriptions, and most of all, avoid clichés. Avoiding clichés is particularly important for genre writers because it’s all been done before. How many different ways can you write about fucking? How many different ways can you describe cocksucking? The answer is that it’s the context that makes it interesting to read about.”

Pritchard is currently writing novels, none of which, at this writing, is scheduled for publication.

### Biography

Born in St. Louis, April 28. Moved to southern Illinois in 1957, and suburban Houston, Texas, in 1970. Began to experiment with dance and performance art, as well as writing while at the

University of Texas at Austin in 1977. Moved to San Francisco, 1979. Taught high school in San Francisco, 1985–1986. Taught English in Japan, 1987–1988. Queer activism from 1989 to 1993. With Cris Gutierrez, published and coedited the zine *Frighten the Horses*, 1990–1994. Married Cris Gutierrez in 2003.

SAGE VIVANT (JILL TERRY)

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## PRIVATE CASE

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Segregated cabinet in the British Library

The presence of erotica in great national and academic libraries is not something that is generally advertised but may well be suspected. Often erotic books are merely catalogued in the normal way and lost amidst their more respectable brethren. Sometimes, as with the “Enfer” [Inferno] of the Bibliothèque Nationale or the agreeably punning Φ [fi!] pressmark of the Bodleian Library, Oxford, erotic works are segregated or given special shelf-location codes to distinguish them, but they have always been included in the printed catalogues.

By contrast the British Library took a different course entirely, maintaining for almost 100 years a secret catalogue of its holdings and enforcing special rules on those readers diligent enough to discover what treasures were literally

locked away in the glass-fronted cases of the Arch Room of the old Library at Bloomsbury.

The precise origins of the Private Case are uncertain, and a number of theories on the subject have been proposed. However, the most likely would seem to have been a desire to conceal books that were thought of, in earlier times, as being obscene rather than merely erotic. This would account for the large number of medical or sexological books in the collection until the mid-1960s, as well as the presence of novels like *Naked Lunch* by William Burroughs, which by no stretch of the imagination could be described as erotic.

The earliest entry into the Private Case that I know of is a verse satire called *Paradise Lost; or The Great Dragon Cast Out* (London, 1838) by “Lucian Redivivus.” This was acquired by the British Library in 1841 and was probably kept in



## PRIVATE CASE

a cupboard in the keeper's office. Since the collection remained at first relatively small, numeric pressmarks were deemed unnecessary, but eventually the confines of the keeper's cupboard became somewhat restrictive and around 1865 more generous accommodations had to be found, and with them numeric pressmarks. *Paradise Lost* acquired the shelf location P.C. 20. b. 12, but was later "desegregated," as the process is called, to the less restrictive pressmark 1077. d. 70.

The growth of the Private Case was at first slow. Some of the books—for example, Vize-telly's splendid series of unexpurgated translations of Zola—were acquired through the operation of the British copyright laws, which demand that copies of each book published in the United Kingdom be deposited with a number of the nation's major research libraries, including the British Library. Others were purchased with public money, which is perhaps why there are so few mentions of the Private Case and its contents to be found in the minutes of the trustees.

The collection received its first major boost in 1900 with the Ashbee bequest. Henry Spencer Ashbee accumulated one of the best Cervantes collections outside Spain. He also had a substantial erotica collection, which the British Library accepted with rather less enthusiasm, and there is evidence to suggest that many mid- to late-Victorian English erotic books in the collection were destroyed by the Library as being of no value—a pity, since in many cases Ashbee's descriptions of these books in his celebrated three-volume bibliography of erotica are all that we know about them. The books the Library kept can be identified by a small leather label or the accession date stamp of November 10 1900.

Throughout the 20th century, the collection grew thanks to the efforts of Dr. E.J. Dingwall, an honorary assistant keeper in the Department of Printed Books, who apparently purchased for

the Library individual books and small collections with his own money. Other bequests, and the transfer of the small Guildhall Library collection to the Private Case in 1950, further enlarged the holdings, until in 1964, the massive Dawes bequest elevated the Private Case to one of the finest collections of its kind in the world.

During the late 1960s, a decision was made to enter the Private Case books into the General Catalogue. By then, the collection amounted to almost 2,800 titles. The process of recataloguing involved checking each volume to see whether, in the light of changing attitudes, they still deserved to be there or could be safely desegregated. A little over 800 titles were weeded out in this way and reshelved in other, less restricted areas of the Library.

As of 1991, the Private Case contained about 1,950 titles. Additions are no doubt made from time to time, but with pornography freely available and a more liberal view of what's acceptable, these are infrequent. Where books are added to the collection today it seems likely that the reason has more to do with their rarity than their indecency.

PATRICK J. KEARNEY

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# PROSTITUTION

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Prostitution covers a wide variety of behaviors and activities; not surprisingly it offers poets, playwrights, and novelists rich subject matter, figuring metonymically for other behaviors, attitudes, and ideals. In erotic literature dating from before the middle of the 20th century, the prostitute is generally viewed as a threat: to masculinity, to the social order, to “good” women. However, the rise of the prostitutes’ rights movement and other shifts in representations of female sexuality have offered new versions of the prostitute: her illicit sexuality and erotic explorations suggest economic and personal freedom.

One of the earliest prostitutes in literature, the unnamed “harlot” in the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh* civilized Gilgamesh’s companion, Enkidu. She taught him to dress, bathe, and drink wine, but Enkidu cursed her for destroying his power over animals. Obviously, this narrative suggests that the luxury associated with women corrupts masculinity, a familiar theme.

The prostitute character is central to the theatrical canon. Shakespeare’s *Othello* has Bianca, Behn’s *Rover* includes Angelica, and Brecht’s *Mother Courage and her Children* features Yvette. The prostitute in most canonical plays is usually a peripheral figure who displaces tension over correct female behavior in the main plot or serves as a vehicle for the playwright’s larger argument. Bianca’s promiscuity shadows Desdemona’s supposed infidelity, making literal Othello’s assumptions about women’s “natural” inclinations. In *The Rover*, Angelica is a spectacular figure; Restoration audiences were preoccupied with depictions of sexuality, especially female sexuality, and Angelica provides the body on which some of the play’s more obscene jokes and subplots are written. Brecht’s whores (Pirate Jenny from *The Three-Penny Opera*, Shen Te from *Good Woman of Setzuan*, and Yvette) stand in for the evils of capitalism. These three examples demonstrate the elasticity of the prostitute metaphor; that these three are exemplars rather than exceptions suggests that the prostitutes’ erotic presence thrilled theatre audiences.

Before the 19th-century, few plays featured prostitutes as the central dramatic focus. However, the 19th century fully exploited the dramatic potential of prostitution narratives: “courtesan plays” were immensely popular. Alexandre Dumas  *fils’ La Dame aux camellias* (*Camille*) is the paradigm here. *Camille*, first produced in Paris in 1849, tells the story of beautiful, desirable Marguerite, a courtesan available to characters in the play and the gaze of the audience. Marguerite dances about her Parisian apartments, bosom heaving; is kissed and fondled by the male characters; and finally dies for the entirety of the final act, falling across couches and beds, onto the floor, and into the arms of her friends and lovers. Marguerite provided erotic spectacle for audience members titillated by the visual representation of a courtesan. Her story of sacrifice and sensuality solidified into a pervasive representation of the theatrical prostitute: she is initially shallow and greedy, but true love brings out her best instincts and she dies rather than continue to pollute her family, friends, and lovers.

These plays and countless imitations present an image of the doomed and morally flawed woman. This theatrical narrative parallels 19th-century novelistic treatments of the fallen woman. The narrative of the fall contained prostitutes in the passive, victim role, and attempted to discursively erase their threat to middle-class ideology. Zola’s *Nana* and Balzac’s *Esther* are both terrifying figures; though ignorant and illiterate, they unleash the depravity suppressed by the bourgeois codes of middle-class society from which they seduce their “victims.” Their awesome sexual power is narratively contained, as both women die in diseased corruption. Victorian British novelists also pursued the fallen-woman narrative, albeit with less emphasis on the prostitutes’ activities than her moral attitude toward them. For example, Thomas Hardy’s *Tess of the d’Urbervilles* is less the story of the initial fall than Tess’s struggle to reassert a moral compass. This discursive representation of prostitution had material effects in the nineteenth

## PROSTITUTION

century. Prostitutes were conceived of as so-called fallen women who necessarily died alone and diseased soon after their initial seduction, and so European and American rescue efforts of prostitutes focused on instilling bourgeois moral values into them rather than offering them specific job skills.

Though high- and middle-brow theatre and literature successfully adapt the prostitute to a variety of rhetorical effects, erotic literature also uses the prostitute. For example, the Roman *Satyricon* contains several stories of sexual excess where the prostitute figures as a central trope, again corrupting masculine power through luxury and weakness. John Cleland's *Fanny Hill, or Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* and Daniel Defoe's *Moll Flanders* are two early modern examples of highbrow, literary erotica. In both stories, the innocent girl learns her own sensuality through experimentation before embarking on a career as a prostitute. Shocking when published, and shocking now for its depiction of early modern female sexuality, this erotic literature suggests both corruption and sexual freedom. De Sade also includes prostitutes in his narratives, often using their experience to teach him or the young women under his tutelage new sexual techniques. In important ways, erotica of the 17th to 19th centuries offers prostitutes as representing the limits of all female sexuality; their sexual excess is the extreme with which all female sexual behavior can be compared.

In twentieth-century Western erotic literature, prostitutes are still repositories of sexual knowledge and advanced technique but are rarely depicted as either fallen or depraved. This shift reflects the prostitutes' rights movement, which insists on the agency (sexual and otherwise) of the prostitute. For example, Tracy Quan's *Diary of a Manhattan Call Girl* chronicles the adventures of Nancy Chan, a high-priced, high-class escort. Chan's experiences are clearly modeled on Quan herself, a working prostitute and the activist founder of Prostitutes of New York (PONY). Chan/Quan detailed her sexual encounters with clients in graphic detail but also

included her struggle as a woman of color seeking entry into the prostitutes' rights movement. Prostitutes and sex-positive feminists are increasingly writing erotic narratives (Xavier Hollander's hugely successful *The Happy Hooker* [1972] was an early entry into autobiographical aboveground prostitute erotica), inflecting graphic depictions of sexual adventures with an awareness of the prostitutes' own pleasure and the parallels between sexual and other freedoms.

KIRSTEN PULLEN

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# PULP FICTION

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The term *pulp fiction* most often refers to a class of paperback books published in Britain and the United States during the post–World War II period, employing a characteristically colorful style of cover art and exploiting sensational themes of criminality and sexuality. While attempts had been made since at least the 19th century to mass-distribute entire novels in paperback form, certain technological advances made in the late 1930s made this mode of publishing increasingly economical and lucrative following World War II. Among these advances were cheaper and faster paper-making techniques (hence the term *pulp*) and improvements in color reproduction and binding technologies. Added to these was the idea of taking manuscripts directly from the author to paperback, giving unknown authors publishing opportunities and thus saving the cost of paying high manuscript advances and/or paying for expensive reprint rights on hardcover best sellers and classics. An early edition of William Burroughs' novel *Junky*, published in 1953 in paperback by Ace Publications, exemplifies all of the qualities of pulp fiction. Treating what was considered a highly sensational theme and involving much of the kind of material that a congressional committee had termed obscene in the previous year, this novel by an unknown author cost its publisher little and eventually proved a very good investment.

Another innovation, in distribution, was led by the Fawcett publishing house in 1939. Fawcett, which had formerly published only magazines, hit on the idea of distributing books through channels formerly reserved for periodical publications. The lower cost of production made this mass distribution possible. In the postwar United States, pulp paperbacks were available (usually in revolving racks) in virtually every drugstore, bus station, train station, and laundromat. Rachel Bowlby has documented a similar development in Britain, where the W.H. Smith chain of book and stationery stores had placed branches in all major rail stations by the mid-20th century. This led to the rise of the

cheap “commuter novel,” intended for reading on short train journeys. Alison Hennegan recalls her first sight of one such novel in a London train station in the 1950s. It was a paperback reprint of a classic novel with a lesbian theme—made obvious by lurid cover art which the young writer found immediately desirable and which her mother found objectionable. The incident illustrates the nature of the sexual messages and interactions which occurred around pulp paperbacks throughout the postwar decades.

Along with drugs and violent crime, sexual identity has been a major preoccupation of the pulp paperback genre. Both the cover art and promotional blurbs exploit the position of women as objects of desire in the culture at large, and often add to this the sensational theme of “perversion.” Thus lesbians become the perfect marketing tool, and lesbian fiction is perhaps the best-remembered form of the pulp paperbacks of the postwar era. However, pulp houses published many books on the theme of male homosexuality. *Twilight Men: The Story of a Homosexual*, published by Lion Books in 1952, is a good example. It advertised itself on the cover as “the definitive novel on the homosexual male, a frank and honest account of the subject that had always before been spoken of in whispers and medical case histories.” It is important to note the mention of medical case histories here. All forms of pulp erotica exploited the association of medical inquiry with so-called sexual perversion. In 1959, Collier published Sigmund Freud's *Fragment of an Analysis of a Case of Hysteria* (often referred to as the “Dora case”) inside a sensational cover featuring a woman in a half-laced corset. The cover blurbs make much of Freud's incidental mention of his patient's possible lesbian desires.

In the United States in 1952 a special committee was formed in the House of Representatives for the investigation of then-current pornographic materials. This committee is often referred to as the Gathing's Committee, after the name of the senator who chaired it. In reality, it was an attempt at gaining federal support for

ensorship moves made by local governments and police forces. Over a month the committee examined pulp paperback fiction alongside periodical and mail order publishing. A senior executive of Fawcett Publishing testified, and among the novels examined were *She Made It Pay* by Les Scott, *Spring Fire* by Vin Packer (see *Meaker, Marijane*), and *Women's Barracks* by Tereska Tores. Though the committee's majority opinion found in favor of censorship, the pulp industry does not seem to have been affected by any real increase in the power of censors.

In the early 1960s, with the erosion of censorship in other popular cultural forms, themes began to broaden. Mass-market paperbacks which dealt with drug addiction increased, and many books which constituted tours of urban bohemia appeared. These combined various taboo sexual subjects such as miscegenation, female promiscuity, lesbianism, and male homosexuality. A good example of these is McFadden Books' *I Love Thee Beast* by H.D. Miller. Its cover announces it as "a scorcher, a white hot shocker about the beatniks of Greenwich Village" and quotes *The Library Journal* as saying that it "touches upon the race problems, Lesbianism, homosexuality, psychoanalysis and sex." Here we see a comprehensive list of the many signifiers of sexual content exploited by postwar pulp advertising.

Though most critics agree on the years between 1950 and 1965 as the golden age of pulp publishing, it is difficult to pinpoint an ending to the genre, if there has been one. Inexpensively produced formulaic paperback fiction continues to constitute the most financially significant sector of the publishing industry. Though it is not often referred to by the term *pulp fiction*, critically we must count mass-market romance novels in the same category. The year 1939, which saw the first innovations in pulp distribution, also saw the publication of Daphne du Maurier's hugely successful romance novel *Rebecca*. Pulp publishers saw something in this particular romance plot that eventually became the formula for the mass-market romance novel. By the 1970s romance publishing houses such as Harlequin in North America and Mills and Boon in Britain commanded a market much larger than anything before seen in the publishing industry. Again, low-cost production techniques and innovative marketing, this time through mailing lists and supermarket distribution, led to enormous financial success. Much feminist criticism has been

written on mass-market romance novels. Ann Barr Snitow argues that for women, these novels perform the same function which magazine pornography performs for men. "How different," she writes, "is the pornography for women, in which sex is bathed in romance, diffused, always implied rather than enacted at all. This pornography is the Harlequin (or Mills and Boon) romance" (Snitow, 1983).

Mass-market paperbacks are still a multinational industry, and many are still distributed through newsstand and supermarket venues in the United States and the United Kingdom. Many of these, like the British Black Lace and American Harlequin lines, still function as vehicles for sexual identification and pleasure. Two factors, however, might be seen as contributing to the decline of the "classic" pulp paperback. The increasing use of photography in late-20th-century cover art ended the creation of the colorful and stylized airbrush painting since prized by collectors. Also, after 1970, Western culture began to see itself as increasingly sexually "liberated." Sexual restrictions and taboos were seen in mainstream culture as relics of the past. This narrative of sexual progress detracted from the pose of danger and daring which was the selling point of so many pulp paperbacks.

MEREDITH MILLER

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# PUSHKIN, ALEKSANDR

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1799–1837

Russian poet and writer

## *Secret Journal, 1836–1837*

In 1986 Mikhail Armalinsky published *Secret Journal, 1836–1837*, an erotic and intimate diary that he attributed to Aleksandr Pushkin. The journal was supposedly written during the final months of the poet's life while he was preparing himself for the duel in which he died.

Armalinsky explains in his "Necessary Preface" that in 1976, before his emigration to the United States, a mysterious stranger, referred to as Nikolai Pavlovich, had given the journal to him to be smuggled out of the Soviet Union for publication in the West. It was supposed to have been originally written in French with only a few words and expressions in Russian, and then translated by Nikolai Pavlovich into Russian. Armalinsky contends that the journal would have been banned had it been discovered by Soviet authorities because of its highly erotic content and explicit language. The cult of Pushkin was strong in the Soviet Union, and any scandal, founded or unfounded, concerning the idol would not have been tolerated.

The authenticity of the *Secret Journal* as Pushkin's work is problematic on several levels. Two major points speak against it: the suspicious circumstances under which it came to be discovered, and the fact that the original manuscript, if one exists, has never surfaced. Since its first publication, the journal has not been conclusively authenticated. Its credibility problems are compounded by the absence of any mention or discussion of this work in the serious Pushkin scholarship of the late 1980s to the early 21st century. The language of the journal as translated—crude, cryptic, and poorly crafted—does not help the cause.

Lending some credence to the work as Pushkin's are the rumors that a secret journal had been written, meant to be published a hundred years after his death. Also there is Pushkin's reputation

as both a libertine/freethinker and as the author of two erotic works: the famed "Don Juan list," a notebook that candidly records his sexual exploits, and the scandalous "Graf Nulin," a comic short story with sexual overtones. Both factors could count in favor of the *Secret Journal's* authenticity. The poor language, so uncharacteristic of Pushkin, may be attributed to its being a private journal, as well as a translation. Perhaps it should be seen as biographical and historical, not to be judged from a literary point of view.

The discussion that follows starts with the assumption that Pushkin is the author of the journal. It is not within the scope of this article to prove or disprove the journal's authenticity.

The journal reads like a fictionalized biographical work with an overtly erotic twist. Intimate details and excesses of the author's sexual life are blended together with a morbid preoccupation with destiny and death, recurring themes in Pushkin's works. A close look at court life, with its hypocrisy, politics, and intrigues adds a new dimension and interest to the plot by bringing to light the suspect court morality. Pushkin was publicly opposed to Tsar Nicholas I, in large part due to the despotic monarch's policy of repression of personal freedom. The journal's obscene language and imagery and repeated use of vulgar words to depict genitalia and the sexual act are almost juvenile in their insistence and can be interpreted as expressions of rebelliousness and defiance; and the sexual excesses and licentiousness can be seen as devices to prove his point.

The journal tells the story of Pushkin's unhappy marriage to Natalia Goncharova, a court beauty and one of the tsar's mistresses; his dissolute and debauched lifestyle with innumerable affairs and liaisons; Natalia's alleged affair with Dantes (D'Anthès), a dashing French officer; Pushkin's decision to challenge his rival to defend his wife's honor; and finally, the duel which resulted in his agonizing death. The journal's ribald tone is diffused in places by the author's musings on the disadvantages and restrictions of matrimony.

The first entry of the journal is dedicated to his wife. The beginning of the journal signals the end with a reference to the duel: "The prediction is coming true—I challenged Dantes to a duel." Alluding to his impending death, he hints that the "notes" are intended for posterity, instructing that they be published in two hundred years or so. The journal, as a "revelation" of his soul, should be made part of his legacy—meant, in his words, "to take my sins, mistakes and torments to the grave with me; they are too substantial not to become part of my monument." The bequeathing of the journal to a future generation is an affirmation of Pushkin's belief that erotica is a legitimate genre.

Graphic descriptions of orgies and trysts abound and are presented in detail; special attention is given to the smell, look, and taste of the sexual partner's genitalia, often accompanied by scatological comments. Scenes of lovemaking even with his wife are presented in a similarly crude manner, with the most intimate details reduced to lasciviousness. Pushkin emerges as a possessive husband, jealous of his wife's success in society as a beauty. He describes his wife as an "ungifted lover," disparagingly comparing her with his other lovers, one of them being Natalia's own sister Katrina, Dantes's wife.

Discussing matrimony, lamenting the loss of the bachelor life and its variety of sexual partners without guilt, he expounds on the benefits of adultery. He admits that his passion for his wife passed a month after their marriage, comparing the married state to a cage and the husband to an animal. The interdictions imposed by matrimony revive lust for other women, turning the "nuptial bed, the cradle of passion, into its grave."

If the *Secret Journal* is proven to be authentic, it would cast a different light on its illustrious author, perhaps unfavorably altering his image. More importantly, Pushkin scholarship would have to be reevaluated and revised by accepting the journal in the literary canon, lending it a postmodern dimension, and thereby keeping his works fresh. Pushkin, long considered an innovator and a visionary, would have again influenced literary discourse.

### Biography

Born in Moscow into a noble family. Received the title of National Poet during his lifetime. Poet, playwright, lyricist, and prose writer, he

is credited by Russian writers and scholars with having created the modern Russian literary language. His works have been made into operas and ballets by composers like Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, and Mussorgsky. Founder and publisher of *Sovremennik* [*The Contemporary*], a literary and historical review. Considered to be the foremost poet of the so-called golden age (1814–1825) of Russian literature.

TRINA MAMOON

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## QUEER THEORY

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Queer theory is a school of literary and cultural criticism that proposes that notions of gender and sexual identities are not fixed entities. It had its beginnings in the development of feminist criticism, postmodern philosophers such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Lacan, and gay/lesbian identity politics of the 1980s. Gay/lesbian studies, in turn, grew out of feminist studies and feminist theory, and gay/lesbian and feminist studies have been interrelated ever since. Foucault's legacy was to inaugurate an understanding of sexuality as socially constructed and as a complex array of social codes and forces, forms of individual activity, and institutional regulatory power. He demonstrates that sex/sexuality has a social history with varying constructions. Foucault resists the naturalizing assumptions of biology and psychoanalytic theory that undergirds normative theories of sexuality. Early constructionist theorists argued with gay/lesbian scholars on the notions of sexuality and gender whether they were socially constructed or do they operate within a transhistorical rubric of what is natural, essential, or biological.

At the end of the 1980s, Queer National activists reclaimed 'queer' as a label for a term of

resistance to heterosexuality. It became an inclusive, political term for translesbigays with activists. The popular and political use of 'queer' does not coincide with the academic usage though they all share a common history of resistance to heteronormativity. Queer theory arose in the early 1990s within universities in a number of academic disciplines from literature and the classics to cultural studies. Queer scholars accepted postmodern indeterminacy and diversity as an axiom of critical inquiry. While gay/lesbian studies concentrated mainly on questions of homosexuality, queer theory expanded its realm of investigation to include sexual desire, paying close attention to cultural construction of categories of normative and deviant sexual behaviors. Queer theory expanded the scope of its queries to all kinds of behaviors linked to sexuality, including gender-bending, transvestism, fetishes, and non-conventional sexualities. It analyzed sexual behaviors, all concepts of sexual identity, and categories of normative and deviant. These formed sets of signifiers, which created constructed social and cultural meanings. Queer theory is a set of ideas based around the notion that identities are not fixed and do not



## QUEER THEORY

determine who we are. As a field of inquiry, queer theory shifts the emphasis away from specific acts and identities to the myriad ways in which gender and sexualities organize and even destabilize society. Queer theory claims that sexual categories shift and change. It differs from earlier gay/lesbian identity politics by arguing that sexual identity templates are not fixed but rather are elastic.

There are several prominent scholars who pioneered queer theory: Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, Judith Butler, David Halperin, and Michael Warner. This list does not do justice to the proliferation of works on queer theory in the last decade, crossing the fields of literature, history, religion, music, and cultural studies. In *Epistemology of the Closet*, Sedgwick provided deconstructive readings of English canonical literature to unmask the distinctions between homosocial and homosexual relations.

Heterosexuality is privileged in its stigmatization of homosexuality, and the closet is the primary paradigm for structuring knowledge in modern society.

In *Gender Trouble* and *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler begins with feminist discussions of gender and advances the argument that gender is not fixed but a cultural fiction. "Gender is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly regulatory frame that congeals over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being." (Butler, 33) Gender is a regulatory construct that privileges heterosexuality as natural and original while homosexuality is understood as its inferior copy. Butler uses the notion of drag as performance that re-inscribes heterosexual norms within a gay context. Drag thus reveals the performative aspects of gender as endless within a regulatory system of sexuality, gender, and desire. Gender becomes something a person performs at particular times rather than a universal characteristic of who you are. Identity categories function as regulatory regimes, whether as normalizing categories or as a counter discourse against normalizing and oppressive regulations.

¶There is no definitional consensus on the limits of queer theory. Jagose proposes that queer theory is a "zone of possibilities...which dramatise the incoherencies in the allegedly stable relations between chromosomal sex, gender, and sexual desire" (Jagose, 2–3). David

Halperin, likewise, takes anti-definitional stance to queer theory: "Queer, then, demarcates not a positivity but a positionality vis-a-vis the normative—a positionality that is not restricted to lesbians and gay men but is in fact available to anyone who is or who feels marginalized because of her or his sexual practices...." (Halperin, 62). For queer theorist Michael Warner queer is a transgressive paradigm, representing "a more thorough resistance to the regimes of the normal" (Warner, xxvi). Queer theory becomes a deconstructive theory, attempting to disrupt cultural normativity by surfacing the heterogeneous and multiple meanings of gender, sexuality, sex acts, and erotic desires. Queer theory has no consistent set of characteristics except denaturalization. It is a mode of critical inquiry that invokes non-normative sexuality and does not refer to anything in particular. It celebrates differences, ruptures, and incoherencies of identities while insisting that all sexual behaviors, either deviant or normative, are social constructs, signifiers of particular social meaning.

Queer theory not only represents a resistance to cultural normativity and to heteronormativity but even a resistance to gay or lesbian normativities. The disassembling of gender and sexual orientation templates has allowed space for the development of bisexuality as a category to undermine the binary categories of heterosexual/homosexual and transgendered/transsexual as categories to subvert gender reification.

Critics such as Max Kirsch and Steve Seidman have also noted that queer theory has subverted the ethnic model of identity politics and that it was difficult to build a political movement on instable identities. For some gay/lesbian critics, the inclusive use of queer and queer theory had the totalizing effect of effacing specific identities and political agendas. Or it disprivileges the positionality of gay and lesbian with emergence of bisexuality, transgendered, and diverse markers of identity. Some have accused queer theory of de-gayng the movement while others claim that it privileges white gay males. The indeterminacy of queer theory has led to such contradictory critiques.

ROBERT E. GOSS

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## QUENEAU, RAYMOND

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1903–1976  
French novelist

### Sally Mara

In 1947, there appeared, in ‘French translation from the Gaelic,’ a novel by Sally Mara entitled *On est toujours trop bon avec les femmes*. Three years later, the same publishers issued the author’s *Journal intime*, a diary of her adolescence written in French, which she had learned from her translator, Michel Presle. In 1962, these two works were reprinted by prestigious publisher Editions Gallimard as *Les Oeuvres complètes de Sally Mara*. This volume included another short text, ‘Sally plus intime,’ a collection of scurrilous aphorisms. Sally Mara herself introduced the work, although curiously enough she denied the authorship of this new text. Even more curiously, she begins her preface with these words: ‘A supposedly imaginary author does not often have the opportunity to preface her complete works, especially when they appear under the name of a so-called real author.’ For *Les Oeuvres complètes de Sally Mara* are published here under another’s name, one ‘Raymond Queneau of the Académie Goncourt.’

This curious trajectory calls for comment: Editions du Scorpion, the publisher of the works of Sally Mara, was set up after World War II to cater to the taste for hard-boiled fiction, and had just published a thriller by Vernon Sullivan, supposedly translated ‘from the

American’ and titled *J’irai cracher sur vos tombes [I’ll Spit on Your Graves]*, which became a cause célèbre for its treatment of sex and violence. Vernon Sullivan, in fact, was a pseudonym for Boris Vian, a young writer influenced and encouraged by the same Raymond Queneau, a highly respected writer, who was later revealed to be the ‘author’ of the works of Sally Mara.

All this might tend to make one think that Queneau, too, was hiding behind a pseudonym in order to publish a commercial potboiler, especially as *On est toujours trop bon avec les femmes* is, in its outlines, a violent and sexually explicit story, apparently inspired by James Hadley Chase’s sensational bestseller, *No Orchids For Miss Blandish*.

Set in 1916 during the Easter uprising in Dublin, it is based on an actual event: the taking of the Central Post Office by Republicans. In the novel, they achieve their aim without much resistance, killing some employees and sending the others home. They think they are masters of the situation, but discover a young English woman, Gertrude Girdle, who was caught in the toilet at the time of the attack. It is too late to send her home, since the British army now surround the building, and they find themselves with an unwanted hostage.

As good revolutionaries, they are determined to act ‘properly’ and she, a virgin who believes in king and country, has nothing but contempt for these insurgents against the proper order of things. However, when the leader of the rebels, MacCormack, declares the King of England to

be 'a stupid cunt,' Gertie is both outraged and liberated. While her fiancé, Commodore Sidney Cartwright, leads the British assault on the Post Office from outside, gallant Gertie systematically sets about seducing the men inside. Discouraged by the success of the British counter-offensive and finding themselves alone in their resistance, they are further demoralized as Gertie undermines their sense of moral purity. On the point of surrendering and with their comrades dead, the two remaining rebels try to persuade Gertie not to reveal what occurred so that their dead comrades will not lose honor. She refuses and one of them, O'Rourke, cursing her as a whore, sodomizes her in order to dishonor her instead. When Commodore Cartwright appears and demands to know whether the rebels had abused Gertie, she replies that they lifted her dress in order to admire her ankles. Cartwright orders that the two rebels be immediately shot.

Although the plot has the ingredients to be a potboiler, Queneau downplays all of these elements. Furthermore, nothing inclines us to believe that writing this novel was an indulgence on his part: it is recognizably a Queneau novel and he makes no concessions to the reader who comes expecting salaciousness. This does not mean that it cannot be considered an 'erotic thriller,' but it is one of a singular kind.

It should be noted that, although based on an actual event, the story is entirely 'literary,' since Queneau has taken the places and characters from James Joyce's *Ulysses*. At one point this fact is even commented upon by one of the characters. Sally Mara, in a footnote, explains Caffrey lets this slip because he, 'being illiterate, could not have known in 1916 that *Ulysses* had not yet appeared.' This brings attention to the complex levels of referentiality at which the novel is working, being about the interplays between appearance and reality and the extent to which fiction assumes its own 'reality.'

Many commentators have seen the novel as an attack on the hard-boiled novel and surrealist black humor, since Queneau had criticized both as being linked into the mentality that had made Nazism possible. This hardly seems satisfactory, especially as the novel contains a scene André Breton would surely have considered as a fine example of pure black humor, indeed it draws directly upon surrealist interests in the predatory aspects of sexuality. In it, Caffrey has his

head removed by a shell fired by Commodore Cartwright just as he is being fellated by the latter's fiancée: 'The body continued its rhythmical movement for some seconds, exactly like the praying mantis male when its upper part has been half devoured by the female and which perseveres in the copulation.'

Whatever Queneau's intentions, they are not reducible to facile explanations. *On est toujours trop bon avec les femmes*, taken together with the other works of Sally Mara, reveals a complex web of representation and counter-representation. Characteristic of all of Queneau's work, this theme is given a particular form here by the use of the pseudonym. Sally Mara is less a pseudonym than a female extension of Queneau, bearing much of the same ambivalence as Marcel Duchamp's creation of Rrose Sélavy. The real erotic heart of *Les oeuvres complètes de Sally Mara* is to be found in the complex interplays and undercurrents that this relation reveals.

### Biography

Born in Le Havre, Raymond Queneau was at first an enthusiastic member of the Surrealist group, from which he split in 1929 'for personal reasons' which he never fully explained. A literary polymath, he was a mathematician, a translator, an editor, a poet, as well as a novelist. A founding member of the College of 'Pataphysics' and the Oulipo, his work is marked by a lightness of touch that does disguise his seriousness of purpose and vast erudition.

MICHAEL RICHARDSON

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## RABELAIS, FRANÇOIS

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c. 1484–1553  
French comic writer

Rabelais's humor derives from both a *gaulois* tradition of bawdy parody and an erudite tradition of humanist satire. Erotic themes within the former can be limited to frank obscenity concerning sexual intercourse and a dethroning of the values of chastity and marital fidelity. Yet, as a serious student of Erasmus and St. Paul, Rabelais probably upheld those same values, satirizing unchaste prelates whose celibate life was a fake, just as their obvious wealth defied the vow of poverty. His hero-figures in *Gargantua and Pantagruel* tend to outgrow adolescent sexual dalliances as schoolboys (Gargantua went whoring; Pantagruel had an undisclosed romance) to become responsible adults, and in Gargantua's case a father. However, the licentious themes are maintained via the heroes' exclusively male companions, who, in at least two cases, namely Panurge (anti-hero to Pantagruel) and Frère Jean (anti-hero to Gargantua), claim extravagant sexual appetites and prowess, even though the only one of Panurge's seductions to be described in detail is a failure (see *Pantagruel*, chapters 21–2).

In a fascinating development, Rabelais then makes Panurge, rather than the now chaste and mature Pantagruel, the hero of the *Tiers livre*, which centers on Panurge's terror at being mistreated in marriage now that he feels inclined to woo a bride. Again Rabelais's essentially male perspective conditions the fact that no potential spouse for Panurge is ever selected, named, or introduced, the book instead comprising various unsatisfying predictions concerning his future, and an equivalent series of discussions motivated by his (traditionally Latin) dread of cuckoldry and sexual failure. Meanwhile, the one doctor we meet gives a derogatory, though perhaps only semi-serious, account of female psycho-physiology. Furthermore, Panurge never does marry, and Rabelais, perhaps tiring of his obsessions, turns the *Quart livre* into a sea voyage of exploration rather than that search for the ultimate truth concerning his anti-hero's marital fate, which was its original purpose.

Again, the crew is exclusively male and there are no erotic escapades aboard ship. Nevertheless, the encounters, discussions, and anecdotes comprising their adventures are peppered with the usual lewd details: Frère Jean expresses lust

## RABELAIS, FRANÇOIS

for the maids serving him in chapter 54; a peasant woman uses the “wound” hidden between her legs to scare away a devil; meanwhile, the Queen of the Andouilles, a phallus-shaped race of sausages whom the company defeats in battle, bears a name (Niphleseth) based on the Hebrew for penis. Such incongruity notwithstanding, she is well treated in defeat, while her daughter, also called Niphleseth, ultimately enjoys a happy and fruitful marriage in the French royal court.

The thematic complexity of the Andouilles episode well exemplifies Rabelais’s authorial practice whereby an initially simple topic is overloaded with detail to a point where linear interpretations become plainly untenable. As a writer of comic fiction, he thus earns the bonus of allowing many contrasting readings, whilst his erotic themes, applied almost exclusively to comic effect, deliberately stretch his reader’s tolerance, yet retain a notable freshness by being so frank and so surprisingly juxtaposed to passages of deep seriousness, mystery, and spirituality.

### Biography

Born in or near Chinon, of a middle-class, locally well-established, landowning family. Entered holy orders at some time in his youth, joining the Franciscan house at Fontenay-le-comte, where he pursued humanist scholarship alongside other like-minded intellectuals. Following Church censorship of his Greek studies, left Fontenay for the Benedictine abbey of Maillezais and the tutelage of Bishop Geoffroy d’Estissac, a man of humanist sympathies. At Montpellier by 1530, took various medical degrees, meanwhile gaining employment as town physician in Lyon and encountering his lifelong patrons, the du Bellay family. Early publications were scholarly, but in 1532, following the anonymous *Grandes et inestimables croniques du grand et énorme géant Gargantua*, which he may also have helped edit, he produced a mock epic, *Les horribles et espoventables faictz et prouesses du tresrenommé Pantagruel*. Encouraged by the success of his book (universally known as *Pantagruel*), he published its prequel, *La vie inestimable du grand Gargantua, pere de Pantagruel* (known simply

as *Gargantua*), in 1534/5. With Cardinal Jean du Bellay, Rabelais also made visits to Italy in this period, whereupon, following a lengthy sojourn in Piedmont, then under the French governorship of Guillaume du Bellay (d. 1543), he produced a third volume, now always called *Le tiers livre*, and again featuring the hero Pantagruel. Despite hostility from the Sorbonne, then the center of French Catholic censorship, the du Bellays’ patronage also smoothed over various legal matters, including his apostasy and his tenure of religious benefices, a traditional source of revenue for French writers. A partial (possibly pirated) edition of the so-called *Quart livre* appeared in 1548, describing still further adventures of Pantagruel and his followers. A longer *Quart livre*, possibly still incomplete, was published in 1552, only shortly before the author’s death. The posthumous publications *L’Isle Sonante* (1562) and *Le cinquième livre* (1564), neither definitively authenticated, are probably adapted from his manuscript notes.

JOHN PARKIN

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## RACE, RACISM, MISCEGENATION, RACE-BAITING LITERATURE

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Histories of the construction of race do not always address the erotic or its role and function in maintaining racism. When the intersections of race and the erotic are explored, however, the arguments are often complicated, powerful, and disturbing. Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) offers a compelling account of the eroticized myths of the Orient and how they serve imperialism, and Patricia Hill Collins's *Black Feminist Thought* (2000) powerfully considers the role of self-definition in social knowledge and transformation. The politics of location make any discussion of race and the erotic always partial and definitely problematic. Whose version of race? Whose version of the erotic? Is the erotic always implicated in the politics of race? Can the erotic ever exist outside of or divorced from other systems of power?

In the 1960s, Calvin C. Hernton did much to highlight the way that sex and racism were intertwined, boldly arguing, for example, that "all race relations tend to be, however subtly, sexual relations." Edited volumes, such as *Sex, Love, and Race* (1999) and *Race/Sex: Their Sameness, Difference, and Interplay* (1995), may be said to extend Hernton's argument. In her introduction to *Race/Sex*, for example, Naomi Zack states that "the historical intersection or connection between socially constructed sexuality and socially constructed race has been the sexualization of race in American lived experience." And Martha Hode reminds us: "The history of racial categories is often a history of sexuality as well, for it is partly as a result of the taboos against boundary crossing that such categories are invented." The United States, with its long history of slavery, segregation, and institutional racism, provides a particularly dramatic field for investigating the sexualization of race, though it is important to recognize that other national literatures also tell complex stories about the intersections of race and sex. It is also important to recognize that "race," a metaphor for difference,

may refer to various identities, although there are heuristic reasons for focusing on African American identity as it has been represented in the literature of the United States.

Early writings by Africans and slaves in the New World assiduously suppressed the erotic because their primary goal was to argue for the legitimacy, propriety, and humanity of the Negro. Not only was a healthy eroticism missing from African American literature of the nineteenth century but so were negative representations of sex; for example, rape. Despite the very real effects of a slave system that institutionalized the rape of black women and the emasculation of black men, the dominant stereotype of Negroes was that they were primitive and, therefore, more sexually free and even lascivious. Texts such as Harriet Jacob's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) risked much by addressing rape and the sexual violence of the slave system, even though the black subject was a victim and not an agent in these accounts. Jacob's account, therefore, was published under the pseudonym Linda Brent. Conversely, the romanticization of whiteness, which found its apotheosis in the purity of the white maiden, promoted an inviolate femininity. These stereotypes were, of course, dependent upon a Manichaean worldview, one that dominated eighteenth- and nineteenth-century literature.

Even the antislavery novel, as Sterling Brown ("Negro Characters") has argued, made use of harmful but sexualized stereotypes, such as the Brute Negro, the Exotic Primitive, and the Tragic Mulatto. In reference to the latter stereotype, Brown states: "If anti-slavery authors, in accordance with Victorian gentility, were wary of illustrating the practice [of concubinage], they made great use nevertheless of the offspring of illicit unions" (158). The Tragic Mulatto may be the most sexualized figure in U.S. literature, often representing the result of illicit unions but also the threat of miscegenation.



Miscegenation laws and mores against the cohabitation or marriage of people of different races betray a complex history of both fear *and* attraction. Novels by African American authors, such as Frances E.W. Harper's *Iola Leroy*, and white authors, such as William Dean Howell's *Imperative Duty*, document this fear and attraction through their use of the "passing" figure: a light-skinned African American who can pass for white. This figure of racial ambiguity, in fact, has been used by many of the most celebrated American authors to explore the interdictions over interracial love, sex, and marriage. Charles Chesnutt's *House Behind the Cedars*, for example, provides an anguished account of the tensions over miscegenation, and William Faulkner's *Light in August* devolves into the horrific and obscene narrative of interracial relations. George Schuyler's *Black No More*, in developing the relationship between a white supremacist and a passing figure, is pure farce. The many narratives of passing, by writers as diverse as Mark Twain and Langston Hughes, are built upon the taboo of interracial love.

The phobia of interracial relationships, however, is most obsessively rendered and disturbingly portrayed in the novels of Thomas Dixon. In *The Clansman* and *The Leopard's Spots*, Dixon portrays the black male body as a hypersexualized threat. Sandra Gunning writes, in *Race, Rape, and Lynching*: "The continual attempt to escape from and return to the black male body is played out whenever Dixon's narratives dramatize the detection, capture, and dismemberment of a black rapist," and: "Dixon is fascinated with the effluvia of black males." In novels such as *The Clansman* and *The Leopard's Spots*, Dixon has presented the most virulent stereotype of a black sexuality that is monstrous. Dixon's work seems inseparable from the phobia and hate that led to so many lynchings in the first half of the twentieth century.

But what use have canonical authors made of—to use Toni Morrison's term—the Africanist presence? In *Playing in the Dark*, Morrison argues that the study of American literature "should be investigations of the ways in which a nonwhite, Africanist presence and personae have been constructed—invented—in the United States, and of the literary uses this fabricated presence has served." In enumerating some of the strategic uses made of race in literature, Morrison describes the fetishization of blackness

as "evoking erotic fears or desires and establishing fixed and major difference where difference does not exist or is minimal. Blood, for example, is a pervasive fetish: black blood, white blood, the purity of blood; the purity of white female sexuality, the pollution of African blood and sex. Fetishization is a strategy often used to assert the categorical absolutism of civilization and savagery." The fetishization of race, of course, participates in a broader tradition that romanticizes race.

Few scholars have done more to historicize the romanticization of race than George M. Frederickson, whose *The Black Image in the White Mind* (1971) covers the early 1800s to the beginning of the twentieth century, when there was a "revised form of romantic racialism." Frederickson argues that "[w]hat was new about the image of blacks conveyed in the novels of white writers like DuBose Heyward, Julia Peterkin, and Carl Van Vechten was not the stereotype itself but the lack of moralism in the treatment of what would previously have been defined as black immorality or even animality." This history continues to be written in books such as Robert Entman's *The Black Image in the White Mind: Media and Race in America* (2001) and Marianna Torgovnick's *Gone Primitive* (1990). The greater awareness and critical attention to representations of race have not, of course, eliminated all harmful stereotypes or racist narratives, but there are now more images and more complex renderings of the African American experience.

It was not that long ago that William Styron's *Confessions of Nat Turner* (1967) shocked readers with its transformation of Nat Turner, an historical figure, into a slave who was not only concerned with escaping slavery but also obsessed with raping a white mistress. The formal response to this Pulitzer Prize-winning novel came quickly in the form of *William Styron's Nat Turner: 10 Black Writers Respond*, which challenged Styron's history and politics. Indeed, this rather public debate over the representation of Nat Turner as a sexual threat has been just one in a long series of exchanges concerning the struggle over representative images. The debates, moreover, may be found within the African American community and not solely across racial lines. In the 1920s, for example, W.E.B. Du Bois publicly criticized Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem* (1926), stating that after reading the

novel he needed to take a bath. DuBois was concerned with presenting the best qualities of the New Negro, and this did not include his sexuality. Eldridge Cleaver, in *Soul on Ice* (1968), would publicly criticize James Baldwin not so much for addressing sexual themes but for addressing homosexuality, or rather for being a homosexual. Cleaver describes Rufus Scott, the black protagonist of *Another Country*, as “a pathetic wretch who indulged in the white man’s pastime of committing suicide, who let a white bisexual homosexual fuck him in the ass, and who took a Southern Jezebel for his woman.” Cleaver, moreover, cannot separate his characterization of Rufus Scott as “the epitome of a black eunuch” from his characterization of Baldwin as a “castrated” homosexual.

With these many sordid debates suggesting our profound inability to positively work through the dynamics of race and sex, it is refreshing to consider the example of Audre Lorde, who in essays like “Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power” imagines the erotic as important and powerful. “As a Black lesbian feminist,” Lorde writes, “I have a particular feeling, knowledge, and understanding for those sisters with whom I have danced hard, played, or even fought. This deep participation has often been the forerunner for joint concerted actions not possible before.” The empowerment Lorde celebrates continues in the voices of Pat Parker and Cheryl Clarke. It can be felt in the growing concert of gay and lesbian writers of color—marginalized no more. Recent anthologies of gay and lesbian literature by African Americans (*Taboo, Go the Way Your Blood Beats*, and *Shade*) document this growing acceptance of taboo themes.

Is there, then, an erotica of race that does not get implicated in racist structures and hierarchies? How should we regard the celebration of race and color in poems like Langston Hughes’s “When Sue Wears Red” and Nikki Giovanni’s “Beautiful Black Men”? And how should we

understand the racially unmarked but deeply erotic poetry of Carl Phillips? And where should we situate the racially and sexually fluid erotics of Samuel Delaney’s science fiction? There seems to be, in short, a range of expressions of the erotic in contemporary African American literature that speaks to an evolution toward a greater complexity of self-representations.

JUDA BENNETT

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# RACHILDE

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1860–1953

French novelist, dramatist, poet and critic

Rachilde published more than 50 novels, as well as several collections of short stories, poetry, and plays. She wrote extensively in the French press throughout much of her life, and contributed a fortnightly review column to the *Mercure de France*. Diana Holmes (2001) describes her as “a colourful, prolific, combative figure on the French literary scene.” Rachilde’s scandalous reputation rests to a certain extent on her unconventional behavior. She frequently cross-dressed and referred to herself as “Rachilde, *homme de lettres*,” causing Maurice Barrès to christen her “Mademoiselle Baudelaire” in his preface to *Monsieur Vénus*. However, it was the publication, between 1884 and 1900, of her most erotic novels—*Monsieur Vénus*, *Nono*, *La Marquise de Sade*, *L’Animale*, and *La Jongleuse* [*The (Female) Juggler*—which thrust her into the public eye. Rachilde’s critics have often commented on the disparity between her relatively innocent, naive existence and the depravity of her novels. This disparity can in part be explained by her literary heritage. She grew up with full and free access to her grandfather’s library (a scenario almost unheard of in the moral climate of the 19th century) and had read the works of the Marquis de Sade by the time she was fifteen. Although her novels cannot be described as de Sadean in the proper sense, his influence is clearly discernible, especially in the actions of Mary Barbe in the aptly named *La Marquise de Sade*. In addition, when she moved to Paris, Rachilde became involved in the Decadent literary movement. The Decadents were inspired by the works of Charles Baudelaire as well as de Sade and rejected procreation in favor of the perverse, the artificial, the unnatural. Rachilde’s novels share Decadent characteristics with the work of Joris-Karl Huysmans, Jules-Amédée Barbey d’Aurevilly, and Octave Mirbeau.

Rachilde’s novels deal explicitly with female sexual desire. Her dominant heroines engage in a

range of excessive sexual practices such as sadism (Mary Barbe in *La Marquise de Sade*), necrophilia (Raoule de Vénérande in *Monsieur Vénus*), and bestiality (Laure Lordès in *L’Animale*), as well as erotically motivated murder (Renée Fayor in *Nono*) and suicide (Éliante Donalger in *La Jongleuse*). The powerful sexual desires of Rachilde’s heroines are the driving force behind the novels. Her women, who are single-minded, selfish, and emphatically nonmaternal, devote themselves to a quest for female *jouissance* (orgasmic pleasure), which is to be found not in traditional penetrative sex, but in the acts of sexual violence which they inflict on their malleable, helpless, often effeminate male objects of desire. The relentless quest for female sexual pleasure which characterizes the majority of Rachilde’s novels means that the desires of submissive male partners are unfulfilled or ignored. However, this quest is rarely successful, and usually results in the death, disappearance, or demise of the central female protagonist, who leaves a trail of bloodshed and heartache behind her. Éliante’s orgasm in *La Jongleuse*, which she reaches as she caresses a huge alabaster vase, is one of the rare examples of triumphant female sexual pleasure in Rachilde’s work. Although Rachilde’s novels were widely considered pornographic at their time of publication, their general lack of scenes of sexual satisfaction means that they are not erotic in the traditional sense. Instead, the scenes of often violent, frequently melodramatic eroticism which they contain are mediated by the novels’ sustained interrogation of the tortured existence of their pariah-heroines. The power of Rachilde’s narratives comes less from the scenes of sexual activity which they depict than from their engagement with, and perversion of, the accepted gender norms of the 19th century.

When Rachilde writes from the perspective of a male protagonist, as in *Les Hors Nature* [*The Unnatural Ones*] and *La Tour d’amour* [*The Tower of Love*], she demonstrates that male sexual desire is no less problematic than that of

her female protagonists. For the most part, her works represent a violent and troubling exploration of the darker side of human sexuality. However, two of Rachilde's novels, *Queue de Poisson* [*Fish-Tail*] and *Le Tiroir de Mimi-Corail* [*Mimi-Corail's Drawers*], represent a more playful, lighthearted, and mainstream kind of *fin-de-siècle* erotica—interestingly, these works have never been republished and are among the least remarkable of her novels.

### *Monsieur Vénus*

*Monsieur Vénus* is Rachilde's best-known work. Its publication in Belgium in 1884 was a huge *succès de scandale*, earning Rachilde national celebrity and a prosecution for obscenity (the outcome of which cost her two years imprisonment and a fine). Consequently, the courts in Paris ordered immediate seizure of all copies of the book. The novel's celebrity was enhanced by a preface by Maurice Barrès. The heroine of *Monsieur Vénus*, the cruel and youthful aristocrat Raoule de Vénérande, refuses the traditional fate reserved for women—virginity, marriage, childbirth—and elects instead to lead a “masculine” life of sexual freedom. In particular she rejects the kind of male-orientated heterosex in which women's desires remain unfulfilled. In a quest for sexual pleasure, she takes her lover Jacques Silvert from a lower class, sets him up in a sumptuous apartment, and uses him as she wishes. When she discovers that her friend and suitor Raittolbe is also attracted to Jacques, her jealousy leads her to engineer a duel between the two men in which Jacques is killed. The novel ends with an archetypal Decadent scene in which the ghoulish figure of Raoule lavishes her attentions on a wax dummy of Jacques, complete with nails, hair, and teeth which she has taken from his corpse. The scandalized reaction to the novel's publication comes from its clear challenge to the gendered binary oppositions in place in 19th-century France: Raoule's authority, control, and voyeurism are in stark contrast to Jacques's increasingly feminized behavior. Of all Rachilde's work, this novel has best stood the test of time, in part because the “gender trouble” it evokes finds a telling echo in 21st-century identity politics.

### Biography

Born Marguerite Eymery in Le Cros, France, February 11, 1868. Received minimal education at home. Began writing in 1870; took the pen name Rachilde in 1876. First published in local newspapers in 1877. Moved to Paris in 1878. Married Alfred Vallette in 1889 (widowed 1935); one daughter. Co-founded the journal *Mercure de France* with Vallette, 1890; contributed a regular review column until 1925. Made officer of the Légion d'Honneur, 1924. Although infamous in the Parisian literary circles of the 1880s and 1890s, Rachilde's fame diminished as she grew older, and she died alone and in poverty on April 4, all but forgotten by the literary establishment.

HANNAH THOMPSON

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# RADIGUET, RAYMOND

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1903–1923

French novelist and poet

Radiguet published two collections of poetry in his short lifetime, *Les Joues en feu* [*Cheeks on Fire*] and *Devoirs de vacances* [*Holiday Works*], while other poems appeared after his death (at twenty). He is best known for his novel *Le diable au corps* [*The Devil in the Flesh*], written between the ages of sixteen and nineteen and published when he was twenty. This novel tells the story of the illicit affair between a schoolboy and a nineteen-year-old married woman whose husband spends most of the novel away fighting in World War I. This first-person narrative created quite a controversy at the time, and a group of American World War I veterans even attempted unsuccessfully to block its translation and subsequent sale in English. *Le bal du comte d'Orgel* [*Count Orgel's ball*], Radiguet's final novel, was published a year after his death, with a preface by Jean Cocteau, his mentor, collaborator, and close friend. Cocteau used this space to establish what has become an abiding legend surrounding the events of Radiguet's "peaceful" death. *Le bal du comte d'Orgel* displays a maturing talent. Written in the third person, this short novel sets in motion a story of passion that is not acted upon, continuing in the psychological tradition most prominently represented by the seventeenth-century novel *La princesse de Clèves* by Madame de Lafayette.

### *The Devil in the Flesh*

Radiguet's career and the impact his figure had upon French society cannot be separated from the way in which he burst upon the literary scene, nor from the brevity with which he shone upon it. The young writer benefited from a savvy promotional campaign. In order to sell *The Devil in the Flesh*, the publisher Bernard Grasset not only placed oversize photographs of the author in bookstores all over Paris, but also had a newsreel made of the signing

ceremony in which Radiguet received an unprecedented advance for the novel.

Radiguet's short novel provides a detailed analysis of the mental processes (more than the emotions or physical experience) of love, especially as regards jealousy and egoism. Indeed, it spends very little time describing the act of love itself. The focus is on the extreme youth of the unnamed first-person narrator/protagonist, who claims that although he knows his story will be deemed scandalous, his experiences were normal for someone in his situation: sixteen years old and in no danger of having to serve in the cataclysm of the First World War. His novel is thus not only an examination of a lover's calculations, but also a defense of youth itself: "A quel âge a-t-on le droit de dire 'j'ai vécu'?" [How old must one be before one can say "I have lived"?] ("Diable au corps," *Oeuvres complètes*, 431). The theme of debauching youth is never far, though it is the younger participant, that is, the narrator, who maintains sexual and psychological control over his older lover.

After accompanying nineteen-year-old Marthe on a trip to buy furniture for the house in which she will live with her soon-to-be husband, the narrator begins an affair that is made possible by the atmosphere of permissiveness in which the very young spent the war years. After her marriage to the soon-to-be cuckolded young man, Marthe and the narrator begin to keep regular trysts in her new apartment located above that of an older couple who take to gossiping about the young male caller. The hypocrisy of the adult world's reactions to the affair constitute one of the principal interests of the novel. *The Devil in the Flesh* includes brief references to preliminary sexual encounters, though the focus remains on the narrator's emotional manipulation of Marthe. The narrator's "devilishness" leads him to lure Marthe's Swedish girlfriend to her apartment while she is away in order to force himself upon her.

*The Devil in the Flesh* contains, alongside its study of the young lover's adventures, an

implicit critique of liberal parenting. The narrator gets into trouble, he repeatedly shows, because his father chooses to look the other way once it has become obvious that his son is involved in an illicit affair. Eventually the entire town knows what is happening, and the older couple living below Marthe even invites friends over to come listen to the amorous noises emitted by the scandalous couple upstairs. Later, on a trip to Paris, the young protagonist lacks the courage to take a hotel for Marthe and himself, as he is so young and she is already pregnant with his child. The time spent walking around Paris in the winter trying to find the right hotel aggravates Marthe's incipient illness and, it is implied, seals the narrator's partial responsibility for her subsequent death in childbirth. The highly self-critical narrator views love in terms of obsession and egoism, stating that his love for Marthe has blocked out that for his best friend and family. Yet, the narrator makes clear that above this love for the other remains cold self-love. When he learns that young Marthe's dying words were spent calling the name of her newborn son (the same as his own), he decides that all is for the best.

While in the previous generation, André Gide's *L'Immoraliste* [*The Immoralist*] (1902) had treated homosexuality from the shockingly vivid first-person perspective, Radiguet exploded the myth that the very young do not lead rich sexual lives in just as frank a manner. The book's title comes from the expression "avoir le diable au corps" [to have the Devil in one's body], which was used to describe hyperactive children; since the book's release, however, it has taken on an erotic connotation. The story is best known today through several film adaptations, the most recent of which is Marco Bellocchio's sexually explicit *Diavolo in corpo* (1986).

### Biography

Born in Saint-Maur-des-Fossés. Cocteau's heroic preface notwithstanding, Radiguet died alone

ravaged with typhoid fever in a hospital in Paris.

MATTHEW ESCOBAR

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# RAMAYANA

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The *Ramayana* of Valmiki is the most renowned and imitated work of South Asian literature. As the primeval exemplar of Sanskrit literary culture, the epic spawned several poetic retellings in Sanskrit, including Buddhist and Jain works, as well as in vernacular languages throughout South and Southeast Asia. The popularity of the broadcast of the *Ramayana* television serial of Ramanand Sagar in 1987–88—the first all-India television hit—is a testament to its continued cultural relevance today.

Scholars agree that a single poet likely authored the core narrative of the *Ramayana*, although there is wide disagreement regarding its date. The traditional dates of the life of Rama occur in the legendary Treta Yuga, one of the epochs of Hindu time, c. 867,102 BCE. Produced from the same bardic tradition as South Asia's other great epic, the *Mahabharata*, in the region of the eastern expansion of the Vedic Aryans, the *Ramayana* was likely authored either during the late Vedic (c. 750–500 BCE) or early Mauryan (c. 500–300 BCE) period. While the absence of explicit references to the urbanization of the eastern Ganges valley and of Buddhism argue for the former, the developed ideology of divine kingship appears anachronistic before the advent of the Mauryan empire. The epic comprises about 50,000 verses divided into seven books.

The basic plot of the *Ramayana* is as follows. The narrative opens with the birth of the god Vishnu on Earth as Rama, son of Dasharatha, along with his three brothers, Bharata, Lakshmana, and Shatrughna. Later, the sage Vishvamitra calls Rama to the forest to protect his sacrifices from demons. At the conclusion of this sojourn in the forest, Rama wins his bride, Sita, in a test of heroism and returns triumphant to the capital, Ayodhya.

The Book of Ayodhya and the Book of the Forest contain many of the most dramatic events of the epic. Dasharatha desires to install Rama as crown-prince, as do the people of the kingdom. But his youngest wife, Kaikeyi,

corrupted by the advice of her servant Manthara, uses two boons granted to her earlier to banish Rama to the forest for fourteen years and demand that Dasharatha install her own son, Bharata, in his place. Rama, far from displeased at this change of fortune, accepts his stepmother's wishes dutifully in a spirit of sacrifice, eager to protect the word of his father, and proceeds to the forest with Sita and his brother Lakshmana at his side. During this time his old father dies of grief. Bharata, who had been away from the kingdom, is aghast when he hears of his mother's actions and beseeches Rama to return, only to be denied. Rama instead gives him the symbol of his own sandals, with which Bharata rules Ayodhya.

Rama, Sita, and Lakshmana spend ten years in the forest, culminating in the turning point of the epic—the abduction of Sita by the demon-king Ravana. The trouble begins when the ugly sister of Ravana, Shurpanakha, makes amorous advances to Rama and Lakshmana and abuses Sita, for which Lakshmana mutilates her. Several demons die at the hands of Rama in the ensuing battle, and Shurpanakha, enraged, incites Ravana to intense longing for Sita with her descriptions. Ravana then forces the demon Marica to take the form of a golden deer to lure Sita into sending Rama after it. Disguised as an ascetic, Ravana deceives Sita and takes her off in his aerial vehicle. The brothers return in horror and despair, collecting whatever traces of evidence are available.

The intelligent and heroic monkey Hanuman, one of the most memorable characters of the epic, meets Rama and Lakshmana grieving near Lake Pampa and facilitates an alliance between them and the monkey-king Sugriva, which is cemented by Rama's assassination of Sugriva's brother, Vali, who had usurped the throne. The monkeys set out in troops to seek Sita, but only Hanuman's party succeeds in discovering her presence in the demon capital at the island of Lanka. Hanuman leaps over the ocean, conveys a message to Sita along with Rama's signet ring,

and plunders the city, burning it with his tail, which is set aflame by the demons.

The Book of War describes the colossal battle between Rama and Ravana. Vibhisana, Ravana's righteous brother, surrenders to Rama and offers his assistance in the war. Rama, Lakshmana, and the monkeys build a bridge to cross the ocean and then mount their attack on the demons. Rama kills Ravana along with his brothers, sons, and multitudes of the demon army. He is finally reunited with his beloved wife, Sita, but cruelly rejects her; after Sita subjects herself to a trial by fire and the god Brahma himself reminds Rama of his own divinity, he accepts her, claiming that he only intended to demonstrate to the world Sita's unadulterated purity. Rama and Sita return triumphantly to Ayodhya in the aerial vehicle.

The *Ramayana* contains several explicitly anti-erotic elements and yet is at heart one of the great love stories of world literature. While characters displaying deviant or excessive sexuality—Ravana, Shurpanakha, Kaikeyi, and even Dasharatha—eventually meet with death or infamy, Rama's renunciation defines his heroic character, as does Sita's absolute fidelity. Several of the key motifs of the romance genre, including separated lovers, rings and recognition, abduction and rescue, are present. Descriptions of the painful separation between Rama and Sita are passionate and poetic, such as the descriptions in 5.23 of her "brooding," "bathing her full breasts with her flowing tears," and being "afflicted" and "overcome by grief," causing some medieval commentators to classify the aesthetic sentiment of the entire epic as "love in separation" (Goldman and Sutherland 1996). This romantic dimension appealed especially to the poetic imagination of later Sanskrit poets like Kalidasa, whose lyric love poem, the *Meghaduta*, is modeled on Rama's separation from Sita; and Bhavabhuti, who in his poignant *Uttararamacarita* reverses the tragic ending of the subsequently appended last book (where Rama once again abandons Sita) in a long, dramatic meditation on the lovers' mutual, unrequited longing.

AJAY K. RAO

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## READER RESPONSE

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In erotic fiction, the reader response, generally to other erotic texts, plays such an important part that it has come to represent one of the defining principles of the genre. Of course other characters in non-erotic texts also read (erotic or non-erotic) texts to which they also react (Don Quixote and Emma Bovary to name but two examples of famous avid readers). But in erotic fiction, reader responses are so insistently present that they serve more than the characterization of the novel's hero or heroine. In erotic fiction, the narrative functions of characters' readings are multiple: they contribute to the recognition of the genre and to its characterization as illicit, they help emphasize the narrative and ideological power of the genre as a whole (and thus of each individual text's power), and they also create a supplemental layer of voyeuristic transgression so typical of erotic fiction.

From the very beginning, the erotic novel capitalized on its marginal status. In one of the most prolific periods of erotic fiction production, the Enlightenment, the novel as a whole came under fierce attack. The erotic novel and all obscene productions were condemned by various legal, philosophical, and religious authorities, who had very little in common except their condemnation of erotic fiction. The radical philosopher La Mettrie, who was famous for his iconoclastic views on ethics, fiercely attacked the first famous (and notorious) erotic novel to be written and published during the French Enlightenment, *Histoire de D[om Bougre]*, *Portier des Chartreux* (1740). Such novels, La Mettrie contends, must be avoided at all costs if their dangerous influence is proportionate to the powerful empire of reading on the imagination. Later in the century, a voice from the other side of the ideological spectrum would express a similar concern. In his *Nymphomanie* (1771), Dr. Bienville describes at great length readers' reactions to erotic fiction and other "tender, lascivious, and voluptuous novels" which act on their readers (preferably female) as a

"magnifying glass which brings together the sun rays in order to fix them in one small part, and to set it on fire" (110).

From a literary point of view, the tendency of characters in erotic novels to read (and sometimes quote) other erotic novels helps create a strong erotic intertextual presence. Numerous references to preceding texts lead to a historical catalogue of previous productions, contributing to a definition and characterization of the genre itself. At the end of the eighteenth century, de Sade's Juliette comments on erotic books published during the entire century, thus placing her own philosophical ideas and sexual practices (as well as de Sade's novel itself) within the erotic corpus of the eighteenth century. In the absence of an official critical discourse on the genre, the erotic novel itself creates a critical space for discussing (analyzing, criticizing, recommending, or condemning) other erotic novels.

Thematically, the presence of other erotic texts plays a very active role: that of exemplifying the power of the genre and of establishing itself as a transgressive corpus. Capitalizing on the official condemnation of erotic fiction by the church and the medical establishment, erotic texts acknowledge the radical influence of erotic fiction on its readers, but they transform such negative influences into positive ones. The description of the reading character who is systematically, and often delightfully, under (narrative) influence leads to quantitative and qualitative improvements of sexual performances by the reading characters. Some erotic novels aim primarily at improving their characters' sexual performances by providing them with catalogues (sometimes illustrated) of postures to be imitated (see, for example, *Les quarante manières de foutre, dédiées au clergé de France* [*The Forty Manners of Fucking, Dedicated to the French Clergy*], 1790).

In other erotic novels, readers responses are framed to show the power of the erotic novel not only on characters themselves, but also, *en abyme*, on their female and male readers. In the

second erotic best seller of the Enlightenment, *Thérèse philosophe* (1748, the same year as *Fanny Hill*), one character who has systematically refused penetration for fear of becoming pregnant has finished reading the first best seller, *Dom Bougre*. As she is “all on fire,” she implores the priest who had lent her the lascivious book to penetrate her. At the end of the book, only novels and lascivious prints can convince Thérèse to be penetrated by her lover. Reactions by male readers are similar, as erotic fiction inevitably incites them to imitate described models. One of the protagonists of Restif de la Bretonne (who also wrote pornographic texts) is so inflamed by the reading of *Dom Bougre* that he tumbles the six women who come to visit him within a couple of hours, barely recuperating enough between two orgasms to proceed with the “inflaming readings” (*Monsieur Nicolas*, 1794–1797). A later Victorian novel again self-complacently emphasizes the dangerous power of erotic fiction. In the anonymous *My Secret Life* (1885–1895), the narrator remembers having received a copy of *Fanny Hill*. As had been the case in Restif de la Bretonne’s work, an erotic novel causes the reader to lose all restraint. Rather than repeated intercourse, *Fanny Hill* causes the hero to masturbate, and the narrator gives a perfect example of a reader’s reaction to erotic fiction: “I devoured the book and its luscious pictures, and although I never contemplated masturbation, lost all command of myself, friggid, and spent over a picture as it lay before me. . . . Fascinated although annoyed with myself, I repeated the act till not a drop of sperm would come” (124). As J.M. Goulemot has put it, and as so many readers (female and male) in erotic texts testify, readers’ reactions to erotic novels prove the absolute power of erotic fiction, which breaks all social, moral, and physiological barriers.

When applied to female characters reading, similar scenes can also serve as a physiological incentive to the turgescient male character who observes a hidden female reader. In this instance, the reader’s reaction serves as an additional foreplay for the female reader and an additional transgression for the voyeuristic male observer (the targeted audience of many early erotic novels), who finally interrupts the

reading for more “solid” pleasures, thus completing physically what had been initiated by the reading.

In general, the effects of all “infernal books” are described at great length, but they are given to the reader less as a warning against spermatic expenditure than as a complicit invitation to similar excesses under their influence. One of the most popular erotic novels from the seventeenth century, *L’École des filles* [*The School of Girls*] (1655), a best seller in France and in England, starts with an “Orthodox Religious Decree” which could exemplify the ideal reader’s reaction in, and to, erotic fiction: “Our August father Priapus severely condemns every man and every woman who reads or hears the love precepts, morally explained in the famous *School for Girls*, without spermatizing or being stimulated spiritually or physically in any way” (183).

JEAN MAINIL

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## RÉAGE, PAULINE

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1907–1998

French novelist and journalist

### *L'Histoire d'O*

In January 1954, Jean Paulhan, chief editor of the *Nouvelle Revue Française*, met Jean-Jacques Pauvert in Paris and gave him the manuscript of *The Story of O*. Pauvert read it overnight and immediately realized that it was “quite obviously one of those books which make an impact on their readers.” The author had already signed a contract with another publisher, and the next day Pauvert went to the Editions des Deux Rives, where René Defez sold him the contract, describing as “trivial porn” the book for which Pauvert felt himself to be the ideal publisher.

*The Story of O* relates the passion of a young woman, formerly carefree and independent, who delights in becoming the “captive” of a man, René. In order to keep his love and give him constant proofs of her abandon, O agrees to become a sexual slave and to undergo initiation in a chateau at Roissy outside Paris. Here, for fifteen days she allows strangers to subject her to tortures, deprivations, and caresses which gradually dispossess her of her sense of being, while creating in her a feeling of deep mystical pleasure. On her return to normal life in Paris she resumes work as a fashion photographer and becomes attracted to a model, Jacqueline, also desired by René. O begins an affair with her and wants to take her to Roissy. When O is given over by René to a more demanding master, Sir Stephen, known as “the Englishman,” she is branded with the mark of Sir Stephen and her labia are pierced with rings. But she finds in her absolute submission a sense of extravagant pride. At the end of the story, her tamed body, partly hidden by the mask of a sparrow-owl, is displayed during a party given by a mysterious Commander. The metamorphosis of the heroine into a night bird raises her momentarily above the level of common mortals like a “creature

from another world” that the fascinated audience comes to look at and touch, despite its fear and repulsion for the chains and irons which bind and pierce her.

Two short paragraphs conclude the story, offering an alternative between a tragic ending and a degradation of the story. The first one refers to a final chapter in which O will return to Roissy and be abandoned by Sir Stephen. It was written at the same time as *The Story of O* but discarded until its publication in 1969, entitled *Return to the Chateau*, with an introduction, *A Girl in Love*. The second cuts short O's existence like the blade of a guillotine with its account of her voluntary death.

Since June 1954, when the work was first published, a number of ill-founded ideas about *The Story of O* have circulated. The first of these concerns the circumstances of the first publication. *The Story of O* was not published clandestinely but officially, by a man who had begun at the age of 21 a vast, courageous undertaking: to publish the complete works of the Marquis de Sade. Publishing *The Story of O* was a new challenge, as for the first time a woman revealed “the nocturnal and secret part of herself” in language otherwise chaste and mannered. Another ill-founded idea concerns the author. Because of the reputedly masculine dimension of the fantasies referred to, and of his status as preface writer, Paulhan was long considered, mistakenly, to be the author of the novel. He was in fact its privileged addressee. Even if he did not write it, he nevertheless inspired it as a lover and urged its author to publish it. She was deeply in love with Paulhan, a married man and a womanizer. They had been lovers for ten years and she was looking for a way to continue to please him. Paulhan did not believe that a woman could write such a story. The author took up the challenge using the weapons of her intellect. She decided to captivate him by writing down the fantasies which had obsessed her since her youth and which her lover, a well-read man familiar with the works of de Sade, would

appreciate. In *A Girl in Love* (1969), written while Paulhan was dying, the author revealed for the first time that the story was a love letter designed to enthrall him.

The fact that the author was a woman gave rise to severe disapproval on the part of the intelligentsia of the time, including Albert Camus, for example, who nevertheless was quite ready to defend the book in court. In *La Coupe est pleine* (1975), Michel Droit still thought that the book had been written by “a well-read, lewd old man.” The truth came out in July 1994 when Pauline Réage, in an interview with John de Saint-Jorre in *The New Yorker*, admitted that she was in fact Dominique Aury. At 86 years old she no longer had to fear the disapproval of her deceased family. Yet as early as 1954 some well-known figures close to Gallimard knew her real identity but kept it secret. In *Confessions of O*, her interviews with Régine Deforges, she explains that at the time, even the police knew every detail of her true identity!

Another persistent legend concerns the immediate impact of the book. Its official publication created a scandal only within a limited circle. The press was dumb with stupefaction. Controversy over it did not arise until September 1975, when its screen adaptation by Just Jaeckin, judged “abominable” by the author, popularized the work and was the subject of a dossier in the magazine *L'Express*.

The book came out during a period of austerity marked by censorship, the main weapons of which were the July 29, 1939, statutory order “on the protection of the family and the birth rate” and the more redoubtable July 16, 1949, law prohibiting the publication of any book “constituting an outrage to accepted standards of behavior” by a triple ban on selling to minors, public display, and advertising. The book was subjected to this ban in 1955. Legal proceedings were indeed begun but toward the end of 1955 suddenly abandoned thanks to an “arranged” meeting at a luncheon between Dominique Aury and the justice minister of the time. As for the first edition in English, published by Maurice Girodias at Olympia Press, its sale and circulation were banned in February 1957. The poor translation was quickly replaced by a new one entitled *The Wisdom of the Lash* (May 1957).

The weight of repression partly accounts for the “conspiracy of silence” which greeted

*The Story of O* and for its poor sales, hardly 2,000 copies during the first year. The fact that it won the Prix des Deux-Magots in 1955 widened its readership considerably. The first important critical appraisal of the book was undoubtedly Paulhan’s preface, “Happiness in Slavery,” inseparable from Réage’s story. This subtle and provocative text did not quite correspond to the book, according to Aury, but its presence immediately proposed threefold support for it: *aesthetic*, because Paulhan was a highly respected writer and critic (elected to the Académie Française in 1963), whose mere name was enough to recommend the book and guarantee its literary worth; *intellectual*, because the preface provided an initial interpretation of the novel; and *ethical*, because by likening the book to “a fairy tale” and more especially “an impassioned love letter,” Paulhan took a clear stand on certain points to forestall the moral objections of censors and reticent readers. The apparently paradoxical title of the preface prefigures Réage’s book as the illustration of an idea running counter to common opinion, as it associates love with dependence, not with freedom. Moreover, from the singular case of the heroine, Paulhan posits the existence of a femininity entirely devoted to sexuality—“At last a woman who confesses . . . that they never cease to obey the call of their blood; that everything in them is sex, even their minds”—and needing nothing less than “a good master” to provide an outlet for it! *The Story of O*, far from being an embarrassing story, thus satisfies “a virile ideal.”

To preempt a denial of the author’s feminine identity, he takes a firm stand in its favor, justifying his position by referring to details in the book. Nevertheless, certain problems are raised—the autobiographical elements, the real name of Pauline Réage, the addressee—but not resolved, and so maintain the aura of mystery surrounding the work.

Paulhan’s preface was at times misunderstood and, according to Muriel Walker, would foster “a certain collective psychosis” by insisting on the scandalous content of the book. At any rate it provided a reference point for enlightened criticism of the time. The principal critical reviews recalled by Aury in *Confessions of O* (1975) were “L’Amour fou” by Claude Elsen in *Dimanche-Matin* (August 29, 1954); “Les Fers, le feu, la nuit de l’âme” by André-Pieyre de Mandiargues in *Critique* (May 1955); and

“Le Paradoxe de l'érotisme” by Georges Bataille in *La Nouvelle Nouvelle Revue Française* (June 1955). Yet other articles, of varying interest, appeared in *Combat*, *Le Courrier des Canettes*, *Medium*, and again in *Dimanche-Matin*.

These critics all recognize in the subject of the book a woman's painful journey through life, with its tragic outcome, and are all disturbed by O's unusual complacency. Only André Berry in *Combat* (March 14, 1955) lingers over the erotic dimension of the book, considering that *The Story of O* pinpoints lust in its purest state. The others refer to less compromising aspects: the mystic quality of the heroine's quest, the contrast between the audacity of the subject and the discreet style, the risk of legal proceedings, and the repercussions on censorship.

Elsen's review questions the erotic label attributed to the story. He compares *The Story of O* with the *Song of Songs* and *Tristan and Isolde* and proposes that amorous motivation is the informing principle of the novel, at the same time half-denouncing the complacency of the heroine. Mandiargues interprets the story as “a mystic novel” in the tradition of Teresa of Avila, Catherine Emmerich, and *The Portuguese Nun*. For Bataille, the author of *L'Anglais décrit dans le château fermé* (1953), the story is about an ascetism which brings about the degeneration of the flesh while elevating the spirit. Bataille's article is more neutral and conceptual, comparing Réage's novel with *Roberte ce soir* by Klossowski (see *Klossowski, Pierre*). He refers to the gruesome eroticism of *The Story of O* as “the impossibility of eroticism.” Recalling the image of Teresa of Avila, who dies “of not being able to die,” he sees the object of O's quest as death. These principal commentaries use the term “erotic” with some caution, no doubt for reasons of censorship but also because Réage's book is too complex for facile labels. They free it from a vision reducing it to a sado-masochistic (S&M) story with a single aim, that of arousing the reader by its highly erotic content. Unfortunately, such a positive evaluation of its complexity by the enlightened critics of the time would not prevent the vice squad from unleashing its fury upon Réage's book and from considering it as “violently and deliberately immoral.”

It was not until 1969 that the possible alternative expressed in Paulhan's preface between “an experienced lady who has done it all” and “a dreamer” was resolved. *A Girl in Love*, a

magnificent text written just before Paulhan's death, provides the key to the reading of the novel. In his review of the *The Story of O*, Francois Mauriac was wrong: the novel is not simply “the confidences of a beautiful woman” but the laying bare of violent fantasies in total contrast with the discreet personality of its author. We also learn from *A Girl in Love* that *The Story of O* was written at night in small notebooks before being read in a car at each secret meeting between the two lovers.

*A Girl in Love* preceded *Return to the Chateau*, a last chapter formerly discarded. The few reviews it inspired recognized the novel as a work of eroticism. The senselessness of official repressive measures, the fact that eroticism was henceforth a public phenomenon, and the changes in public attitude toward it explain why it was possible in 1969 to discuss the guignolish eroticism of the book without risking the censors' wrath and harming one's literary reputation. For Emmanuelle Arsan, *The Story of O* was the opportunity for “intellectual and moral progress,” as it asserted women's long-oppressed freedom of expression. And unlike the “passion for servitude” defended by Paulhan, the novel brought “a stronger taste for freedom.” Arsan declared that *The Story of O* had inspired her to dare to write *Emmanuelle*, even if the response of her own radiant heroine to the question of love was more in keeping with modern attitudes. So, between 1954 and 1969 the novel changed status from a *curiosa* to “a great marvel produced by French literature during this period of transition” (Mandiargues), as it influenced the liberation of attitudes toward love, especially for women.

The reaction to *Return to the Chateau* was, on the contrary, one of disappointment. The transformation of the mystic chateau into a vulgar high-class brothel and of the dissolute master into a crook and the degradation of O into a cheap prostitute constituted a desacralization of the mystic aura and was deplored by the critics. The terms of the challenge had changed. Whereas in 1954 the book had breached the then-current fortress of puritanism, in 1969 it appeared as the incarnation of a “real” eroticism, as opposed to a strictly commercial one. The publication of *Return to the Chateau* provided critics with an opportunity to denounce the popularization of eroticism. It was no longer a matter of battling against censorship, now inoperative

anyway, but of battling against the foisting of cheap eroticism onto the public at large.

Whereas in France the ban on the advertising of erotica was lifted in 1975 and translations of Apollinaire's *Onze mille verges* became available to the public even in Spain, *The Story of O* was still censored as of 1979, mainly because its author was a woman. In Quebec, while the censorship of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* ended in 1962, *The Story of O* was confiscated by the Montreal vice squad, and in 1967 a new trial opened during which defense witnesses argued that the erotic aspect of the book constituted a positive vector of evolution in public attitudes. The confiscation order was lifted in 1973, but the judges nevertheless ordered the Delorme bookshop, which had put the original edition on sale, to pay a \$200 fine.

In September 1974 the author of *The Story of O*, as Dominique Aury, gave her first interview, with Jacqueline Demornex for the magazine *Elle*. That year the movie version of Arsan's *Emmanuelle* broke box-office records, with 700,000 tickets sold in 7 weeks. The sense of public fear and unease sparked by the wave of pornography and sexology then inundating France had inspired the journalist's interest in the author of what was described as "the most widely read contemporary French novel in the world" and of "one of the finest erotic texts ever written." The interview took place shortly before the release of the screen adaptation of the novel by Just Jaeckin—who also made *Emmanuelle*—and of the 12-page dossier in *L'Express* featuring on its cover a topless Corinne Cléry, the actress playing the title role. In Madeleine Chapsal's commentary, the dossier aimed at reviving the topical relevance of the book and presenting it as symptomatic of the present reality, which in 1975 was marked by an upsurge in violence and a lack of communication between the sexes. A year earlier, the American feminist Andrea Dworkin had devoted a chapter in *Woman Hating* to Réage's novel. For Dworkin *The Story of O* is more than simple pornography but a story of demonic possession which posits men and women as being at opposite poles of the universe and which reveals, through O as victim, the true, eternal and sacral destiny of woman: submission to men's power.

The reactions of women who recognized a positive social function in the book were few in number. Fortunately some women critics have

thrown new light on the character of O. Jessica Benjamin, for example, maintained that "the desire for submission represents a peculiar transposition of the desire for recognition," and Brigitte Purkhardt considered the depersonalization of O as the precondition for her attaining individuality. Béatrice Didier invited the reader to probe beneath the surface detail, asserting that the essential core of the book lies in "the affirmation of the writing of extreme desire"; Anne-Marie Dardigna examined the subjection of the woman's body as the precondition for erotic narration, at the same time distinguishing O's expressive body from that reduced by de Sade to its anatomic materiality.

The book had already inspired a number of inchoate artistic projects. In the early 1960s, Kenneth Anger had drawn up plans to produce a movie of the book by way of subscription, but his project was never carried out. In 1967 the impresario Norbert Gamsohn had obtained the rights, but apparently without any result. During the same period Maurice Béjart had planned to make a ballet of *The Story of O*, but once again the project had not been realized. The screen version by Just Jaeckin (1975) is the best known adaptation. It took advantage of the success of the book but weakened its significance, diluting its S&M plot and giving it a happy ending in which O, reclining peacefully in Sir Stephen's arms by the fireside, burns the letter "O" onto the back of his hand with the tip of a lit cigar.

The film and the cover of *L'Express* created a huge scandal and resulted in the settling of old scores with the book through broadsides at the film. The novel was the target of a number of attacks by feminists. Janis L. Pallister judged it severely and, despite all the evidence to the contrary, refused to believe that its author was a woman. Susan Griffin, equally fierce in her disapproval, studied the narrative point of view but mistakenly attributed the main narrative instance to just one voice, that of O the slave. When the film was released, militant feminists from the Mouvement de libération des femmes (MLF), outraged over what they perceived as the commercial exploitation of women's bodies in sexually explicit films, stormed the *L'Express* building and daubed vengeful inscriptions in lipstick on its walls. Their action was supported by the archbishop of Paris, Monsignor Marty, by Michel Droit, and by François Chalais, who in an "Open Letter to the Pornographers" called

Réage's book "the Gestapo in the boudoir." The affair was also taken up by politicians and led to a legal decision to give an X rating to pornographic films and to introduce a professional tax on them of 33 percent.

Other screen versions of the book followed Jaeckin's but were unequal in quality and far removed from Réage's text. In 1975 an American film, *The Journey of O*, was made by Chris Latham. In 1979 Lars Von Trier brought out a black-and-white tribute to the book, *Menthe – la bienheureuse*. A Franco-Japanese adaptation based on *Return to the Chateau* was released in 1981. A sequel to *The Story of O* was made in 1984 by Eric Rochat, who in 1995 also created a ten-hour serial for television, with Claudia Cepeda in the title role, which in turn was produced as a shorter, 82-minute film. The Spanish filmmaker Jesus (Jess) Franco released a loosely based *Historia Sexual de O* in 1986, and, more recently, *The Story of O—Untold Pleasures* (2001) was made in the United States by Phil Leirness.

Other graphic artists have sought inspiration in Réage's book, among them illustrators. Léonor Fini, the surrealist painter, illustrated several fine editions; Hans Bellmer designed for the cover of the first edition in 1954 a silver medallion destined for a circle of privileged readers; Guido Crepax made several comic-strip versions of the book as early as 1975; Loic Dubigeon illustrated the 1981 edition with a hundred drawings; Lynn Paula Russell has specialized in erotic illustrations of S&M literature; Stefan Price has created since 1996 over twenty oil paintings and drawings based on the book; and David Wilde illustrated a series of erotic books, including *Story of O*, for a private client.

Interest in the work continued in the 1980s. In 1981 a chapter in Maurice Charney's *Sexual Fiction* dealt with *The Story of O* and with *L'Image* by the so-called Jean de Berg (suspected by some of being Réage herself) (1956). The two books are studied as "erotic/religious fables in the style of Sade." A year later, Susan Sontag in *The Pornographic Imagination*, considered that "the notion implicit in *Story of O* that eros is a sacrament is not the 'truth' behind the literal (erotic) sense of the book . . . but exactly a metaphor for it."

Then, in the 1990s the author's real identity was revealed to the public and critical interest in the book was once again stimulated. John de Saint Jorre, a journalist and writer, first met

Dominique Aury while doing research for his book *The Good Ship Venus*. The chapter on *The Story of O* in his book recounts the true story of the novel and its author through the words of the main people involved; Saint Jorre also published a shorter version of this chapter in *The New Yorker* in 1994. Both texts contain a host of details about the genesis of the book and the biography of its author—the circumstances of the publication of what was both a *succès d'estime* and a *succès de scandale*, the liaison between Paulhan and Aury, the origins of the characters, the book's posterity, the origins of *Return to the Chateau* and *A Girl in Love*, the reactions to the book in the United States, the puzzle of the identity of the American translator, "Sabine d'Estrée": all are covered with a maximum of precision and in-depth investigation to reveal the truth about the book.

In 1995 Hector Biancotti interviewed Dominique Aury for *Le Monde* on the subject of "literature as love," a conversation which presented the author's life from the angle of a quest for "pure love." But it was her death in 1998 which gave rise to new articles. In *L'Humanité* Régine Deforges paid tribute to the woman who had enabled her to become a writer herself. In the same newspaper, on May 2, 1998, J.-P.L. (?) announced the death of Dominique Aury and recalled the remarkable feat the sulfurous book represented when it was written. Five days later it was the turn of *The Times* of London to announce the death of the author of "an international bestseller," of "the best-known work of erotic literature this century," which, according to the journalist, showed masculine desire at its extreme. The same year, S&M comic novelist Molly Weatherfield eulogized Dominique Aury as the mother of masochism and mentioned the special place that *The Story of O* held in the context of contemporary pornography. A pre-feminist story in which everything revolves around masculine desire, Réage's book is here indeed considered a masterpiece but an outmoded one, due to its 1950s atmosphere of latex and piercings and to its difference from the positive sexual atmosphere of the present day.

In 1999, John Phillips's analytical study of *The Story of O* took up several academic points of view on the novel and clarified some of its aspects with the help of literary theoreticians such as Gérard Genette. Here the worrisome question of the author's identity is put forward

as an example of the dangers inherent in any moral or artistic conclusion based on a presumed identity. Phillips also examines the title of the work, the question of the narrative voice, and the powerful suggestiveness of the letter O with its possible symbolic value, already interpreted differently by Andrea Dworkin, Susan Sontag, and Luce Irigaray and here given a fresh appraisal. In order to explain the least evident aspects of this complex, open, and composite work, Phillips draws upon multiple sources of knowledge and theory, notably feminist, and takes a stand in relation to them.

The beginning of the 21st century has seen an ongoing journalistic interest in *The Story of O* and its author. In 2000 the revue *Sigila* published an article by Nicole Grenier revealing the dual personality of the author and studying the resonances between the articles written by Dominique Aury, a privileged witness of the literary scene for 50 years, and Réage's mythical text. In July 2004 Geraldine Bedell, for *The Observer*, disclosed lesser known facts such as the fate in store for the book on feminist campuses during the 1980s (it was burned) and the identity of Aury's son, Philippe d'Argila. Then the audiovisual media took over from the written word. On the literary radio program *Un Été d'écrivains* on France Inter, Jérôme Garcin told the behind-the-scenes story of "the great literary scandal of the 20th century, an erotic masterpiece written by a woman, Dominique Aury, for the love of a man" (also the subject of a long article in *Le Nouvel Observateur*). In December 2004, on the 50th anniversary of the first edition, Paula Rapaport made a documentary film broadcast on the Franco-German TV channel Arte. It not only told the true story of the book, showing Dominique Aury at various moments in her life and interviewing various witnesses, but also reconstructed several scenes from *The Story of O* and the interviews between Aury and Régine Deforges in *Confessions of O*.

Today the book is still in print, translated into 17 languages. It is a classic reference in the literature of eroticism and quoted in most anthologies and essays devoted to this genre, yet hardly is it ever mentioned in textbooks for schools and universities. It is indeed extremely rare for a teacher of literature to recommend reading the book, in spite of its irreproachable literary quality. Controversy over the novel has gradually given way to serious academic interest in internal

analysis of the work, which has made it possible to highlight the complexity of its formal functioning. Among the forerunners in this respect, Gaëtan Brulotte in 1974 proposed a structuralist analysis, considering *The Story of O* as a vast field of opportunity for study. Since then it has inspired a number of dissertations and theses.

Why is it that still today *The Story of O* exerts an irresistible power of seduction over its readers and has lost nothing of its breath of scandal? The classic construction of this book, its discreetly suggestive style and the Sadean imagery haunting it do not make it a "modern" book in the sense that it echoes the aspirations of our time. The idea of love as an absolute gift to the other appeals less and less to our Western conscience. Women are now more attached to their recently won individual liberties. Nevertheless, in choosing to prove her love by the exercise of debauchery, which enables her both to please her lover and to satisfy her own desires at will, the heroine displays a "freedom of mind . . . rarer than a freedom of manners" (Dominique Aury).

The novel's power both to enchant and to disturb lies in a mythic dimension over which mundane reality has no hold, in the seductiveness of a heroine who chooses to assert herself in non-being rather than establish her individuality, in the strange combination of unusual events and the quiet audacity of a narration which assumes responsibility for them without judging them. More than an erotic novel with a strong S&M theme, it is a mystic novel which revitalizes an ancient myth, that of passionate love in which passion is *endura*, that is, suffering which leads inevitably to death.

O resembles neither de Sade's Justine, the prisoner of ancient forms of servitude, nor Juliette, who, according to Apollinaire, the forerunner of 20th-century woman. She is a character unique in literary history, for unlike sentimental or mystic heroines, she uses the sexual mode, as conceived by the man she loves, to give herself and to pursue her own destruction. She plays the man's game not only to go on being loved, even though aware of the precariousness of masculine desire, but also to belong to herself no longer and to disappear, whence the quest of which man is the instrument. She also brings an original slant to the character of a woman in love through her reverse relation with the life of her author: the nocturnal double of Pauline Réage, the incarnation of a secret love affair between a



## RÉAGE, PAULINE

discreet woman and a charismatic man for whom Réage wrote this passionate love letter. We should first read it as such.

### Biography

Pauline Réage was the pseudonym of Dominique Aury, who was actually born Anne Desclos on September 23 at Rochefort-sur-Mer. She received a bilingual education and discovered at an early age the works of Kipling, Virginia Woolf, Shakespeare, Laclos, and Fénelon. Her encounter with the works of de Sade came later, when she was 30. After brilliant studies at Condorcet and the Sorbonne, she began working as a journalist. In 1939 she participated in choosing the texts for Thierry Maulnier's *Introduction à la poésie française*, then, during the German occupation, distributed the clandestine *Lettres françaises*. It was when she proposed her *Anthologie de la poésie religieuse* (published 1943) to the *Nouvelle Revue Française* that she met Paulhan, 15 years her senior. After 1944 Aury was subeditor for *Lettres françaises*, *L'Arche*, and then *Nouvelle Revue Française*; and from 1950, for 25 years she was the only woman on the reading committee at Gallimard. A translator, preface writer, and literary critic, she won the Grand prix de la critique littéraire in 1958 for *Lectures pour tous*. In 1963 she joined the panel of judges for the Prix Femina. She died at the age of 90. *The Story of O* is the only published novel which it can be said with certainty she wrote.

ALEXANDRA DESTAIS

Translated from the French by Valérie Burling

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# REBATET, LUCIEN

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1903–1972

French novelist, journalist, and critic

There are not many ways of presenting the fascist writer Lucien Rebatet other than in Sartrean terms. Because he was an arch-collaborator under the Nazis, he was very much considered a *salaud* (a very uncomplimentary French epithet) even by René Étiemble, who supported his book against Sartre; an “inexpiable *salaud*” by Marc-Edouard Nabe; and “the very worst of *salauds*” as far as George Steiner was concerned. This judgment of the author contrasts with the high praise earned by his 1,319-page novel *Les deux étendards* [*The Two Battle Flags*]. Although ignored by the critics, it attracted the attention not only (predictably) of young right-wing novelists like Nimier and Blondin, but also of former members of the Resistance and anti-fascists as well known as Jean Paulhan and Étiemble. Failing nonetheless to be discussed widely, it was labeled by Steiner as “the secret masterpiece of modern literature,” while Pascal Ifri referred to it as “a damned masterpiece.” This seems disputable for a novel whose all-too-classical form is indebted to the nineteenth century and whose very conception is a refusal to engage with the main trauma of the twentieth century. The work which, like much of de Sade’s, was written in prison, could be considered as a major piece of erotic literature. One of its most enduring literary achievements consists in its subtle concealing of its erotic dimension. While dealing with questions of theology, as the title (borrowed from Saint Ignatius of Loyola) suggests, as well as of music, painting, theatre, and literature, eroticism appears in fact to be its principal theme. This eroticism is both spiritual and material, marked by ecstatic pleasure and agony, where unveiled desires and the body reveal as much fear as rapture.

Set in Lyon and Paris in the 1920s, it is the story of two highly intellectual twenty-year-old boys: Michel, a former pupil of the Brothers, who has lost his faith and hopes to replace it

with a pagan cult of arts and pleasure, and Régis, who wants to become a Jesuit priest but loves a younger girl named Anne-Marie. The two lovers hope that their mystical and pure love will sublimate the flesh; its fulfillment shall come when Régis enters the seminary and when Anne-Marie joins an order of nuns. Michel, who fell in love with Anne-Marie as soon as he met her, sees sharing their spiritual adventure as the only means of being loved by her. The incapacity of Michel to adhere to his new beliefs and his gradual winning over of Anne-Marie from Régis shows what he considers to be the supremacy of eroticism. Yet Anne-Marie’s inability to forget her earlier ideals and to find satisfaction, once Michel has successfully convinced her to reject Régis, along with her vow and her faith, shows religion to be a “drug” even more powerful than sex. Rebatet proves his anti-religious point with cruel sarcasm by setting the ultimate failure of eroticism and the final triumph of Régis’s God in the holy City of Rome. This frustrating outcome is aimed at showing that the perpetuation of religious prejudice implies the ruin of human happiness. As in de Sade, the novel is ultimately a tale of the destruction of the innocent and trusting Anne-Marie, “the most admirable lover.” Yet, it is the Catholic Régis and not the libertine Michel who destroys her.

Whereas in 1942’s *Les décombres*, Rebatet’s occasional eroticism is descriptive and graphic and serves the metaphorical purpose of highlighting the violation of France by the German armies, in *Les deux étendards*, eroticism thrives in a more subtle atmosphere of a gradually growing desire and a fiery intellectualism. It results from the combination of two opposing erotic strategies. Firstly, the incredibly lengthy pursuit of the desired object, the pious and supremely beautiful Anne-Marie, whose fall is anticipated and awaited with growing excitement for well over 1,000 pages. This fall, preceded and followed by a negation of her purity, gives the narrative its climax and its overriding leitmotif. Secondly, throughout the novel are

## REBATET, LUCIEN

scattered scenes of intense crudity, told in the language of students from the 1920s and in which portraits of mistresses and emancipated or debauched girls (such as “Gaupette”) are contrasted with the physical process of repressed desire by Catholic virgins in the *Années Folles*.

### Biography

Lucien Rebatet was born November 15 in Monas-en-Valloire (Drôme) and attended a school in Saint-Chamond led by the Marist order, where he earned a baccalaureate and became an atheist. He studied philosophy and letters first in Lyon (1921) and then at the Sorbonne (1923), without completing his degree. He had several low-paying jobs as a private school teacher and an insurance clerk before and after his military service in Germany (1927), where he became a fascist. He was a journalist for Charles Maurras’s monarchist newspaper, *Action Française*, writing celebrated cinema criticism under the pseudonym François Vinneuil (1929–1940), and from 1932 for the far-right broadsheet *Je suis partout*, led by Pierre Gaxotte. In 1933, he married Véronique Popovici in Romania. He was overtly pro-Nazi and, together with Drieu La Rochelle and Robert Brasillach, was one of the most prominent figures of French collaboration. His anti-Semitic novel *Les décombres* (1942), describing the French military collapse in the years 1938–40, became the best seller of the occupation years. Like Céline, he followed the officials of the Vichy regime into their German exile in Sigmaringen in September 1944, and was captured on May 8, 1945, in Austria. He was sentenced to death on November 23, 1946, but unlike Brasillach, Hérold-Paquis, or Luchaire, he wasn’t executed. He was reprieved on April 12, 1947, and like Maurras and Benoist-Méchin, served a long jail sentence in Clairvaux, where he wrote most of his most important novel, *Les Deux étendards*, published by Gallimard in February 1952, the same year Rebatet was freed. He published another novel, *Les épis murs* (1954) and resumed journalistic activities, with contributions to the journals *Rivarol*, *Les Écrits de Paris*, and *Le Spectacle du Monde*. His book *Une histoire de la musique* was published in

1969. He never expressed regrets or apologized and died embittered and in literary isolation on August 24, 1972.

DOMINIQUE JEANNEROD

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# REBELL, HUGUES

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1867–1905

French poet, translator, and novelist

Among the fiction of Hugues Rebell, some half a dozen or so works have been considered sufficiently interesting to merit being reprinted in recent decades in France in paperback: *Le magasin d'auréoles* (1896), *La Nichina* (1897), *La femme qui a connu l'empereur* (1898), *La Câlinese* (1899), *La saison à Baïa* (1900), *La Camorra* (1900), and *Les nuits chaudes du Cap Français* (1902). Though none of these works are in themselves pornographic, all include discussions of adult sexual behavior, and several include flagellation scenes. Resolutely pro-aristocratic, much of the prose fiction is best understood as a reaction to the tide of democratic politics which many right-wing commentators feared was engulfing France at the time. Although the Grassal family wealth was considerable (significantly, it derived ultimately from the slave trade), Rebell had been spending money so recklessly that by the beginning of the new century he was in considerable financial difficulty. It was at this moment that he entered into relations with the publisher Charles Carrington (i.e., Paul Fernando), who operated in Paris from about 1890 until his death in the early 1920s. Carrington had been captivated by the flagellation scenes in *La Nichina*, and Rebell produced various works for him in this vein, including: *The Memoirs of Dolly Morton* (1899), *Whipped Women* (1903), and *Cinq histoires vécues* (1904). With regard to *Les Mystères de la maison de la Verveine* (1901), an above-average flagellation novel which some bibliographies attribute to Rebell, it is likely that his involvement was limited to translating and editing the book, since the original work, *The Mysteries of Verbena House* (1882), is usually ascribed to the journalist George Augustus Sala. Various other titles published by Carrington, including *Le Fouet à Londres* (1905), seem unlikely to have been the work of Rebell. Apart from some of the Carrington material, none of

his work has been made available in English translation; a certain amount of biographical information has been published in French in recent years, however.

### *The Memoirs of Dolly Morton*

Rebell's authorship of this work has never been comprehensively established, though there is strong evidence in support of the attribution. The fact that the English edition preceded the French only confuses matters, since it is possible that Rebell wrote the novel in his native language and it was then translated into English prior to the French edition, as *En Virginie* (1901). Though Rebell himself was a translator (among his works is the French translation of Oscar Wilde's essays, *Intentions*, in 1905), it is customary for translators to work only into their mother tongue. Perhaps the strongest argument in support of Rebell's authorship, however, is the clearly defined historical context of the novel—the period of the “underground railway” in the antebellum United States (i.e., the network of farms and houses in which escaping slaves were given refuge as they moved north)—and its psychosexual dynamics.

Whether or not Rebell was the author, *The Memoirs of Dolly Morton* has to be considered one of the more able flagellation novels of the period, not only on account of its period style and historical detail but also with regard to the vivacity of the erotic scenes. In essence, the novel is an episodic account of the adventures and progressive humiliation of the eponymous heroine, who, on the death of her father, decides to assist escaped slaves in their bid for freedom. Naturally, in such a work, one moves progressively from one flagellation scene to another. In *Dolly Morton*, the opening chapter describes Dolly's own childhood from the perspective of the domestic discipline she receives. Subsequent chapters detail her plight at the hands of local plantation owners when her political activities regarding slavery become known; the manner

by which she is blackmailed into becoming the concubine of another plantation owner (Rebell was particularly fascinated by power games of this sort, and practically all his prose fiction involves hierarchies of some sort, whether political or domestic); and the increasingly licentious behavior of her blackmailer. Needless to say, each scenario involves some form of flagellation activity and/or sexual humiliation. Closure of the novel comes in the form of northern military successes, at which time Dolly makes her way to Paris.

### *Les nuits chaudes du Cap Français* (1902)

In 1899, as noted above, Rebell began working for Carrington. In parallel with this, however, he also continued to tout other projects around Parisian publishers. One such project, a two-volume novel with a Caribbean setting (to be entitled *La Caresse des tropiques* and *Noire et créole*, respectively) was offered to a firm called the Maison d'Art in May 1900. Two years later, under the new title *Les nuits chaudes du Cap Français* [*The Hot Nights of Cap-Français*], and for an entirely different publisher, this would prove to be the author's last work of fiction of any note brought out by a mainstream publishing house. It is also one of the author's most accomplished novels, and certainly one his most dense.

*Les nuits chaudes du Cap Français* is a complex tale of the web of sexual and emotional blackmail and jealousy which develops on an isolated sugarcane plantation in Saint-Domingo in the aftermath of the outbreak of the French Revolution. Indeed, it might even be claimed that the action of the novel is precipitated by events in France and, more importantly, the subsequent breakdown of law and order, since the starting point of the novel is the murder of the fleeing sister of a plantation owner who is carrying valuable property sewn in the lining of her coat. In the best tradition of the nascent detective story, the sordid details of this crime are not revealed until an advanced stage. The culprits, however, are an apparently honest Creole, Mme Gourgueil, who acts from pecuniary advantage, and her black maid, Zinga, who is motivated by a hatred of whites. Although Mme Gourgueil subsequently adopts the murdered woman's daughter, Antoinette, she will henceforth be always in the power of Zinga.

Although the author had never visited the French West Indies, the claustrophobic nature of colonial life and the petty rivalries and jealousies which develop between neighbors, between masters and servants, and even between stepmother and a pubescent stepdaughter are well defined. Flagellation, for once, is not the central focus of the work, but the relationship, essentially of a sexual nature, which exists between women. This is particularly true of Mme Gourgueil's interest in Antoinette. Naturally, the exoticism of the location lends itself particularly well to this sort of exercise, but Rebell is at pains to locate the story within a clearly defined political and social context. Though far more sophisticated as a novel than *The Memoirs of Dolly Morton*, one sees the same fascination with historical detail, the same power dynamics at work (though here put to the service of a revenge novel something in the tradition of Dumas), and the same manner of closure, as an essentially hierarchical world crumbles in the face of democratic political reform. Indeed, perhaps the most successful single piece of writing that Rebell achieved is the short story *La Vengeance d'un inconnu*, which serves essentially as the introduction to *Les Nuits chaudes du Cap français*, though all the events in it are, in fact, a consequence of the main body of the novel. Here again a complicated revenge intrigue is worked out, this time within the context of Parisian revolutionary politics.

In contrast to the main intellectual preoccupation of nineteenth-century French popular literature, which was to expose aristocratic sexual misconduct, Rebell seeks to celebrate such excesses. It is perhaps for this reason that not only was the author little appreciated in his own time, but remains a largely unknown writer to this day. *Les Nuits chaudes du Cap français* was initially conceived following the success (the only real one of Rebell's literary career) of *La Nichina* (1897), another complicated tale of intrigue and revenge set against the backdrop of Renaissance Venice. Significantly, Pascal Pia lists a 1916 French translation attributed to Rebell of *Queenie*, first published around 1885 (and subsequently issued as *The Adventures of Lady Harpur*), an anonymous flagellation novel with a West Indian setting. Obviously, there must be a lost earlier French edition, but if Rebell really was the translator of this work, it would suggest one not entirely unexpected source for *Les Nuits chaudes du Cap français*.

### *Whipped Women*

*Whipped Women*, which consists of five short stories, was the last book Rebell prepared for Carrington. Even by Rebell's own standards, this remains a curious and by no means satisfactory work. According to some critics, even Carrington, who brought out an English translation (attributed to the pseudonymous Jean de Villiot) in a limited edition of 300 copies in 1903, would seem to have been aware of the book's limitations, demanding a number of revisions. Stylistically, the book is more simple and straightforward than is usually the case with Rebell, perhaps indicative of the author's declining physical strength and levels of concentration. On the positive side, there is a greater show of humor than elsewhere in Rebell's work, though also an insistence on melodramatic denouement. This is clearly indicated in a story ("Le confesseur") concerning the Princess Elisabeth Bathory, who is subject to an elaborate hoax (which, needless to say, involves the surprisingly naive Elisabeth being flagellated) by a lover who disguises himself as her new confessor; when he reveals the nature of the trick he has played on her, Elisabeth murders him in a fit of passion before killing herself (see *Pizarnik, Alejandra* in this volume for information on the real-life Erzebet Bathory, the "bloody countess." Any relation?). This, and other stories in the collection, contain occasional scatological references (which are not to be found elsewhere in his work). Together with the increasing severity of the flagellation scenes, some commentators see this collection as further tending to indicate the author's mental collapse. The original manuscript, under the title *Femmes Châtiées*, was not published until 1994.

### Biography

Georges Joseph Grassal was born in easy circumstances in Nantes and died in abject poverty in Paris. Though by no means academically precocious, as a teenager he became fascinated by such *fin-de-siècle* figures as J.-K. Huysmans (whose 1884 novel *A Rebours* is considered by

many to have defined the Decadent movement in France) and the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche. Indeed, his identification with the figure of the outsider led him to invent the pseudonym Hugues Rebell by which he subsequently preferred to be known. Between 1886 and 1890 he self-published a handful of works, mainly collections of poetry, initially in Nantes and later in Paris, where he established himself in 1892. Over the course of the following decade, he published some 25 books and contributed to various magazines and journals.

TERRY HALE

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## REBREANU, LIVIU

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1885–1944

Romanian novelist, short story writer, and dramatist

### *Adam si Eva*

*Adam si Eva* [*Adam and Eve*] was published in 1925. According to the writer's wife, it was inspired by a real incident. While walking on Lapusneanu Street in Iasi in September 1918, the novelist was suddenly struck by a beautiful green-eyed woman who was looking intently at him. The woman seemed familiar, although the writer was convinced that they had never met. They exchanged a glance, then turned round, walked farther, and after a few steps simultaneously turned their heads to look at each other again. Then they disappeared from each other's lives forever.

Inspired by this event, Rebreanu initially wrote a short story based on metempsychosis. Then he created seven fictional kernels that developed into a novel through repetition and reinforcement of the main theme. Actually, it is difficult to say with certainty whether the composition of *Adam si Eva* is that of a novel or a short story cycle. What is obvious is that *Adam si Eva* is an erotic novel that relies on the idea that the first couple (Adam and Eve) is reiterated in any new couple. The two lovers are elements of the original of the Platonic androgyny. On their quest to restore their initial unity, they must go through the pains of recognition and separation in seven lives. They will be reunited only in the seventh life. Rebreanu's very clear thesis is reinforced by the repetition of the number seven. There are seven chapters (stories), and each of them has seven parts. Everything is sevenfold: the spans of time, space dimensions, and details of significant objects in the story.

In the first chapter, entitled "The Beginning," Toma Novac, a university professor from Bucharest, is on his deathbed, and is suddenly cognizant of all his post lives. In this supreme moment of final comprehension, he will relive, in

a flash, all his seven lives. In the first life he is Mahavira, a cowherd, who is the predestined partner of Navamalika, one of the maidens destined to King Arjuna. In a swift moment, Mahavira succeeds in resting his cheeks on Navamalika's maidenly breasts. The punishment is terrible. He will be skinned alive. In the second life he is Unamonu, a high Egyptian government official, and his beloved is Isit, the pharaoh's favorite. Everything is simply longing and desire in this life. In the third life he is Gungunum, a Babylonian scribe, and he loves Umma, a county governor's daughter. The war between Nippur and Babylon will bring him an ironic death among other prisoners of war although his ransom had already been paid. Distant worshipping is all that is allowed to the desperate lover in this life. In the fourth life, the social balance between the two lovers is changed. He is Axius, a Roman cavalier who loves below his rank. His beloved is a slave, Servilia. This is one of the best chapters of the novel. In a sadistic fit Axius asks the flogger to whip Servilia in order to punish her for the desperate passion that she inspires. Trying to get rid of this obsession, Axius travels to the East, but nothing can remove Servilia from his mind. Upon his return, his first question is about Servilia. The jealous Chryssilla, his wife, stabs Servilia to death. Axius will cut his veins open in the bathroom, desperate for having lost the chance of a lifetime. In the fifth life he is Adeodatus, a monk in a German medieval monastery, Hans by his secular name. His desperate love is blasphemous as well. Rebreanu's exploration of obsessive love is both clinical and theological. Adeodatus dies kissing the icon of the Holy Virgin and mumbling "Maria" while Satan grins at him and says that there is nothing more precious in the world than the love of woman. In the sixth life, Rebreanu plays again with social status of his protagonists. He is Gaston Duhem, a revolutionary physician in France during the Reign of Terror. She is Yvonne Collignon de Gargan. They meet in a

revolutionary court and are sent, with expediency, to death together. In the seventh life he is Toma Novac, a philosophy professor in Bucharest, Romania, in the thirties of the twentieth century. He is shot to death by the jealous husband of Ileana, his predestined love. Toma's spiritual guide, Tudor Aleman, will set forth the ideological frame of this sevenfold literary structure that is *Adam and Eve*. He appears to verify that Toma does meet the woman that is the embodiment of his other spiritual half and make sure that this life is the seventh, the end of the material journey of the soul.

The fictional discourse of *Adam and Eve* is organized on two levels: a meta-discourse which utters the life of the self in-between the earthly lives in a space and time of pure consciousness and a fictional discourse which is the erotic story. The former always presents the painful separation of the soul from the body, its wandering as pure consciousness, and then its reintegration into another finite body. The latter is a historical and erotic novel. The two partners meet in different historical periods that are described with precision and the pleasure of the picturesque detail. They always belong to different social groups, and this disparity makes their reunification impossible. Sometimes the man has a higher social position, sometimes the woman. The writer varies the circumstances with intelligence and avoids monotonous repetition. Eroticism is mostly distant adoration and desire. Occasionally, hot embraces and even sado-masochistic drives are allowed. Full sexual accomplishment exists only in the seventh life, the last.

Metempsychosis is the vehicle of love, and love is the absolute accomplishment of the human being. *Adam si Eva* is a variation on the same theme of narrative virtue. Rebreanu is able to maintain the delicate balance between the same and the different. The scheme is always the same. The two lovers meet and recognize each other and after a very brief interlude of physical and mostly spiritual reunification they are separated forever. It is only in the Roman and the French story that the woman is killed before the man. Otherwise, she stays in the world after the man's violent death or she remains an idealization, as with Adeodatus. The man always has the initiative of the quest and he is always killed for having transgressed the rules, be they social, moral, or religious. The seven lives are constructed from the man's

perspective, for the woman does not leave the world with her lover even in the seventh life when the cycle is over for the man. Why not for the woman as well? Rebreanu, the male writer, gives no answer. There is usually a third character that fulfills the eternal triangle and thwarts the lovers' reunification. It is the spouse or the partner of one of the lovers. Eroticism permeates the text. Sexuality is explored with delicacy and psychological penetration, especially in the cases when love becomes an obsession bordering on the pathological.

With Rebreanu, Eros is the manifestation of destiny. In his narrative demonstration, Eros and Death meet and complete each other. The tragic dimension of the story is given by the reiteration of the desire. The seven linear plots become a cycle that gets a utopian dimension. Rebreanu's millenarism is individual and erotic. The reader is advised to hope and expect the greatest encounter of any life: one's predestined partner, the other half of one's spiritual self.

### Biography

Born in the village of Tirlisua. Died in Valea Mare. He made his debut with a collection of short stories, *Framintari*, in 1912. Rebreanu is considered the creator of the Romanian modern novel. One of his best novels, *Padurea spanzuratilor* (translated as *The Forest of the Hanged*), is set during World War I and expresses the trauma of the Romanian military from the Austro-Hungarian empire obliged to fight against the Romanians from Romania. In 1920 Rebreanu won the Nasturel-Herescu Prize of the Romanian Academy for his novel *Ion*. In 1939 he became a member of the Romanian Academy.

MIHAELA MUDURE

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# RECHY, JOHN

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1934–

American novelist

Ben Satterfield once likened John Rechy's writing to "an excerpt from Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia Sexualis*" (Satterfield: 81). In fact, Rechy demonstrates an almost Sadean knowledge of sexual variation, gingerly describing the exchange of every conceivable body fluid in scenes of the most abandoned promiscuity. Yet, descriptions of explicit sex actually take up only a part of his writing, and are absent from his most famous book. What makes Rechy an erotic novelist is not his ability to pen a raunchy scenario when he wants to, but his soldierly defense of Eros in its eternal struggle with Thanatos.

After leaving the army, Rechy drifted into the half-world of male prostitution, migrating from city to city until he ended up in New Orleans. A long letter to a friend, eventually published in the *Evergreen Review*, became the nucleus for his brilliant first novel, *City of Night* (1963). Supposedly the semi-autobiographical account of a nameless homosexual street hustler, *City of Night* depicts a hidden world of outlaw sex, peopled by drag queens and bull dykes, hustlers and "scores," chicken hawks and ratty teenagers, all seemingly condemned to pursue a never-ending search for some "substitute for salvation" in a godless universe. Only by refusing to reciprocate, while desperate scores lick his body, can Rechy's hustler feel completely whole. In the process, the distinction between the author and his literary alter ego gradually

disappears. As Rechy himself has suggested, autobiography and fiction have become nearly indistinguishable in his life.

While *City of Night* eschewed any graphic description of sex, Rechy's second novel, *Numbers*, was much more explicit. *Numbers* carries the story of the hustler (now named "Johnny Rio") forward, chronicling his return to Los Angeles after an absence of three years. Dropping any pretense of hustling, Johnny resolves to break his old "record" by getting thirty men to get him off, without doing anything in return. Strutting through movie balconies, men's rooms, and parks, he reaches his goal, only to finally recognize that he needs his scores as much as they need him. Since *Numbers*, Rechy has published nine more novels, one "documentary," several plays, and numerous essays. Although much of his early work focused on gay themes, more recent efforts, such as the underrated *Our Lady of Babylon*, have dealt with "straight" sexuality in its various permutations. In fact, he often writes from the perspective of a number of characters in a single book, demonstrating a profound capacity to empathize with a people of either, or every, gender.

Yet, Rechy appears to be deeply conflicted about his own eroticism. Honorah Moore Lynch has thus suggested that he is torn between the need for order and a hunger for rebellion (Lynch: 1). From a sociological perspective, Rechy's work seems to chronicle the decay of bourgeois society and the coming of some new hyper-modern order. On one level, he clearly portrays sexual life as an apparent struggle

between opposing forces. On one side are the rich, old, white men who do the looking, and on the other side are the women, young men, and poor who get the looks. While the former have money and power, the latter have only their youth and allure to bargain with. This binary structure not only forces poor males to sell their bodies to the rich, but makes male prostitution the only way that men who want to be looked at can gratify their needs.

On a deeper level, however, Rechy portrays a very different reality that is gradually pushing its way to the surface of social life. Here, men and women, young and old, are all motivated by the same needs, and cursed by the same loneliness. Gender is mere performance, mere artifice dictated by a dying social order. Marriage appears here as an empty convention, and righteous promiscuity as the only kind of sex befitting a democracy. Johnny Rio “c’est nous.” While “people wear masks three hundred and sixty-four days a year,” an old crone warns, only on Mardi Gras do “they wear their own faces” (*City of Night*). When women gain the right to look at men as men have looked at women, everyone will become equally narcissistic, and the traditional order will pass away. What bourgeois society calls narcissistic is merely the highest form of self-expression. The orgiastic rites of Fat Tuesday reveal not only the real faces of people, but the face of the future itself.

Against this background, Rechy extols street sex as a righteous disruption of the filaments of power, paving the way for a sexual revolution that will make everyone equal (except, perhaps, the old and ugly). Yet, a strange (crypto-Catholic?) guilt haunts this vision. In the fact-based *Sexual Outlaw*, Rechy wonders why after being with “dozens of people, I just want . . . to die.” It is perhaps to assuage this guilt that Rechy has felt compelled to distinguish between the life-affirming sex of joyful promiscuity and the deathlike anti-sex of sadomasochism. Rechy’s moralistic condemnation of sadomasochism may shed light on why critics have too often ignored his work. Too conservative for the cultural left, but too radical for the right, Rechy has never been “politically correct.” The result has been a scandalous silence about his books. Despite the fact that his works have been translated into twenty languages and sold millions of copies, he has never received the critical attention he deserves. As society continues

to become increasingly “Rechyan,” this may slowly change.

### Biography

Born March 10 the child of impoverished but aristocratic refugees from the Mexican Revolution, grew up in El Paso. Studied at Texas Western College (BA degree) and the New School of Social Research in New York. Served a tour of duty in Germany in the U.S. Army. Adjoint professor, Professional Writers Program, University of Southern California; Pen-USA West Lifetime Achievement Award, 1997. William Whitehead Award for Lifetime Achievement, 1999.

LAWRENCE BIRKEN

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### Website

<http://www.johnrechy.com>

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# REICH, WILHELM

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1897-1957

Austrian physician, psychotherapist, and scientist

Reich's first published article, under the guise of describing a patient, tells how he had witnessed his mother's sexual relationship with his tutor and then told his father. These events and his mother's subsequent suicide may well have become what his biographer Sharaf called, using Erik Erikson's phrase, "an 'existential debt [remaining] all the rest of a lifetime.'" Certainly the rights of lovers to what Reich called "the genital embrace" remained central to his passionate mission. In a letter to Lou Andreas-Salomé (1928), Freud called Reich "a worthy but impetuous young man, passionately devoted to his hobby-horse, who now salutes in the genital orgasm the antidote to every neurosis."

Reich outlined the phases that are supposed to occur in healthy sexual intercourse and lead up to orgasm. There is pleasurable (not "cold") erection; the man is "spontaneously gentle . . . without having to cover up opposite tendencies"; then, "pleasurable excitation, which during the preliminaries has maintained about the same level, suddenly increases . . . both in the man and in the woman—with the penetration of the penis" (the man feels he is "being sucked in," the woman that she is "sucking the penis in"). The man increasingly feels he wants to penetrate deeper, but not sadistically "pierce" the woman; the "frictions" are "mutual, slow,

spontaneous, and effortless," with all consciousness on the pleasurable sensations; finally, there is loss of voluntary control, increased excitation, a "melting" sensation, and clouding of consciousness; ejaculation and orgasm begin in increased frequency of involuntary muscular contractions and with the desire (in the man) to "penetrate completely" or (in the woman) to "receive completely," a release of tension, and the tapering off of excitation in "a pleasant bodily and psychic relaxation."

He considered the moralistic suppression of such experiences, especially in adolescents, the basis for the "mass psychology of fascism" itself, and was drawn to the Communist Party in an effort to oppose sex-denying society, though in time the Communists repudiated him for his sexual beliefs. His break with Freud can be understood not only in terms of his insistence on the genital orgasm, and his subsequent political position, which Freud did not want to be associated with psychoanalysis, but also in terms of his interest in curative technique, for which, as a psychotherapist, he apparently enjoyed remarkable success. In *Character Analysis*, a work still referred to in psychoanalytic literature, Reich developed the theory of "character armor." He noted that patients got better not just because they had insights, but because, along with these insights, they experienced emotional release. For instance, they needed to express their anger, not just know they had it. Reich came to believe that mental repressions are maintained by chronic

muscular tensions that inhibit emotional energy. These rigidities reveal the specific “character” and call out for an active therapy rather than the famed analytic neutrality. From here Reich developed his argument against the theory in Freud’s later work of a primary masochism and original “death instinct.” For Reich, masochism is in no way inborn but the *result* of turning onto the self sadistic impulses that are not primary but caused by suppression of loving, life-affirming impulses. These impulses are the true human biological “core” which patriarchal, sex-denying society has suppressed—the energy that accumulates from the cosmos in the body and is discharged naturally in the uninhibited genital orgasm. Ultimately, then, in a reversal of Freud’s views, it is civilization that needs to be cured in order to prevent neurotic unhappiness. In the schizophrenic, the ego itself breaks down because (unlike in “homo normalis,” the neurotic who makes up the mass of humanity) the “armor” no longer functions to prevent perception of the free “streaming” of cosmic biological energy in the body. This energy, whether inside the body or responsible for the spiraling of hurricanes or galaxies, is cosmic “orgone” energy.

Thus, Reich came to be less interested in psychological processes than in physical ones, which he believed to be the basis of illnesses like cancer as well as of neurosis, and began to think that because processes such as lightning flashes and orgasms seem analogous, they must in some way be identical. Indeed, the observer’s own inner feelings can be a guide to physical research. He called this “functional” thinking. What cosmic and biological processes supposedly share in common is their animation by the orgone energy. Thus orgone is responsible for the blue of the sky, the blue he thought he could see in blood cells at high power, and the blue Reich said he could detect under certain conditions in the dark. He claimed to observe orgone and its effects in experiments using instruments like microscopes, electroscopes, and Geiger counters, and came to believe he could control them through his “orgone energy accumulators” (“orgone boxes”), made of alternating layers of metal and organic material, in which one could sit and be charged with cosmic life-energy. He became notorious for such devices, the use of which led to his federal prosecution and which were treated with some

interest by American literary figures such as Norman Mailer, William Steig, and William S. Burroughs.

In this later phase of his thinking, there is an increasing pessimism about the possibilities of curing “homo normalis,” whose unleashed sadism is responsible for all of the horrors of human history, and tampering with the “armor” most likely only causes an outburst of devastating “emotional plague.” Reich came to think the only hope for humanity lay in yet unarmored infants. A.S. Neill, founder of the “free school” Summerhill in England, was interested in his ideas and engaged in correspondence with him.

Sometimes those interested in Reich’s earlier work try to separate it from his orgone preoccupations of this later phase. But Chasseguet-Smirgel and Grunberger argue that the later work is directly related to the earlier, since Reich’s conception of genitality is based on a notion of physical “discharge”; indeed, they stress the resemblance of this discharge—a view of love that leaves out human *relationship*—to excremental functions and conclude that what they see as his later psychosis is related to anal fixations. But perhaps the vision in his later work of a universe animated with life-energy, which can be felt by lovers who experience joyful sexual intercourse with each other, is best understood as a kind of poetry—valid enough as long as one does not try to use an electroscope to assure its “scientific” validity.

### Biography

Born March 24, 1897, in Galicia in the Austro-Hungarian empire. Privately educated, entered German high school, 1907. Suicide of mother when he was twelve. Austrian army 1915–1918; medical studies at University of Vienna 1918–1922. In Freud’s Psychoanalytic Polyclinic was first clinical assistant, then director of the Seminar for Psychoanalytic Therapy 1924–1930 and vice-director of the Polyclinic 1928–1930. Left Germany in 1933. Research at University of Oslo 1934–1939, then lived in the United States for the remainder of his life. Directed his Orgone Energy Laboratory in Forest Hills, New York, 1939–1941. Founded Orgone Institute, 1942, and set up “Orgonon” in Maine, home of the Wilhelm Reich Foundation, 1949. U.S. Food and Drug Administration complaint in 1954; sentenced to two years imprisonment for criminal

## RELIGIOUS SEXUAL LITERATURE AND ICONOGRAPHY

contempt, 1956. Died in the federal penitentiary at Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, November 3.

GERALD J. BUTLER

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# RELIGIOUS SEXUAL LITERATURE AND ICONOGRAPHY

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Although religion is often popularly considered to be an antisexual force, the relations between sexuality and religion are complex and multiple. The production and regulation of desire is a concern of most religions, and religious traditions which severely restrict accepted sexual behaviors may nevertheless generate highly erotic imagery. It is possible that the central concern of the earliest religions was the desire to make sense of the mysterious powers of fertility and sexuality. Ancient religions celebrating female fertility have been posited, and the patriarchal Greek mythology is full of narratives of bizarre sexual encounters and conceptions. Sexual practices may be considered to produce access to the divine in some religious movements, such as the minority Tantric form of Buddhism. Any one religious tradition may fluctuate between considering erotic and religious pleasures as fundamentally similar or fundamentally opposed to each other.

In the West, however, Christianity is the faith which has had the most impact on understandings and discussions of sexuality. The reputation of Christianity for anti-eroticism is, in part, justified. St. Augustine of Hippo (who had prayed,

as a youth, "Give me chastity and continence but not yet") identified sexual difference and sexual desire as the product of Adam and Eve's fall and thus as the signs of human imperfection. The ascetic strand of Christianity celebrates virginity as a route to partial restoration of that lost perfection and may include extreme austerities such as Origen's self-castration. But Christianity still allows a regulated marital sexuality, more restrictive but also more egalitarian than most of the various secular codes with which it has coincided and competed, and some contemporary Christians are engaged in the project of resacralizing sexuality.

The dominant Christian attitude to explicit discussions of sexual matters has most often been hostile. St. Augustine was horrified by the lascivious content of pagan worship and theatre; medieval priests were ordered to be circumspect in the investigation of sexual sins for fear of inadvertently informing penitents of the existence of sins they would never otherwise have contemplated. Although many present-day Christians approve a limited celebration of sexuality as part of God's creation, others are vocal opponents of pornography and even of sex

education. Material which combines erotic with religious themes is particularly controversial, as demonstrated by the furor over the 1988 film *The Last Temptation of Christ* or the prosecution of *Gay News* in 1977 for blasphemous libel for the publication of James Kirkup's poem "The Love That Dares to Speak its Name," a homoerotic meditation on the crucified Christ. Reproduction of this poem is still illegal in the United Kingdom, though it is easily found on the Internet.

Some Christian practices, however, have enabled the production of erotic speech, literature, and iconography. Michel Foucault's provocative and influential *History of Sexuality* locates the historical roots of sexuality and subjectivity in the Catholic practice of confession, which requires each penitent to construct a narrative of his or her actions. Hagiographic narratives may dwell on the stripping and torture of martyrs with a relish which some modern commentators consider pornographic, or may detail the preconversion activities of penitent prostitutes. Visual representations of saints sometimes emphasize the naked or vulnerable body to potentially erotic effect.

However, it is the mystical tradition which has produced the most characteristically Christian erotic literature. Christian discourse uses metaphors of human relationships to describe those between humans and God: God the Father may be the most familiar of these, but God the Lover has a long-standing presence in Christian thought. Christian celebrations of erotic desire are most likely to be found in the mystic tradition developed from the Song of Songs, also known as the Song of Solomon, or Canticles. Although both Jewish and Christian authorities permitted canonicity to this book only by interpreting its intensely erotic language as metaphorically signifying the contract between God and Israel or God and the Church, it was also used by both male and female mystics to speak of their desire for God. Reinterpreted as a narrative of the soul's longing for God, the Song is in a sense re-literalized and offers a language for speaking of desire, dangerous to unsophisticated readers who might be tempted to read its surface level, but an invaluable sourcebook for the spiritual elite. Its example authorizes Christian mystics, especially in the Catholic tradition, to use erotic language as the most appropriate expression of their apprehension of the divine.

The sixteenth-century Spanish mystic St. John of the Cross adapted the Song into passionate verse: his friend, St. Teresa of Avila, considered herself married to God and famously wrote of an ecstatic experience in which she envisioned an angel piercing her heart with a golden spear. Almost a century later Gianlorenzo Bernini in stone and Richard Crashaw in verse responded independently to the power of her vision with equally sensuous works of their own. Bernini's sculpture of Teresa's ecstasy is so intensely erotic that the psychoanalytic theorist Jacques Lacan cites it as the very image of sexual pleasure: "You only have to go and look at Bernini's statue of her in Rome to understand immediately that she's coming."

Christ is the most common but by no means the only object of mystics' desire: the Virgin Mary may also be addressed in love-lyrics almost indistinguishable from those addressed to women. Scholars of the tradition are divided as to whether such expressions should be understood as reports of sexual fantasies or as metaphorical treatments of mystical ineffability, but it may be that it is impossible, or unnecessary, to distinguish these experiences. In the visions of both male and female mystics, Christ sometimes appears as a feminized figure, suckling his worshippers with his blood, his wound vulval and penetrable. Women who spoke from the position of a bride of Christ might also construct him as a perfectly masculine lover. Such language was also available to male mystics, such as the twelfth-century monk Rupert of Deutz, reporting on his encounter with the figure of Christ on a crucifix:

I took hold of him whom my soul loves, I held him, I embraced him, I kissed him lingeringly. I sensed how gratefully he accepted this gesture of love when, between kissing, he himself opened his mouth, in order that I kiss more deeply.

Although almost all Christian traditions condemn homosexual acts, God's unique status as object of desire, both the ultimate Same and the ultimate Other, disrupts heterosexual stability. The tradition of erotic mysticism can enable the articulation of desires otherwise rejected by mainstream Christian sexual ethics. Kirkup's poem, though its explicitness gave genuine offense to many Christians, is not without precedent in religious literature.

SARAH SALIH

## RENAULT, MARY

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## RENAULT, MARY

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1905–1983  
British novelist

### *The Charioteer*

Self-identified as a bisexual, Renault is best known for her novels about ancient Greece. Their focus on male friendships and ideals of masculinity frequently led readers to assume that she was male. She published her first novel, *Purposes of Love*, in 1939, commencing a number of works focused on nursing (in which she had been trained) and hospital settings. *The Charioteer* (1953) is the last of these and also represents her shift in interest to male relationships.

The novel portrays the essential human drive for the erotic within the context of a bildungsroman which traces the growth of Laurie (Laurence) Odell from naive youth to erotic adulthood. Written within the oppressive context of the 1950s, the novel's eroticism is that of the gesture, the smile, the suggestion, and the implication, much like the later writing of Henry James. *The Charioteer* explores the challenges of integrating the erotic aspects of human nature into an integrated homosexual man. The novel is richly and intensely erotic: every interchange between characters has erotic undertones, as Renault brings to life the experiences of a group of men and women in Britain under the pressure of World War II. The novel's achievement lies in its ability to depict a world

in which even innocence has erotic ramifications and in which the ideal of human love emerges in uniting the physical with the spiritual.

Renault develops this unified doubleness through deft use of the myth of the charioteer from Plato's *Phaedrus*. In *Phaedrus* Socrates describes the human soul as a charioteer driving two contrary horses: one noble, self-restraining, and aware of shame, and the other unruly, willful, and desiring. Renault uses the myth on multiple levels in which different characters at once personify the drives of the different horses and wrestle with their own individual ill-matched team. All the major characters are caught in the challenge of managing and reconciling their idealisms and their desires—from Reg, a soldier desperately in love with his unfaithful wife, to Andrew, a tough but naive conscientious objector whose love for Laurie remains on the plane of the ideal.

Synthesis—or mastery of the two horses—is achieved by Laurie, a young man severely wounded at Dunkirk and now enduring a slow recuperation in a military hospital. Aware of his homosexuality, he finds himself lonely and alone because of the tension between his idealized view of human relationships and his own sexual desire, which seems to threaten those ideals. Laurie's personality has been shaped by a pair of crises marked by overtly sexual overtones. The novel opens with Laurie, age five, alone in bed, aware but unclear about the rift in his parents' marriage—specifically his father's infidelities—that leaves him knowing “the burden, prison, and mystery of his own uniqueness” (13). The second, parallel event occurs during Laurie's public school days when the head of the school, Ralph Lanyon, whom Laurie idealizes, is expelled for homosexual behavior with another student. Renault describes Laurie's adolescent idealization of Lanyon as “a kind of exalted dream, part loyalty, part hero-worship, all romance. Half remembered images moved in it, the tents of Troy, the columns of Athens, David waiting in an olive grove for the sound of Jonathan's bow” (31). Laurie's idealism here is doused by the fact that his hero had in fact committed the acts. In parting, Lanyon gives Laurie a copy of *Phaedrus*.

The bulk of the novel explores the adult Laurie's coming to terms with himself. In the hospital, Laurie falls in love with a young Quaker conscientious objector, Andrew Raynes.

Andrew's openness to friendship and affection disarms Laurie by its innocence. Both men are aware of an abiding love for the other, but Andrew's apparent ignorance of his own sexuality keeps this relationship within the Jamesian realm of the wished for rather than the realized. Typical of idealized lovers, they seek out the quiet and comfort of companionship with the beloved without actually moving into the realm of physical touch. Their single kiss is awkward and abortive because a nurse happens to enter the room.

This idealized romance becomes challenged by the reappearance of Ralph Lanyon, now a sailor also wounded during the Dunkirk retreat. Against his own inclinations, Laurie agrees to attend a homosexual party because Lanyon is also expected to attend. Here the men are “specialists,” focused only on the physical aspects of their desires. Such behavior appalls Laurie, and Lanyon is critical of it, but has in fact participated widely in that version of his sexuality. However, from the beginning of their reunion, Laurie and Ralph have an intellectual and physical sympathy which much later finds consummation. From that point, Laurie is caught between his Platonic romance with Andrew and the physically rewarding if less ideal involvement with Lanyon.

Eroticism in the novel operates on a number of levels. Men in Laurie's ward make the expected jokes about women; and the erotic life of Laurie's Dunkirk friend, Reg, provides the most overt sexual plot, as the infidelities of his wife, Madge, underscore the challenges of maintaining a faithful relationship, which is precisely what Reg has such a passionate need for. Laurie himself flirts with a heterosexual alliance with the gentle nurse Adrian, which culminates in a kiss and Laurie's confession of another attachment. The blush of Laurie's mother when he suggests she need not remarry provides the most striking image of how heterosexual eroticism is gently but firmly a public fact.

By contrast, homosexual eroticism manifests itself through multiple modes of suggestion, implication, and innuendo. Laurie's idealism had already received a shock from his contact with the homosexual underworld in Oxford before the war. Here, and in the party Laurie attends, the atmosphere of camp banter and presumed promiscuity repels Laurie. The characters in this underworld define themselves exclusively by



## RENAULT, MARY

their homosexuality, and the presumption of ready sexual liaisons among the members of this shadow community underscores a simple physical eroticism devoid of the spiritual affinity that Laurie feels with Andrew.

Laurie's romance with Andrew is very much a spiritual eroticism threatened by the possibilities of physical consummation. By contrast, Ralph Lanyon has lived a life of promiscuity with both men and women even while yearning for the ideals of male friendship, human wholeness, and membership in a broader fellowship. Laurie's challenge is to find this integrity, to cherish the ideal as superhuman, while maintaining its values within the context of a real, physical relationship.

The achievement of the ending is Laurie's integration of his idealistic and desiring selves into a complete eroticism that is both sexual and spiritual and that recognizes the pull of both of the horses in the drive of human nature, allowing Laurie to love both another and himself and to integrate his sexuality into his humanity in a way that most of the other characters of the novel have been unable to accomplish. At the end, Laurie returns to Lanyon, ostensibly to a committed relationship between two strong men. Renault concludes with an image drawn from her governing myth: the horses "are far, both of them, from home, and lonely, and lengthened by their strife the way has been hard. Now their heads droop side by side till their long manes mingle; and when the voice of the charioteer falls silent they are reconciled for a night of sleep" (347).

### Biography

Mary Renault is the pen name of Eileen Mary Challans, who was born in London, England, on September 4 and was trained as a nurse in the 1930s. In 1948, with her companion, Julie Mullard, she moved to South Africa (note that

in *Phaedrus*, upon which *The Charioteer* is based, Plato designates the two horses as "white," the noble one, and "black," the unruly one). She died of bronchial pneumonia in Cape Town on December 13.

KEITH E. WELSH

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# RESTIF DE LA BRETONNE, NICOLAS

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1734–1806

French novelist, autobiographer, and philosopher

The word *érotisme* did not enter the French language until around 1850. But if 18th-century France did not have the word, it had the thing. Of some 3,500 novels published between 1700 and the French Revolution of 1789, around 200 are classifiable as libertine, and a large quantity of licentious verse also circulated on a permanent basis. While the official culture of church and state frowned at the prevalent level of sexual frankness and pursued authors who overstepped the mark (*Les Bijoux indiscrets* [1748] helped earn Diderot a jail sentence), public attitudes varied considerably. Moralists, critics, censors, and the police drew fine distinctions. Anything classed as “gallant” or “frivolous,” though deplorable, could at least be relied upon to be well spoken and was considered socially and aesthetically permissible. Books and pictures described as “lewd,” “obscene,” and “scabrous” were morally reprehensible, of course, but the label “lascivious” or “lubricious” indicated a far more wicked will to exploit the lusts of the flesh. At the bottom of the heap, unmediated paillardise, or bawdyness—which denoted a vulgar pandering to the beast in man—was beyond the pale. But most libertine fiction had higher ambitions than the mere titillation which is the purpose of pornography, and a measure of licentiousness was tolerated in literature as in public life. For the most part, it operated within the limits of a certain cultural complicity which was part of the mood of contestation that grew as the French Revolution approached. Particularly after 1740, many philosophical (and therefore obliquely political) skirmishes were fought in the erogenous zone.

Restif de la Bretonne was not a libertine in this intellectually combative sense. While he had decided views about how society should be changed for the better, he was more concerned with his own sexuality and how it might be exploited to defeat the real world, which was

resistant to his writings, and project him into a region of the imagination which had little to do with reason and promised a haven which legitimized his sexuality and freed him of transgression and guilt. His place in the history of 18th-century eroticism lies somewhere between Casanova’s conception of sexual freedom as a means of expressing the total self and Laclós’s (and even more so de Sade’s) equation of sex with power. Excluded by his social origins and outsiderly life from the traditions of courtly libertinage, he made sexuality an essential ingredient of an inner fantasy which became more lurid, insistent, and hermetic as he grew older. Thus although Restif has a clear place in the history of erotic writing, he may also be considered a case that could have been written about by Krafft-Ebing.

His literary education was undirected and, after he was apprenticed to the printing trade in 1751, largely determined by the books he printed and read in proof. It was thus that at Auxerre he read *Mysis et Glaucé* (1748), Séran de la Tour’s mildly erotic neo-Grecian poem. When Restif arrived in Paris, his friends Boudard and Renaud provided him with clandestine scabrous books from the illegal printing shops where they worked. Certainly, Restif’s haphazard apprenticeship as a writer gave him more than a nodding acquaintance with erotica, to which he attributed a large capacity to pervert young minds and harm society. Impressionable heroines in his first novels, such as *Lucile* (1769), are exposed to plays and fiction which glamorize vice but are brought back to the path of virtue by a course of reading which includes Rousseau’s *La nouvelle Héloïse* (1762) and the wholesome novels of Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni (1713–92). The corruption of innocence is one of the major themes of the dozen books which preceded *Le paysan perversi* (1775), where Edmond’s “perversion” is the loss of his country virtue by exposure to the values of the city. It was a fashionable subject, but Restif approached it from a number of original directions.

First, *Le pornographe* (1769) tackled sexuality as a social problem. The title is a personal noun referring to a “writer on prostitution” (the modern sense of *pornographie* also dates from the mid-19th century), and the book is a “project” which offers a plan for reform of the vice trade and displays no more salacity and no less public spirit than are to be found in the writings of opponents of the so-called white-slave traffic a century later. It is worth noting, to Restif’s credit, that while the most famous philosophes tackled the great issues posed by the clash between religious and secular thinking, it was left to minor writers like Restif to identify prostitution as a serious social and medical problem. Poverty, lack of education, the decline of marriage and the family, the bad example set by the rich, and the culpable connivance of the police all figure on his surprisingly modern list of causal factors. He took the view that prostitution is ineradicable, since the demand for it is eternal and the supply endless. It is a necessary evil, and society has a duty to limit the damage done by what it cannot prevent. Whores play a useful role—they are a safety valve for male urges and a protection for decent women—and they deserve better treatment. Restif claimed to have carried out a personal investigation of their attitudes and conditions, though elsewhere his knowledge of the brothels of Paris derived, he said (sometimes self-reproachfully, sometimes with pride), from a more basic imperative. It is clear, however, that his sympathy for the plight of the prostitute is as striking as it was rare in his time. His project was designed to encourage the state to control and regulate the flesh market. He recommends the building of state-run, efficiently policed bawdy houses in quiet suburbs. All social classes would be catered to and medical services would be provided to restrict the spread of venereal disease. Useful employment would be found for superannuated inmates and for the children born in the new, hygienic, socially useful, and classically named “Parthénions.” Though quaint in parts and overearnest (Restif’s utopianism is never far from the surface), *Le pornographe* is a well-informed and thoughtful inventory of the regulationist case, which has continued to be fiercely advocated and passionately opposed.

Second (and this was the stance which would prevail), Restif approached the corruption of innocence from the personal stance of autobiography. His early novels recall incidents

and people from his past. Thinly disguised heroines, some of whom he later identified as girls he had known, and naive, idealistic young men who resemble his younger self, encounter temptation. They may succumb temporarily, but they are guided to safety often by a wiser, older man who is an echo of his father or of respected churchmen he had known as a boy. Until 1775, his novels were far more moral than titillating. But with *Le paysan perversi*, the tone darkens. Edmond, urged on by the cynical Gaudet d’Arras to be “bold” with life and women, rapes Madame Parangon, ushers his sister into prostitution, and is cursed like Cain. Edmond is clearly a transposition of Restif, who identified closely with the character’s guilt and failure. In the early 1780s, the heroes of a series of “posthumous” novels which drew heavily on Restif’s experience and psyche, labor unavailingly under the weight of a father’s curse. Their crimes are never made explicit, but they have been judged by an unforgiving Jansenist God in whom Restif had long since ceased to believe.

This mood had blown itself out by the mid-1780s. But by then Restif had become addicted to using fiction as a way of acting out in his imagination desires which he could not achieve in life. He wrote several versions (notably *Le quadragénaire* [*The Middle-Aged Man*], 1777, and *La dernière aventure d’un homme de 45 ans* [*The Last Adventure of a 45-Year-Old Man*], 1783) of a scenario in which he is deceived by a girl young enough to be his daughter. These novels, though not explicit in any way, carry a strong erotic charge, the reason for which was his attraction to his elder daughter, Agnès. He opposed her marriage in 1781, complaining that Augé was not a suitable husband. When he was proved right and Agnès fled from her brutal, sadistic spouse, Restif wrote his version of her experience in *Ingénue Saxancour* (1786), an early example of a “faction.” It contains scenes and reports of sadistic behavior and is one of the rarest of his books, his family later having destroyed all the copies they could find.

Despite these ominous signs, Restif’s sexual personality was still capable of objectivity, and in 1783 he began serious work on his autobiography, *Monsieur Nicolas*, which was published in 1796. In it, he traced the development of his “combustible temperament,” giving a large place to the precocious fumbings of his early years and not disguising, but often exaggerating,

his success with women. A small number, however, were the focus of an idealizing tendency. Jeannette Rousseau, a notary's daughter to whom he was too shy to speak, remained a lifelong icon. Along with Madame Parangon (the wife of his master at Auxerre) and Filette, whom he watched from a distance in the 1790s, she represented an ideal of womanhood which he had failed to find in his wife and which he had expressed rationally in another grandiose project, *Les gynographes* (1777), designed to show how women should be educated and prepared for their role as wives and mothers. He continued to instruct them in their duties of subservience, and *Les contemporaines* (1780–5, 42 vols.), by far his longest collection of tales, showed “a thousand and one” routes to married happiness. But generalities did not electrify his imagination, which required, he said, a basis in fact and a muse to inspire him.

This often meant weaving stories around girls he had known or merely glimpsed. The result was not always a remembered encounter but the imagined tale of what he would like to have happened, with himself as irresistible hero. His heroines acquired graphic reality in the 300 illustrations for *Les contemporaines* which he commissioned mainly from the engraver Louis Binet (1744–c. 1800), with whom he worked closely. He claimed that the women he pictured were distinctive by their bearing, dress, and social class. In fact, they are all versions of a single type which is obsessively re-created: a doll-like head (large eyes, rosebud mouth, oval face) is set above an impossibly narrow thorax; miniaturized shoes peep out under long skirts; legs twice as long as the upper torso eventually turn into exaggeratedly swelling haunches. A small minority are nudes and a few are shown as the victims of sadistic men. Restif took great pains and incurred considerable expense to externalize his inner vision of women who all wear the straitjacket of his obsession.

Most of the stories he published in the 1780s were based on muses he had known, some of whom reappear in a variety of situations. Occasionally he borrowed the experience of third parties. Alexandre Tilly (1764–1816) recalled being approached by Restif, who asked him to provide “erotic episodes” from his life which he could use. Tilly refused and wrote them up himself in his own *Memoirs* (written 1804–5, published 1828) in the sardonic, libertine style

which was a world removed from Restif's compulsive voyeurism. Undeterred, Restif continued to press his lurid imagination into a variety of rational causes. Thus he gave a philosophical twist to his obsession with female dress. He argued that feminine modesty is more stimulating than nudity and insisted that any attempt to dull down female fashions (he instanced the Revolutionary taste for unexciting low heels) undermined the attractiveness of women. The birth rate would fall and the incidence of homosexuality rise. For Restif, the homosexual was an antisocial egotist whose infertility denied man's procreative function and therefore harmed the growth of the population on which the wealth of nations depended. Most unexpected of all these arguments was his account of the creation of the universe.

In the beginning, he argued, all matter was gathered into a small, spinning, fiery sun in empty space. As it whirled, pieces were projected by centripetal force to form secondary suns, which in turn ejected further suns until their energy was exhausted. When they were no longer capable of generating new suns, they still scattered matter, which formed into planets where in time living forms appeared. By analogy with terrestrial creation, Restif argued that the life-giving force was male, that “corporeity” was female, and that male suns impregnated female planets and the “eggs” of plants and breathing creatures by their rays. In time, the cooling of matter reduced the system's procreativity and induced aging and eventually death. Dead planets lost momentum and spiraled back into their local suns, hastening the latter's extinction by choking them with accruing burnt-out matter. Steadily, beginning with the farthest flung, each sun died and returned to its parent until finally all matter congregated in one small mass. Then, like the Phoenix rising, the mass burst into new life, and the cycle, which he called a “revolution,” was begun again.

But if the cosmos was a stately sexual ballet, Paris offered Restif, its observer in *Les nuits de Paris* (1788–94, 16 parts), opportunities for chronicling more immediate immoralities—sometimes with graphic vividness, at other times with shameless voyeurism, of which his lurid and purely fictitious account of the activities of the Marquis de Sade may stand as an example. *Le Palais Royal* (1790) was a further, anecdotal incursion into the milieu of

prostitution. By then, the ancien regime had fallen, and while Restif joined the pamphlet war with a short series of scurrilous pamphlets directed at the abbé Maury (May 1790), he had no hand in the obscene *Dom Bougre aux États Généraux* (1789), which is still often attributed to him.

But also by then, Restif was losing interest in the real world and retreating into himself and his desires as the source of inspiration. He continued to add to *Monsieur Nicolas* and wrote *Le drame de la vie* (1793), a series of interconnected plays through which he relived old adventures and old loves. But recycling the past ceased to satisfy him, and he grew interested in rewriting his life as it might have been. He likened himself to an artist assigned to sketch an unfinished building and arranged his adventures as he wished they had turned out. In *L'Année des dames nationales* (1791–4, 12 vols.), he made a modest use of his new freedom. Anodyne for the most part, his stories linger over the sexual possibilities of colonial settlers who, far from the world of law, create ideal conditions for sexual domination. A similar power is granted to Multipliandre, magical hero of *Les Posthumes*, which Restif began in 1787, rewrote in 1796, and published in 1802. Multipliandre is a projection of Restif triumphant. He quells all opposition and reorganizes France, the world, and finally the whole universe according to social principles outlined by Restif in the series of reformist, utopian projects he had published between 1769 and 1789. But Restif also exploits Multipliandre's ability to inhabit other bodies to achieve the sexual success denied to him in life.

After 1795, when he was treated for a urinary dysfunction, Restif hints that he was impotent. This may be so, but in any case his libido was unaffected. To *Les Posthumes* he added a handful of “re-vies,” or revisionistic essays that revisited familiar characters and situations which he retold according to some new hypothesis. He had shown that the cosmos was a series of so-called revolutions; now he argued that each revolution followed exactly the same pattern and that our lives have been relived many times. This knowledge gave Restif the advantage, because now, on paper, he could correct his mistakes and generate a past not as it *might* have been but as it *should* have been. Hence, with *L'Enclos et les oiseaux* [*The Enclosure and the Quails*] (1796), he returned to a scenario dating back to

a poem which he claimed to have begun in 1749. In it he had imagined transporting twelve girls to a sequestered enclosure of which he was master. In his re-vie, he transforms the situation into a gigantic fantasy engineered by a final autobiographical hero who is omnipotent and made immortal by means of a potion called “spermaton.” He fathers immense numbers of daughters, and over many generations, the enclosure spreads until it fills the world with a genetically pure race of Restif clones. *L'Enclos et les oiseaux* was never published, and the manuscript was dispersed. But enough remains to indicate the visionary power of Restif's erotomania.

It does not, however, reach the level of frank obscenity displayed by *L'Anti-Justine* (1798), of which only one volume (of four) was published. It was ostensibly written as an antidote to de Sade, who, he said, made sex a justification for cruelty, pain, rape, and murder and threatened the fabric of society. In the event, Restif's counterblast was another autobiographical exercise which sets no limit on the sexual energies of Cupidonnet/Nicolas. Beneath the squirmings and the ecstasies, Restif is to be observed doing to his enemies—that is, almost everyone he had ever known—what he could not do in life. It is a perverse exercise, an escape, a chronicle of impotence. The rarest of all Restif's books, it is also a compendium of its author's sexual fixations. It is now accepted that he committed incest with Agnès and that his claims to have fathered some 230 daughters (against one son) is part of a wider erotic fantasy. Many stories ring the changes on his carnal feelings for so-called muses who looked like or might have been his daughters. No less insistent was his obsession with women's feet (always daintily visible in his closely supervised illustrations) and with women's shoes, which, as his private journals reveal, he used for onanistic rites. Restif is one of literature's most clearly documented literary cases of foot fetishism.

As a casebook example of an erotomaniac, Restif displays multiple symptoms—incest, daughter fixation, foot fetishism, voyeurism, mild perversion—which intensified as he grew older. In literary terms, however, he was saved from their destructive potential by a creative literary imagination. His reputation may stand on his perverse amours—but there are many other Restifs: the imaginative novelist, the social reformer, the below-stairs observer of Paris life,

the explorer of time who has no equal before Proust, the philosophical and political idealist, the anti-intellectual who freed the imagination from the bonds of Enlightenment reason, and not least the autobiographer, who laid his heart bare and still offers us, two centuries on, true reflections of ourselves.

### Biography

Born Nicolas-Edmé Restif (or Rétif) de la Bretonne at Sacy (Burgundy), October 23. Took his name from the farm of La Bretonne into which the family moved in 1742. Attended village schools and, for one year (1746–47), the Jansenist college at Bicêtre before being apprenticed to François Fournier, printer at Auxerre (1751–55). Worked as a journeyman typesetter, then as a foreman printer until 1766, when, believing he could write as well as the authors he printed, he became a full-time writer. Between 1767 and 1802, he published some 50 titles in 300 volumes: reforming tracts, novels, over 1,000 short stories, unperformed plays, accounts of Paris seen “from below,” and the autobiography for which he is best remembered, *Monsieur Nicolas*. He became famous in 1775 for *Le paysan perversi* but remained, by choice, outside the literary establishment. Married Agnès Lebègue in 1760 (divorced, 1792); two daughters. Died in Paris, February 3.

DAVID COWARD

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# REVERONI SAINT-CYR, JACQUES ANTONIE

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1767–1829

French novelist and librettist

## *Pauliska ou la perversité moderne*

Reveroni Saint-Cyr is currently remembered for only one work, a Gothic novel (though more in the French style than the British tradition) entitled *Pauliska ou la perversité moderne; mémoires récents d'une Polonoise* [*Pauliska, or Modern Perversity: Recent Memoirs of a Polish Woman*] (1798). The novel is imbued with a royalist political agenda far removed from the concerns of any British Gothic novelist of the period. In essence, *Pauliska* recounts the vicissitudes suffered by the eponymous heroine, a beautiful young countess, during her attempted flight from Poland shortly after a Russian invasion. Given the date of the book's publication (1798), commentators have not failed to see parallels between the misadventures of Pauliska and Marie-Antoinette's abortive flight to Varennes in June 1791.

Pauliska is aided and assisted throughout by a young army captain, Ernest Pradislas, who is devoted to her cause. This allows the author, of course, to exploit the sentimental benefits of separating Pauliska from her companion, and, indeed, throughout much of the novel, we follow their separate adventures. At one moment, for example, Pauliska falls into the hands of the sinister Baron d'Olnitz, who has been conducting experiments with love serums. Pradislas, on the other hand, is captured by a gang of female *philosophes* belonging to a clandestine organization whose membership extends from Madrid to Saint Petersburg. During the period of his captivity, Pradislas is subjected to a bizarre sexual experiment. In short, he and a young woman are stripped and placed into a cage in order for the observers to witness whether he becomes sexually aroused. The point of this experiment is to determine whether men's reactions are

motivated by the emotion of love or are merely the automatic response to external promptings. In the event, however, the author neatly sidesteps these issues by making Pradislas fall in love with the female member of the sect chosen to participate in the experiment, and the couple manage to contrive an escape.

Interestingly, at the very moment that *Pauliska* was first published in the late 1790s, there was a considerable vogue in Paris for translated English Gothic novels. Indeed, so great was this vogue that a number of French writers produced imitation Gothic novels, sometimes disguised as translations. However, it should not be taken for granted that the French term *roman noir* and the English term "Gothic novel" are entirely identical. English Gothic novels tend to be set not only in the distant past but also in an essentially Catholic and feudal society. French imitation Gothic novels, on the hand, are often focused on more recent French history and may be generally seen as providing a conservative response to the French Revolution. One of the most popular of such works, not only in France but also in countries such as Spain and Italy, was J.-F. Regnault-Warin's *Le cimetière de la Madeleine* (1800), which recounts the final days of Louis XVI's reign and execution in 1793 in the form of eleven "visions."

In Reveroni Saint-Cyr's case, the focus is not only on the tribulations of Marie-Antoinette's alter ego but on Enlightenment science generally (parodied through both the Baron d'Olnitz and the society of *Misanthropiles* who capture Pradislas) and on the system of Masonic lodges which conservative commentators blamed for the spread of revolutionary ideas. Paradoxically, however, in terms of genre, *Pauliska* seems as indebted to the tradition of the libertine *conte philosophique* as to, say, translations of the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe. In this respect, however, the novel is by no means alone. Indeed, the works of the Marquis de Sade clearly reflect the same binary tradition. More specifically,

one can point to a French subgenre of more erotically informed novels employing surface genre markers derived from the English Gothic novel, such as *Rosaide et Valmor, ou les victimes de l'orgueil* (1800), a Gothic flagellation novel deliberately misattributed to Horace Walpole, and *Le Parc aux Cerfs* by de Faverolle (pseudonym of Elisabeth Guénard, Baronne de Méré) (1809), which centers on a clandestine brothel claimed to have been operated for the sexual gratification of Louis XV in the late 1750s.

The brief revival of interest in *Pauliska* in France during the 1970s may perhaps be explained by two factors: the continued interest in cultural manifestations of the French Revolution and the ongoing debate about censorship in contemporary society. Regrettably, little subsequent work has been carried out either into the precise nature of the French *roman noir* or its more philosophical counterpart.

### Biography

Jacques Antoine Reveroni Saint-Cyr was born in Lyons. His life would seem to have been spent mainly as an officer in the French artillery and engineer corps, from which he retired in 1814 with the rank of lieutenant-colonel. Among his various military projects, he is known to have prepared a plan for the royalist defense of the Tuileries during the early stages of the French Revolution, worked on strengthening a number of fortifications, and narrowly missed out on participating in Napoleon's Egyptian expedition due to ill health. Like many men in a similar position, he probably took to the pen initially as a means of making a living as a consequence of

the financial catastrophe which accompanied the French Revolution; a later flurry of activity suggests a similar pecuniary embarrassment about the time of Waterloo. He published two novels in 1798 and six more later on, wrote more than a dozen plays and operas (some unperformed) during the first two decades of the new century, and acted as occasional librettist for musicians as distinguished as Dalayrac and Cherubini (then at the height of his fame). Reveroni Saint-Cyr's present-day obscurity is probably due more to the immediate topicality of his work than any other fact. The *opéra-comique* was not then the despised form it is today, and audiences were particularly appreciative of parodies (an art form that rarely survives the test of time). *Pauliska*, too, might best be considered to some extent a parody (a French imitation Gothic novel) with considerable topical appeal. None of his work has been translated into English. He died in Paris, possibly in a state of temporary insanity.

TERRY HALE

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## RHETORIC

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*Rhetoric* refers to the theory and practice of persuasive speaking; the word is derived from the Greek verb *rhêtoreúô*, meaning to speak, and more particularly, to speak in public. As a theory, rhetoric has sought since antiquity to

understand speech as a force that asserts itself in the energy to act upon others and upon oneself, to affect ideas and actions, will and desire. As the practice of discourse, rhetoric develops through an art of speaking and writing that



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places the business of seduction at the heart of the exercise of speech.

Rhetoric, at once the well-thought-out experience of discourse and the craft of speech, also claims to teach the art of winning hearts and minds by arousing the desires and passions of the listener or reader. Accordingly, beginning in the Renaissance it was called upon to play a major teaching role in educating Europe's upper classes. Until the nineteenth century at least, this education in eloquent speech encouraged artistic and literary practices which, in keeping with the ideas of Cicero, made every work into a project intended not only to instruct [*docere*], but also to please [*delectare*] and to affect the emotions [*movere*].

In modern Europe, the oratorical training of people of letters was based mainly on the teaching of rhetoric dispensed by the Jesuits. The Jesuit fathers proposed to train young people who, fit for polite society, would be able to win over an audience solely through the art of pleasing by word and gesture. In tune with the spirit of court society and inheritor of the splendors of the Baroque sensibility, this rhetorical tradition is particularly attentive to the theatrical vocation of eloquence, that is, to the emotional aspect of words. By cultivating the seductions of oratorical artifice, it turns language into the instrument of a performance where wit seasons discourse and eroticizes it through the multiplication of sense images or subtle allusions.

It is to this oratorical tradition that erotic literature is most indebted. At least this is what one infers from Boyer's French-English dictionary, whose author, in the 1702 edition, suggests that the French term *libertin* be translated as "wit." That the libertine novelist is often a student of rhetoric as well is likewise affirmed in a novel attributed to the comte de Mirabeau and titled *Hic et Haec, ou l'élève des Révérends Pères Jésuites d'Avignon* [*Hic and Haec, or the Student of the Jesuit Fathers of Avignon*] (1798). Notice, for example, in what terms the hero of the story, a brilliant student of the Jesuits and a talented prose writer, describes the way in which his first mistress fixes her gaze on his sex: "Et ses yeux, écrit-il, se fixaient sur l'insolent dont l'orgueil augmentait à vue d'œil; il y a peu d'avocats aussi éloquents aux yeux d'une femme : je vis le succès du plaidoyer muet, et reprenant sa main, je la pressai contre l'orateur" [And her eyes, he wrote, rested on the insolent member whose pride swelled visibly; there are few lawyers as

eloquent in a woman's eyes: I saw the success of the wordless plea, and taking her hand, pressed it against the orator].

From Pietro Aretino to the marquis de Sade by way of Crébillon *films*, rhetoric imbues erotic literature with this sense of virtuosity and stylistic ingenuity that is founded upon the art of allusion, wordplay, and double entendre. Over and above this taste for oratorical artifice, rhetoric also questions all forms of private exchange, beginning notably in the Renaissance, a time that differed in this regard from the tradition of classical antiquity, which was concerned primarily with public speaking, whether in the Athenian agora or in the Roman forum. Rhetoric henceforth came to include the art of conversation and repartee, of pleasing one's audience, of seducing it even, within that dialogue par excellence: the exchange between men and women. In moving from the ancient forum to the aristocratic boudoir, the art of speech was now employed in the service of love. This is seen in the novels of Crébillon *films*, for example, who in *Sopha* (1740) has a lover declare to his lady: "Je vous ai prouvé la nécessité où vous êtes d'aimer encore, et je vais . . . vous prouver actuellement que c'est moi qu'il faut que vous aimiez" [I have proved to you that it is necessary for you to love again, and I will . . . prove to you now that it is I whom you must love].

The importance that rhetoric accorded to the various forms of private exchange influenced erotic literature all the more in that the models par excellence of a speech at once eloquent and intimate were, especially in ancien régime France, considered essentially feminine. In the preface of his *Essai de rhétorique française* (1746), Gabriel Henri Gaillard, for example, specifies that the company of women "est absolument nécessaire pour polir l'esprit . . . [car] leur conversation . . . est une espèce de Rhétorique-Pratique" [The company of women is absolutely necessary for polishing wit . . . [for] their conversation . . . is a kind of practical rhetoric]. Erotic literature constantly echoes this "practical rhetoric" that women are given to, as shown by a text like *Trois voluptés* (1746), a short anonymous play in which the hero describes the love letters he receives from his mistress as follows: "Je sentis dans celles qu'elle m'écrivait ce feu, cette légèreté, . . . enfin cette véritable éloquence qui n'existe que dans le style des femmes" [I felt in the ones she wrote me this fire, this grace, . . .

in short, this genuine eloquence one finds only in the writing style of women].

Finally, rhetoric favors the eroticization of discourse to the extent that since Aristotle, it has been conceived of as “a picture thinking,” that is, as the power to represent and to form an image to actualize and to place before the eyes. By magnifying the emotional aspect of speech, rhetoric teaches the art of representing the physiological and sensory intensity of lived life in such a way that discourse, transposed into a visual order, can claim to make what it describes visible. From this point of view, erotic literature can arouse a desire for pleasure in the reader only when it becomes an eloquent picture able to make things seen by creating an illusion of the real that triggers an awakening of desire.

ANDRÉ MARC BERNIER

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## RICE, ANNE

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1941–  
American novelist

Best-selling author Anne Rice is one of a select few contemporary American novelists who have successfully published works in both mainstream and erotic literary markets. Most famous for her continuing Chronicles of the Vampire series, which began in 1976 with *Interview with the Vampire*, Rice is most noted in erotic circles for the work published under her two pseudonyms, A.N. Roquelaure and Anne Rampling. However, Rice is an author who infuses sexual and erotic content into all of her works, emphasizing the importance that sexual progression maintains in her writing. The erotic content of all of Rice's

novels is fluidly pansexual, a world of sexual opportunity based on the sensuality of new experiences. This is especially true in her vampire novels, in which the transformations of the human characters into vampires allows for nearly overwhelming sensory explorations of the world around them:

It was as if I had only just been able to see colors and shapes for the first time. I was so enthralled with the buttons on Lestat's black coat that I looked at nothing else for a long time. Then Lestat began to laugh, and I heard his laughter as I had never heard anything before. (*Interview with the Vampire*)

Of course, nothing is as sensuous as the act of drinking blood:

I knelt beside the bent, struggling man and, clamping both my hands on his shoulders, I went into his neck. The sucking mesmerized me; the warm struggling of the man was soothing to the tension of my hands; and there came the beating of the drum again, which was the drumbeat of his heart—only this time it beat in perfect rhythm with the drumbeat of my own heart, the two resounding in every fiber of my being, until the beat began to grow slower and slower, so that each was a soft rumble that threatened to go on without end. (*Interview with the Vampire*)

Rice's focus on the sensory experiences of the narrator—sound, sight, texture, taste—rather than on the corporeal nature of the act itself belies her lush, eros-accentuated style, a hallmark of her later erotic novels. The twin themes of dominance and surrender—the narrator vampire's domination over his victim and his surrender to the transformation that controls his body—reflect Rice's fascination with the gentler side of sado-masochism, creating worlds where the cessation of sexual and physical autonomy need not ally themselves hand in hand with the crueler aspects of dominant sexual play.

This loving representation of sexual slavery often creates a divided self within Rice's protagonists, individuals who both worship and fear punishment, who become valuable animals but still wield extraordinary power because, without their obeisance, their masters signify nothing. This concept of the divided self plays a prominent role in all of her erotic novels. As one character notes, "The best slaves sometimes make the best masters" (*Beauty's Punishment*). The three Roquelaure novels, *The Claiming of Sleeping Beauty* (1983), *Beauty's Punishment* (1984), and *Beauty's Release* (1985), present a sexual satire of the Sleeping Beauty mythos in which Prince Charming wakes Beauty only to claim her for the sado-masochistic theme park governed by his mother, an ill-tempered and leering evil Queen. The three books chart the sado-masochistic adventures of Beauty and the Prince, Tristan, as they are auctioned off to different masters, carried off in village raids, and become the sexual wards of a powerful sultan. In the *Beauty* trilogy, slave psychology becomes an allegory of religious experience, and the need for masochists to seek perfection in both their masters and their selves a divine quest:

There is something undeniable in the true slave who worships those of unquestioned power. He or she

longs for perfection even in the slave state, and perfection for a naked slave must be yielding to the most extreme punishments. The slave spiritualizes these ordeals. (*Beauty's Punishment*)

Rice's two Rambling novels, *Exit to Eden* (1985) and *Belinda* (1986), while also largely concerned with the divided self, focus more on the psychological and emotional repercussions of sado-masochistic experiences to the individual. Here, dominance and surrender become a methodology toward the re-essentializing of the actual self—a process of psychological recovery that often ends in, for lack of a better term, social normalcy. *Exit to Eden*, for example, is the story of Elliott, a nihilistic photojournalist who goes to the Club to test his personal mettle. Lisa, the Club manager, chooses Elliott as her own personal slave because she desires a challenge, "the kind of man who submits to no one and nothing in the real world" (*Exit to Eden*). There is a philosophical context to their sado-masochism, and the two become conversational sparring partners as well as master and slave. Ultimately, Lisa abandons the Club to join Elliott in the real world of marriage and social normalcy, giving up their sado-masochistic games in favor of domestic tranquility. Thus in the novel, the master and slave relationship not only gives way to husband and wife, but actually allows for it, securing both Lisa and Elliott into roles they believed, at the novel's commencement, they would never be capable of fulfilling.

*Belinda* is Rice's version of Nabokov's *Lolita*. In the book, forty-four-year-old children's book artist Jeremy Walker is seduced by sixteen-year-old nymphette Belinda. Quickly abandoned by his adolescent lover, Jeremy obsesses over the conflicting shame and titillation he associates with her. He begins to paint likeness after likeness of her on canvas, as if attempting to both understand and capture the essence of what she signifies to him. Eventually he locates her, and the two begin a wary game of cat-and-mouse, both with each other and with their own inner turmoil. Ultimately, like *Exit to Eden*, this book ends with a happy marriage, conventionality winning out over the perceived indiscretions of the divided self.

Rice's mainstream appeal and lush style have done much for contemporary erotic fiction. Though she no longer writes erotica, her work is continually infused with the themes prevalent in her erotic work. Rice continues to explore and

refashion—for better or for worse—the paradigms of surrender and domination and the divided self, thus maintaining a continuing erotic presence on today's best-seller lists.

### Biography

Born Howard Allen O'Brien in New Orleans, October 4; changes name to Anne at the age of five. Graduated from Richardson High School, Richardson, Texas, 1959; enters Texas Women's University but leaves for San Francisco after one year. Graduated from San Francisco State University (SFSU) with a BA in political science in 1964; completes MA at SFSU in creative writing in 1972. Married poet Stan Rice 1961; two children, Michele (1966–1972) and Christopher (1978–).

MICHAEL G. CORNELIUS

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## RICHARDSON, SAMUEL

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1689–1761

British printer and novelist

### *Pamela*

In 1739, two booksellers suggested that Richardson produce “a little volume of letters, in a common style, on such subjects as might be of use to country readers who are unable to indite for themselves.” But while writing this he conceived the epistolary method would serve to tell a story that he had heard fifteen years before—of a young servant girl whose wealthy and powerful master tries to seduce and rape her but cannot succeed in possessing her except by marriage. All Richardson’s works have a moral purpose, but in *Pamela*, his most popular, the sexual content is so strong that the novel is often read as if designed to arouse readers sexually. “Good God!” wrote Richardson’s contemporary Charles Povey, “what can youths learn from *Pamela*’s letters, more than lessons to tempt their chastity?” The anonymous author of *Pamela Censured* in 1741 pointed out the “images that tend to *inflame*”—and in the process helped sell the book; it was rumored that *Pamela Censured* was a bookseller’s trick. Fielding’s *Shamela* (1741) gives a parodic version that demonstrates the hypocrisy of Richardson and his pious readers. But Fielding’s comic intention distances readers from the heroine, while Richardson, with his minute attention to the sentiments in Pamela’s “heart,” brings readers into a close—and titillating—identification with her erotic “trials.” Although Pamela is always able to fend off her “wicked master,” it is evident that she is also responding to him sexually. The sexual content was made necessary by Richardson’s desire to make his didactic story effective. “I am endeavoring to write a Story,” he told George Cheque, “which shall catch young and airy Minds, and when Passions shall run high in them, to shew how they may be directed to laudable Meanings and Purposes, in order to decry such Novels and Romances, as

have a Tendency to inflame and corrupt: And if I were too spiritual, I doubt I should catch none but Grandmothers.” But as the author of *Pamela Censured* pointed out:

the Modest Young Lady can never read the Description of Naked Breasts being run over with the Hand, and Kisses given with such Eagerness that they cling to the Lips; but her own soft Breasts must heave at the idea and secretly sigh for the same Pressure; what then can she do when she comes to the closer Struggles of the Bed, where the tender Virgin lies panting and exposed, if not to the last Conquest, (which I think the Author hath barely avoided) at least to all the Liberties which ungoverned Hands of a determined Lover must be supposed to take?

The aroused reader then “privately may seek Remedies which may drive her to the most unnatural Excesses”—i.e., of masturbation. D.H. Lawrence called Richardson’s work “calico purity and underclothing excitements,” and, more recently, Peter Wagner in his *Eros Revived* points out how close *Pamela*’s vocabulary of passion is to eighteenth-century erotic works and how “kinky” (Wagner’s word) the novel can be, as in the scene where the master waits in Pamela’s bed, disguised in the nightdress of Pamela’s bed-fellow, to try to rape her with the help of his assistant, the “mannish” Mrs. Jewkes. Richardson made many revisions in subsequent editions to tone down the eroticism. For example, the 1740 version reads: “I found his hand in my bosom; and when my fright let me know it, I was ready to die; and I sighed, and screamed, and fainted away.” But in the last edition, published in 1801, this becomes: “The wicked wretch still had me in his arms. I sighed, and screamed, and then fainted way.” In innumerable passages she loses her susceptibility, her breasts, even her ears (which previously would “color”).

### *Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison*

*Clarissa; or, the History of a Young Lady* is the story, told through letters between Clarissa Harlowe and her friend Miss Howe, of an upper-class young woman. She is courted by the rakish

Lovelace, but resists him because of his lack of morals, though she is attracted to him. Her parents seek to force her into a marriage with another she does not want. Lovelace abducts her and drags and rapes her, and she dies. De Sade thought highly of this novel. But, unlike *Pamela*, this much longer novel does not present us with graphic representations of bodily response. Even Lovelace seems less interested in the woman as a goal of sexual desire than as a prize to conquer sexually—to defeat the idea of chastity by defeating it in this paragon. But it is Clarissa who wins the struggle—by dying. As William Beatty Warner put it, through the very letters she has written, “Clarissa dies so that she may produce the book that will guarantee her triumph. . . . The heroine will be exalted and the witnesses of the tragedy will begin an invidious meditation on the causes of Clarissa’s fall. The book ends by pointing an accusing finger towards everyone but Clarissa.” Nonetheless, Richardson feels the necessity to editorialize against Lovelace and admonish readers, in the course of the long novel, not to develop a sympathy for Lovelace and his aspirations. He is killed by Clarissa’s cousin in a duel.

In *The History of Sir Charles Grandison*—perhaps Richardson’s answer to Fielding’s *Tom Jones*—the hero rescues the lovely Harriet Byron from a fraudulent marriage ceremony by which the rakish Sir Hargrave Pollexfen would possess her. Harriet and Sir Charles fall in love, but, because of a previous engagement, Sir Charles does not ask to marry her, nor does he try to relieve his desire for her in any other way. At long last the complications are cleared up and they can marry. While Richardson has been credited with a great understanding of the psychology of his female characters, his male characters are generally not regarded as very credible. But Sir Charles is the ideal of the male required by heroines of future fiction. Never attempting to overpower the woman with his sexual desire, the “Grandissonian hero” Lord Orville offers his protective services

to Fanny Burney’s *Evelina* and as Darcy or Knightly to the heroines in Jane Austen, but these heroines may often be read as harboring an attraction to the men who do not have high-minded feelings about them. It is not easy to deny that Richardson’s works inevitably subvert their puritanical heritage.

### Biography

Born in Derbyshire, England, the son of a joiner; after a brief, elementary education apprenticed to a London printer. In 1721 married his master’s daughter and set up his own printing business in Fleet Street, then in Salisbury Court, where he lived for the remainder of his life. Wife died in 1731. Remarried in 1733 and had four children who survived, all daughters. Wrote and published *The Apprentice’s Vade-Mecum* (1733) and his version of *Aesop’s Fables* (1739), *Pamela; or, Virtue Rewarded* (1740), *Letters Written to and for Particular Friends* (1741), *Clarissa; or, the History of a Young Lady* (1747–48), *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (1753–54). By 1754 had become Master of the Stationers’ Company and Printer of the Journals of the House of Commons. Ran his printing house till his death.

GERALD J. BUTLER

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## RIMBAUD, ARTHUR

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1854–1891

French poet

While Arthur Rimbaud was in Africa, the publication of Verlaine's article "Les poètes maudits" [The Damned Poets] in 1883 did much to promote the myth of the *enfant terrible*, as did the publication in 1886 in *La vogue* of "Marine" (26 May) and "Mouvement" (21 June). These two free-verse poems figure in the collection of otherwise exclusively prose poetry entitled *Illuminations*, which, with *Une saison en enfer* and the verse poems grouped under the heading *Poésies*, traditionally constitute the three major movements of Rimbaud's work (although, with the exception of *Une saison en enfer*, these groupings are not formal poetry collections but rather editorial conventions that have persisted for much of the last century).

Much of the poetry of Rimbaud can be thought of as erotic, albeit in different ways according to the groupings of poems. In the *Poésies*, there is an unmistakable tender sensuality in poems such as "Soleil et chair" [Sun and Flesh], "Sensation," "Roman" [Novel], "Rêvé pour l'hiver" [A Dream for Winter], "La maline" [The Sly Girl], and "Première soirée" [The First Evening], whereas the poetic subject is more impulsive or violent toward women in "Vénus Anadyomène," "Les reparties de Nina" [Nina's Replies], and "À la musique" [To Music]. In "Le cœur du pitre" [The Fool's Heart], the narrator describes a (perhaps fictitious, perhaps real) scene of homosexual rape at the hands of a troop of soldiers. Rimbaud inserted this poem—alternately entitled "Le cœur supplicié" [The Tortured Heart] and "Le cœur volé" [The Stolen Heart]—in his poetic manifesto, his Seer Letter of May 13, 1871. In this letter to his former professor, Rimbaud prefaces the poem with the words, "I beg you, do not underline it with your pencil or too much with your thought" and concludes the poem, and the letter, with the double-negative, "This does not mean nothing."

As the poem "Le cœur du pitre" suggests, much of the eroticism in Rimbaud's poetry has long met with theories that directly equate the poems with specific episodes in the poet's life; "the girl with huge tits and lively eyes" who appears in "Au Cabaret-Vert" is none other than Mia la Flamande, who worked at the real cabaret, La Maison-Verte (Steinmetz: 40), and one of the young girls who would have inspired "À la musique" was either the real-life Blanche Goffinet or Marie(-Henriette) Hubert (Steinmetz: 50–1). This blurring of life and work is most tempting for readers of Rimbaud who find themselves confronted with, on the one hand, a highly suggestive poetry and, on the other, a tantalizing biography, but it is ultimately unsatisfactory and does a disservice to the works.

The temptation is particularly great in *Une saison en enfer* [*A Season in Hell*] (1873), written after Rimbaud's definitive break with Verlaine. In this prose collection, the poet seems to offer a repudiation of his earlier poetic work: "One evening I pulled Beauty down on my knees. I found her embittered and I cursed her." The section entitled "Délires" begins with a rejection of a litany of life experiences in "The Foolish Virgin / The Infernal Bridegroom"—many of which have been attributed to Rimbaud's relationship with Verlaine—and proceeds to retractions of his earlier poetic project in "Alchemy of the Word": "It is my turn. The story of one of my follies. . . . I regulated the form and movement of each consonant, and, with instinctive rhythms, I prided myself on inventing a poetic language accessible someday to all the senses. I reserved translation rights." In "Adieu," the last poem, the poet renews his refusal of his past attempts, personal and poetic: "I have created all celebrations, all triumphs, all dramas. I have tried to invent new flowers, new stars, new flesh, new tongues." He then closes with a look toward the future: "We must be absolutely modern. . . . I shall be free to possess truth body and soul."

The collection of prose and free-verse poems entitled *Illuminations* is certainly replete with

erotic tones—particularly in poems such as “Conte” [Story], “Parade” [Circus], “Solde” [Sale], and “Vagabonds”—but the hermetic nature of the poems dominates. While “Parade” marvels in the line “What mature men!”, the reader is left with the impossible task of interpreting the procession, especially with the poet taunting, “I alone hold the key to this savage parade.”

Also notable is the long prose poem “Un cœur sous une soutane” [A Heart Under a Cassock], in which a young priest falls in love with an ambiguous Thimothina, as well as the collaborative *Album Zutique*, a product of informal dinner meetings attended by Rimbaud, Verlaine, Charles Cros, and a host of other poets, composers, and artists. Best known in this collection is the “Sonnet of an Asshole,” written by Rimbaud and Verlaine together and also appearing in Verlaine’s erotic collection *Hombrés*. The poem’s first line, “Dark and wrinkled like a deep pink,” begins with the word “Obscur,” the oversized capital letter “O” emphasizing the poem’s subject matter. Also notable is Rimbaud’s contribution, “Remembrances du vieillard idiot” [Memories of the Simple-Minded Old Man], which presents an adolescent’s obsessions with his own puberty: “Why puberty so late and the disgrace / Of my tenacious and too often consulted glans?” Finally, there are the poems commonly called *Les stupra* [*Defilements*], most likely contemporary and certainly similar in their explicit nature to the poems in the *Album Zutique*, although not formally included in that collection. In “Les anciens animaux...” [Ancient Animals...], the bestial nature of the human animal is on display (“Moreover, man is equal to the proudest mammal; / The hugeness of their member should not surprise us”), whereas “Nos fesses ne sont pas les leurs” [Our backsides are not theirs] evokes a more intimate account of ecstasy: “Oh! to be naked like that, and look for joy and rest, / My head turned toward my companion’s glorious part, / And both of us free murmuring sobs?”

### Biography

Born in Charleville, October 20. Educated at the Collège Municipal, where he received numerous awards for his poems. Attempted to leave

Charleville several times for Paris, e.g., around the time of the Paris Commune. Met Paul Verlaine in 1871, thus beginning a turbulent homosexual relationship between the two poets that ended July 10, 1873, in Brussels, when Verlaine shot him twice in the wrist. Returned to his family farm to compose *Une saison en enfer*, the only collection he published. After abandoning both Europe and poetry in 1875, enlisted in the Dutch army and traveled to Batavia. Upon deserting, returned to France and subsequently traveled to Austria, Sweden, Denmark, Cyprus, Egypt, and finally Aden. Worked for an export company in Aden, and later in Harar, and explored the Somalia and Galla countries. Lived in Africa until ill health—a tumor on his right knee—forced him to return to Marseille, where he eventually died on November 10.

SETH WHIDDEN

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## ROBBE-GRILLET, ALAIN

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1922–

French novelist, screenwriter, and literary theorist

Alain Robbe-Grillet is the author of novels, *ciné-romans* (screenplays that can be read as novels), short stories, autobiography/fiction, and theoretical essays, is a director of films, and has written texts as part of collaborative works with five different artists or photographers. He is chiefly associated with the *nouveau roman* (new novel) writers, through his publisher, Editions de Minuit, which published works by many other *nouveaux romanciers*. This avant-garde group, although not a literary school, shared some common aims, including literary experimentation and a rejection of literary convention. This perhaps explains why many of Robbe-Grillet's works initially had a mixed reception, in spite of his receiving several literary and cinema prizes. Robbe-Grillet came to be viewed as something of a spokesperson for the *nouveau roman*, partly due to a series of essays he published in the collection *Pour un nouveau roman* [*For a New Novel*]. These explored various topics such as novelistic form, realism and reality, time, and characterization, and expounded an eschewal of previous conventions of literature, particularly those of the nineteenth century realist novel, as exemplified by Balzac. Robbe-Grillet complained that realism constructed its fictional universe from commonly accepted means of representing reality, such as anthropomorphic metaphor—the attribution of human qualities to the world around us—whereas in fact the world is neither significant nor absurd, it simply is. Robbe-Grillet's aim was to remove any apparent psychological depth attached to objects, instead allowing their surfaces to be described, so that objects as they really are may be laid bare. Thus, the object itself, rather than the culturally loaded or metaphoric meaning it has acquired, was foregrounded in the *nouveau roman*. Robbe-Grillet's own theoretical work thus inspired

what came to be known as the *chosiste* interpretation of his work, whereby descriptions of things [*choses*] themselves are favored over explanations, and the world is rendered in terms which give it no meaning beyond the bare fact of its existence.

Opposed to this view was the claim that Robbe-Grillet's novels are deeply psychological. A psychological account of his work would assert that in many cases, a disturbed or traumatized mind is at the center of the narrative. The obsessive attention paid to objects, in this interpretation, is indicative of a psychological state wherein the consciousness, disoriented by some shock or trauma, fixes upon certain objects which, for the reader, become associated with that state of mind.

Some scholars of Robbe-Grillet have argued that his interest in the portrayal of objects just as they are perceived is similar in intent to phenomenological philosophy's attempt to describe phenomena as they are given to consciousness in perception, free from the prejudices and preconceptions of science or cultural conditioning. The situated nature of the narrator (or of the narrative perspective) in time and space in Robbe-Grillet's work is also analogous to the phenomenological account of a consciousness with a temporal and spatial bodily situation in the world.

Structuralist studies of Robbe-Grillet's works focus upon an analysis of the formal and structural elements of his texts and films. Patterns are identified across a given work, establishing links between individual words, visual images, or audible elements. These elements are often repeated, recombined, slightly altered each time they appear, or set in opposition to one another, and they give the work its structure and impetus. Structuralism concerns itself with the nonmimetic, purely linguistic interplay of literary and cinematic language. Identifying connections such as these across a work reveals structural devices employed within it and can indicate the way in

which formal aspects combine to construct meaning.

As a writer of erotic fiction, the thread of an interest in eroticism runs throughout Robbe-Grillet's career. The erotic content is subtle in his earlier novels and tends to be alluded to rather than explicitly described, but it begins to take the form of very explicit, sado-erotic images and scenes in his later fiction. The reception of his works in terms of their erotic content has been divided. Feminist critics have, for example, indicated the misogynistic nature of the treatment of his female characters, unsurprisingly, since the rape, torture, and murder of young women are themes which pervade many of his works. Robbe-Grillet himself and those who have defended his presentation of eroticism argue that his works aim to exaggerate clichéd sexual stereotypes in order to reveal their banality, to subvert their usually erotic function. This has been questioned by critics, who argue that his exaggeration of sexual stereotypes tends to be repetitive, rather than subversive. Unapologetically, Robbe-Grillet continues to include erotica in his latest works.

### *Le voyeur*

A watch salesman, Mathias, returns to his native island with the intention of spending the day selling watches. His unrealistic projected sales targets prove impossible to achieve; he is forced to abandon them as events on the island take a sinister turn and he develops a feeling of malaise. During his visit, a local girl disappears. It appears that she has been murdered, possibly following a sexual assault, and her body thrown over the cliffs into the sea. Mathias' itinerary, as he realizes in retrospect, had taken him close to where the girl had been minding sheep on a cliff-top at the time of her disappearance. He realizes that there is a gap in his memory, a certain length of time he cannot recall or account for, which coincides with the girl's death. Although narrated in the third person, the novel reveals the viewpoint of only Mathias, and thus it is through the filter of his eroticized fantasies that events are described. He frequently notices the postures of girls or young women whose hands are behind their backs, a posture suggesting that they are tied up. This is emphasized further by the mention of the collection of pieces of string he kept as a boy and the length of cord

he keeps in his pocket and touches frequently during his visit to the island. Mathias' guilt, although never conclusively established during the course of the novel, is nevertheless hinted at in his return to the cliff-top to recover the cigarette butts and sweet wrappers he had dropped there. Although not a novel that deals with eroticism in an explicit way, the whole work is suffused with erotic tension.

### *La jalousie*

*La Jalousie* rests upon an ambiguity related to eroticism; the double meaning of *jalousie* in the title is indicative of two possible ways of reading the novel. *Jalousie*, taken to mean "venetian blind," can be understood to indicate the possibility of reading the novel as a camera-like recording of the movements of people through a house, with blinds impeding the view. A psychological understanding of the novel, wherein *jalousie* is understood to mean "jealousy," could indicate the possibility of reading it as the thoughts of a jealous husband witnessing the infidelity of his wife with their neighbor. He spies on them through the venetian blinds, while his jealousy, as well as the blinds, distort his point of view. The husband never mentions himself, although the narrative is always situated from a point in space and time that is suggestive of his presence. The novel has little by way of action, with the gradual rise and ebb of the unmentioned narrator's jealousy of the suspected affair being its main feature. The jealousy at the heart of the novel reaches its zenith in a description of an imagined bedroom scene involving A (the narrator's wife) and Franck, their neighbor. The scene begins to take shape in the narrator's mind when, following A's horror at the sight of a millipede at the dinner table, Franck crushes the insect with his napkin, and A's hand grasps the tablecloth. This gesture could indicate either her fear of the insect or her thrilling at Franck's manliness in dealing with it, and the scene is repeated obsessively throughout the novel, with slight modifications each time. One of its modifications involves the grasped tablecloth transforming into a bed sheet grasped in the throes of sexual pleasure. Thus the scene is transformed from the innocuous crushing of the millipede into an act of adultery between A and Franck, followed by the narrator's

imagining one of their visits to a nearby town ending in a car crash.

### *La maison de rendez-vous*

A tale of drug dealing and prostitution in a Hong Kong brothel, *La maison de rendez-vous* [*The House of Assignment*] marks a move to more explicit depictions of eroticism. Lady Ava not only runs the brothel, but appears to control other people and their actions too, including thwarting the attempt of Sir Ralph Johnston to buy Lauren, one of the prostitutes working at the brothel, from her. The prostitutes' duties at the brothel include the performance of an unusual stage act, which involves one of the girls standing in a spotlight and having her dress ripped from her body by a dog, for the delectation of the audience. The novel is complicated not only by the proliferation of narrative voices, between which the narrative jumps unexpectedly, but also by the multiple names given to each character (for example, Lady Ava is also Eva or Eve). Threads of the various characters' stories interweave in a disorienting labyrinth, with the result that it is difficult to establish any definitive account of what occurs in the novel. This is particularly true of the mysterious death of Manneret, which is presented on the stage in the brothel as a performance and is repeatedly recounted and altered later in the narrative as if it were a real event, having consequences in the lives of the other characters. Johnston, for example, is implicated in Manneret's death. Before fleeing in order to avoid being accused, he visits the brothel in a last-ditch attempt to persuade Lauren to accompany him and is finally caught by the police.

### *Projet pour une révolution à New York*

As its name suggests, this novel takes place in New York City, the New York of modern popular culture, a place where modern myths are played out. It abounds with references to, for example, television programs popular at the time it was written (1970), to Robbe-Grillet's own texts, to criminal gangs, and to sexual stereotypes in the form of the delicate flesh of young women subjected to torture. As in *La maison de rendez-vous*, no one narrative voice dominates, characters' names are varied, nothing is certain. The play of exaggerated modern

myths is the only content the novel has; there is no underlying reality that these myths refer to. The nature of the revolution itself is somewhat enigmatic—instead of explaining it, only the means of bringing it about are described. The New York portrayed is one where crime has taken over in the name of revolution, although apparently no revolution ever occurs. In terms of its erotic content, a notable feature of this novel is that one of the revolutionary activities involves the graphically described sadistic torture of women, and it is for this reason that it has courted controversy. In spite of the fact that these scenes are described as imaginary, in spite of their theatricality and staged nature, they have nevertheless caused some consternation among critics. The theatricality of these scenes calls into question the extent to which they can be considered real or referential. Those who defend Robbe-Grillet argue that the scenes of violent sexual torture are not to be understood as referring to anything real—they are a metaphor for his destruction of literary norms, they are the revolution he brings about in literature.

### *Romanesques*

The trilogy known as *Romanesques*—comprising *Le miroir qui revient* [*Ghosts in the Mirror*], *Angélique ou l'enchantement* [*Angélique, or the Enchantment*], and *Les derniers jours de Corinthe* [*The Last Days of Corinth*—consists of part autobiography and part fiction, and Robbe-Grillet deliberately blurs the distinction between the two. As well as recounting the major events of his life and his literary career, the *Romanesques* are an account of the real-life and fantasy events which have inspired his work. Among these are the erotic fantasies which he admits have haunted his dreams since childhood. Whether these fantasies are based upon real people or events is difficult to ascertain, given that Robbe-Grillet does not distinguish clearly between fantasy and reality. Typical of this is the story of Angélique, who is referred to in the title of the second volume of the *Romanesques*. Robbe-Grillet suggests that she really did exist and was the inspiration for the adolescent female character in *Le Voyeur*. He describes a scene during his adolescence or youth in which Angélique undresses and gives him orders (which he dare not disobey) to touch her, introducing him to sexuality and the female body.

The scene bears many of the hallmarks of descriptions of the female body elsewhere in his works, although this early experience engenders fear in the young initiate. When his finger emerges blood stained from her vagina, she claims that he has deflowered her and will forever be cursed by impotence. He fears that he has fatally injured her. In a passage that exemplifies Robbe-Grillet's merging of apparently factual events with fictional ones, the conclusion of his encounter with Angélique is, in effect, a summary of the final part of *Le voyeur*, with the adolescent girl's body found naked in the sea at the bottom of some cliffs, thus suggesting a link between blood, sex, and danger.

### *La reprise*

Eroticism in the form of incest is a major theme in Robbe-Grillet's latest novel, in which there are repeated references to the story of Oedipus. In *La reprise* [*Repetition*] (2001) the ruins of postwar Berlin, a French secret agent named Henri Robin is sent on a mission, the reason for which is unclear. The sense of uncertainty is emphasized by the fact that Henri's identity is constantly changing, he has many names, and the narrative is undermined by a second narrator who contradicts events. Henri suspects that he will be framed for a murder committed by a man who later turns out to be his twin brother, Walther. Walther, who had suffered injuries to his eyes during the war, has murdered their father, suggesting an oedipal parricide. In further family complications, incest is hinted at when it is revealed that Walther may have fathered Gigi, his half-sister, whom he had tortured and interrogated with the aim of ascertaining the whereabouts of their father. Gigi had been made to strip and had her limbs chained down, making it difficult for her to move during the interrogation. Walther admits to having taken pleasure in the sexual torture of Gigi, regardless of any useful information she was able to divulge. Gigi also features in a series of three pornographic drawings signed by Walther, in which she is variously depicted tied down, burned, and crucified, subjected to sexual torture in every case, crying out apparently in pain, although this, according to Henri's narration, could be mistaken for pleasure. Finally, Henri claims to have been raped by Gigi's mother, although he does not find the experience disagreeable.

The sexual encounter between Henri and Gigi's mother (who is described as behaving maternally toward him) thus constitutes a further reference to Oedipus and to the theme of incest which pervades the novel.

### Biography

Born in Brest, France, August 18. Early education, Paris, 1929–39; Brest, 1939–40. Entered into the Institut national agronomique (INA), 1942. Requisitioned into the Service du travail obligatoire (compulsory labor organization established under the German occupation) in Nuremberg, 1943–44, then completed studies at INA. In 1945, joined INSEE (French national institute of statistics and economic studies) and worked on the journal *Etudes et conjonctures*. Volunteered in August 1947 for the Brigades internationales de reconstruction, working on the Pernik-Volouïek railway in Bulgaria. Upon leaving INSEE, worked in an animal artificial insemination laboratory in Bois-Boudran, Seine-et-Marne, and, during the long breaks between duties, wrote the manuscript for a novel, *Un Régicide* (turned down by Gallimard; not published by Minuit until 1978). In 1949 became research engineer for the Institut des fruits et agrumes coloniaux, working in Morocco, Guadeloupe, and Martinique. Ill health led to forced resignation from this post and return to France. During boat journey back, began to write *Les Gommages* [*The Erasers*], and resigned from job in order to finish it, marking the beginning of his career as a writer. Became literary adviser at Editions de Minuit in 1955, a post he would hold for thirty years. Married Catherine Rstakian in 1957. In 1960, Robbe-Grillet signed the *Déclaration sur la droit à l'insoumission dans la guerre d'Algérie* (the so-called *Manifeste des 121*) supporting the right to refuse to serve in the Algerian war. In 1961, survived a plane crash with his wife in Hamburg; wrote the screenplay (published as a *ciné-roman*) for *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* [*Last Year at Marienbad*], directed by Alain Resnais. Robbe-Grillet's film and *ciné-roman* *Glissements progressifs du plaisir* [*Gradual Shifts in Pleasure*] condemned in 1975 by an Italian court as pornographic. Since devoting himself to writing and filmmaking, has been a visiting teacher at several universities around the world, taken part in numerous literary and film conferences, and won several

## ROBBE-GRILLET, ALAIN

literary and film prizes. He became a member of the Académie Française in 2004.

ELIZABETH NEWTON

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# ROCCO, ANTONIO

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1586–1653

Italian philosopher and theologian

## *L'Alcibiade fanciullo a scola*

Published anonymously in 1652, *L'Alcibiade fanciullo a scola* [*Alcibiades the Schoolboy*] was first thought to be the work of Pietro Aretino and later of Ferrante Pallavicino. It was only in 1888 that its true author, Antonio Rocco, was established by Achille Neri. It appears to be in connection with Rocco's membership in the Accademia degli Incogniti that he wrote this "carnavalesque."

*L'Alcibiade fanciullo a scola*, an early classic of homosexual/pederastic literature, became widely known through a new edition in 1862 and a French translation in 1866. (The first English translation of 2000 is based on the 1891 edition of the French translation.) The pioneer homosexual theorist and emancipationist Karl Heinrich Ulrichs knew the book in the French translation and noted in 1868 that it was a "curious book that in addition to deterring frivolities contains much important scientific information." Richard Burton, too, quoted widely from the French translation in his famous "Terminal Essay" to his own translation of *Thousand Nights and a Night* (1888).

The novel is set in Athens and is in the form of a dialogue between the teacher Philotimos ("loving honors") and the boy Alcibiades, presumably the historical general and friend of Socrates. It begins with a glowing description of the boy's physical charms, from head to foot, with broad hints of hidden delights—which his teacher finds irresistible. While ostensibly set in ancient Greece, the dialogue that follows also includes Roman mythology—and the moral arguments almost all relate to Christian teaching. Philotimos makes it clear from the beginning that his goal is penetration. How he proceeds to attain that goal is the subject of the book, for the boy places obstacles in his

path. Not that the boy is entirely reluctant, but he has doubts and questions that he wants answered first.

The various questions are answered in different ways. Alcibiades says, "What you wish to practice is a hideous vice which offends Nature, indeed one which is called 'the sin against Nature,' and our law forbids it." That this act was "against Nature" had already been discussed over a century earlier in another carnivalesque, *La Cazzaria* of Antonio Vignali, a book that also came to modern attention about the same time as *L'Alcibiade* (a new edition was published in Brussels in 1863 and a French translation appeared in 1882). But Rocco gives it an original solution with a clever linguistic twist, as Philotimos replies: "First, that this is a vice against nature is a ridiculous allusion spread by the statesmen. Since in women the flower [asshole] is placed against, i.e., on the opposite side to the fig [cunt], which is called nature, they say the use of it is opposed to nature" (my translation here—this argument, although in the French translation, is oddly lacking in the English edition, which is altogether a free adaptation).

One argument that particularly impressed nineteenth-century readers was in answer to Alcibiades' question: "Cannot you, without having dealings with either women or boys, extinguish the flames of love with your own hands—without expense, without trouble, without submitting to anyone?" (75). Philotimos gives a long speech comparing so-called onanism unfavorably with the contact of a beloved person, concluding: "Onanism, by contrast, deprives us of the sight of our lover, of contact with him in the flesh, and leaves us drained and exhausted. We must not then give up our boys for this habit, because our moderate enjoyments with them bring us joy and health; indeed, one of our most famous physicians wrote this sentence: "*Usus et amplexus pueri bene temperatus, salutaris medicina* [The embrace of a boy, when enjoyed in moderation, is a health-giving medicine]" (77 in the English edition, which, however,

has “Uses et amplexes,” apparently reflecting the misspelling of the Latin in the 1891 French translation). Ulrichs, Burton, and others took this report of “one of our most famous physicians” at face value, but this canard is a sheer invention of Antonio Rocco, as Wolfram Setz pointed out in his excellent commentary to his own German translation (242).

The teacher’s arguments become more and more persuasive. The boy admits to some experience with other boys and says, “Without doubt, there is between these childish games and those of which you have spoken the difference between a green fruit and a ripe one. Therefore I am not very far, either, from venturing upon them, and I am listening to you with both my ears” (85). The teacher is eager: “To work then, my son! Experience will teach you more than will lectures and arguments.”

But the boy is a bit of a tease after all and replies: “It is certainly my wish, but I fear that when you no longer need to convince me, you will become less explicit in your discourse, and your lessons will become less interesting. Therefore continue with your arguments, and wait patiently for the rest.”

The teacher’s final argument is that the sperm of a man improves a boy’s intellect. “A boy who wishes to be the equal of his master has no other way than this. I admit that to be fucked by any man, given that his fluid is warm and temperate, can make the brain of a boy develop wonderfully, but to bear the true fruits, let him be fucked by a man who is noble and distinguished” (92–3). Now the boy is completely convinced and says, “I give myself to your wishes. It is your desire to instruct me, more than other reason, that decides me. See, I prepare myself for you.” With that, he lifts his robe and the master attains his goal.

The book concludes: “How they continued their encounters and their loving caresses is what we will tell you in a second part, even more lascivious.” But the second part never appeared.

### Biography

Born in Scorzola (Abruzzi, Italy). He studied theology and philosophy in Rome, Perugia,

and especially in Padua, where his teacher was Cesare Cremonini, the “Aristotle of his time.” Rocco then settled in Venice, where he became a successful teacher and writer. As an Aristotelian, he attacked Galileo’s mathematical “Platonism” in 1633—and received a rude reply from Galileo. In 1634, as a member of the Accademia degli Incogniti [Academy of the Unknowns], Rocco gave a lecture on love in all of its manifestations—from love between parents and their children to physical love and love of one’s country and God—and brought them all under one formula, “Amore è un puro interesse” [Love is a pure interest]: basically each person loves only himself. In 1636 the city of Venice named Rocco its official teacher of rhetoric and moral philosophy. He died there.

HUBERT KENNEDY

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# ROJAS, FERNANDO DE

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1465–1541  
Spanish novelist

## *Celestina*

This dialogue novel, written in the final years of the fifteenth century by the Salamanca university law graduate Fernando de Rojas and possibly one other hand, is considered to be one of the top half-dozen Spanish masterpieces of world literature. It foreshadows the development of both the theatre and the novel in Spain and Europe and creates one of the archetypal characters of Spanish fiction, the bawd, go-between, and sorceress Celestina.

The genesis of this masterpiece is cloaked in mystery. Rojas claims to have found a one-act play and during his Easter vacation to have added another fifteen shorter acts to it (in 1497 or 1498) and taken it to the publishers where it appeared in 1499 as the *Comedia de Calisto y Melibea*. Its printing success was such that Rojas decided to lengthen it, adding five new acts interpolated into act XIV of the original and renaming it the *Tragicomedia de Calisto y Melibea* (this possibly in 1502, although no editions survive from this date). The nickname *Celestina* was given to the book by the public at a later date.

The story is as follows: Calisto meets Melibea in her garden, which he has entered in search of his falcon. He is smitten but she rebukes him. He returns home and complains bitterly to his manservant Sempronio, who undertakes to seek out the services of the go-between Celestina on his master's behalf. Sempronio fetches Celestina from her house, where she lives with her companion and sometime prostitute Elicia, also Sempronio's mistress. On their return to Calisto's house they are seen by Parmeno, Calisto's faithful servant, who warns him against the wiles of Celestina, who helped to raise him when he was young. (In fact, Celestina was trained by Parmeno's mother, Claudina, a witch who had

been punished and possibly executed.) Calisto ignores Parmeno's good advice and enlists Celestina's help for a large amount of money, which Sempronio expects to share with her. Celestina has a long conversation with Parmeno and manages to subvert him by promising him the sexual favors of Areusa, Elicia's cousin. The long first act ends here, and according to Rojas, he takes up the dialogue early in act II.

In the second act Calisto's maltreatment of Parmeno seals the lad's defection to Celestina's camp. Act III takes place in Celestina's house, where Sempronio and Elicia go to make love while Celestina prepares the scene for a *philocap-tio* spell, viz., to captivate the will of a beloved. She summons up a demon and anoints a skein of thread with snake oil. In act IV she takes the skein to Melibea's house to trade it for a piece of clothing, her girdle or sash. Alisa, Melibea's mother, is called away opportunely to visit a sick relative, a circumstance which Celestina attributes to the Devil's intervention. Melibea is at first angered by Celestina's mention of Calisto but finally lets herself be persuaded to give Celestina her girdle and to see the bawd again after the girls have prepared a prayer for Calisto's alleged toothache. In act V Celestina bears the glad tidings to Calisto, but Sempronio begins to suspect that she will not share the booty with him. Act VI sees Calisto fetishizing the girdle and promising Celestina new clothing. In act VII Celestina makes good her promise to supply Areusa to Parmeno, but she punishes him with a long description of his mother Claudina's witchcraft. Act VIII sees Parmeno and Sempronio sealing their friendship and planning a servants' banquet, which takes place in act IX. Celestina reminisces about the good old days when she ran a large brothel (before these were taken over by the town councils in the mid-1490s after the appearance of syphilis). In act X she returns to Melibea's house and arranges an assignation between the lovers for the next night at the gates of Melibea's garden. Melibea has succumbed to the temptations of lust (or perhaps



the magic spell). Act XI finds Calisto rewarding Celestina with a valuable gold chain, much to the envy of Sempronio and Parmeno, as it is not easily divisible. In act XII the lovers' first platonic encounter at the garden gate has a counterpoint in the fears and cowardice of the young men standing guard outside the walls. Afterward they go to Celestina's house and murder her for the gold chain. As we hear in act XIII from one of Calisto's stable boys, they are immediately apprehended and put to death. In the original *Comedia*, the denouement follows. Calisto goes to Melibea's garden and they make love (old act XIV). He hears a noise outside the garden and rushes to help the stable boys, who now accompany him, but slips and falls to his death. Melibea, overcome by grief, bids farewell to her father Pleberio and jumps from the tower of their house to her death. Pleberio is left alone to grieve the death of his only heir (old act XIV).

The five new acts added by Rojas are an excuse to lengthen the lovemaking (act XIX); they also include some comic action between Areusa and her pimp, Centurio, a braggart soldier (act XVIII), whom she tries to cajole into taking action against Calisto and his servants (he instead arranges for a friend to go in his place). Elicia forges a new partnership with Areusa and casts her own curse on Melibea's garden (new acts XV and XVII). The most remarkable of the new acts shows a Melibea who secretly rebels against the wishes of her parents to make a good marriage for her (new act XVI). Also notable is the new ending to act XIV when Calisto exercises his imagination, first, in cowardly mode, upbraiding the judge who condemned his servants to death, then reliving the night of love with Melibea in the garden.

This work was meant to be read aloud by one or more performers over a series of readings, rather than being performed on stage or indeed read silently. The frankness of the sexual scenes in acts XIV and XIX alone would not have allowed for a more graphic and literal setting, nor would the length of the work. With its portrayal of the psychological and persuasive powers of Celestina and her corruption of both Parmeno and Melibea, whose characters change profoundly as a result, *Celestina* is a century ahead of its time in the depiction of psychological realism. It foreshadows the picaresque genre in Spain and *Don Quixote's* novelistic trajectory.

It also paves the way for shorter theatrical imitations which will help form the early theatrical tradition of sixteenth-century Spain.

The figure of Celestina captured the imagination of the reading public in the same way that the figures of Don Juan and Don Quixote would in the next century. The bawd, sorceress, and sometime witch symbolized the incarnation of evil, but even so was almost attractive in her pride, valor, strength of character, and comic ability to turn a good saying to an evil end. Although Rojas's purpose was essentially didactic and the work was originally aimed at an all-male audience at the University of Salamanca, as an outsider of converted Jewish stock, or a *converso*, Rojas's misogyny was tempered by a sense of identification with the marginalized Celestina and her proto-picaresque cohorts. The women are the strongest characters in the work, and Celestina is a comic figure who subverts the ordered male hierarchy represented by Pleberio and his world. As a genius of misrule, Celestina seduces Melibea on behalf of Calisto and enlists Parmeno to her cause with the promise of sex. Calisto himself is a parodic courtly lover who never lets good sense get in the way of his lust. Although the longer version gives the lovers a month for their love affair, the original shows a Calisto keen to get away from his one-night stand and falling to his death for his pains. Sempronio is an opportunist and Parmeno a weak vessel traumatized by his past. Only Elicia and Areusa emerge as significantly strengthened survivors of the multiple deaths at the end of the work. The most subtle and difficult character is Melibea, who metamorphoses from an inexperienced virgin to a woman resentfully aware of her captivity in her father's home and her powerlessness to escape in the arms of her lover. The ambiguous power of witchcraft in her seduction, her entrapment through an act of Christian charity (the prayer for Calisto), and the failure of her prayer to God for protection make her the best candidate for tragic status in the work. Despite the gory denouement, most of the other deaths are meant to be comic, not tragic. In his closing lament, the pathetic figure of Pleberio faces the failure of the neo-Stoical philosophy which he has followed. He berates fortune, the world, and love, a slight variation on the world, the flesh, and the Devil, and concludes that he stands sad and alone in this vale of tears.

**Biography**

Fernando de Rojas was born in La Puebla de Montalbán in Castile, Spain, into a family recently forcibly converted from Judaism to Christianity. Around 1488 he went to Salamanca, where he studied Latin, philosophy, and law. He died known better for his success as a lawyer than for the masterpiece that would later be known as *La Celestina*.

DOROTHY SHERMAN SEVERIN

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# ROMANIAN EROTIC LITERATURE

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Romania possesses a rich erotic folklore, yet Romanian erotic literature is also bound to popular songs, anecdotes, and especially to epithalamiums, in the form of pornographic songs or verses sung as fertility rituals during the wedding ceremony. Possibly the only writer to use these luscious popular jests as a source of inspiration was Ion Creangă (1837–1889). His short story, *Moș Nichifor, coțcariul* [*Father*

*Nekifor, the Knave*] (1877) is in fact an anecdote set in a “literary” context about a comic tale of the love between an old carter and a young Jewish woman. The literary history notes that there were two versions of this narrative, the first very explicit, the other simply suggestive, making subtle allusions to the sexual act. Only the second version has reached us, and this is a true masterpiece. Two short pornographic

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stories have also been preserved: *Povestea lui Ionică cel prost* [*The Tale of Johnny the Silly*] and *Povestea poveștilor* [*The Tale of Tales*], also named *Povestea pulei* [*The Tale of the Dick*]. Similar to Chaucer and the *Canterbury Tales*, Creangă's touch gives a particular charm to the narratives where popular language and humor are mixed with the refined expression of a great stylist, but, nevertheless, one feels that the folk source that is very obvious. The classical critique then came under the influence of French letters, more in the style of Rabelais.

Folklore is the source for two poets who preceded Creangă: Costache Conachi (1779–1849) and Anton Pann (1796–1854). Although Ion Negoïtescu, in *History of Romanian Literature*, posited that Conachi's poetry borrowed from the ribald character of Alexis Pironă's *Ode to Priap*, one can say that popular poetry keeps its traces in the poems of Conachi, with echoes of the French rococo. A virile, overflowing eroticism is shown by Conachi in *Amoriul din prieteșug* [*The Love from Friendship*], *Judecata femeilor* [*The Judgment of the Ladies*], and *Scrisoare către Zulnia* [*Letter to Zulnia*].

Anton Pann underwent the influence of suburban folklore. His poems portray elegant love as foreplay to carnal love. The vitality of libidinous longing is impregnated with the sighs and expressions of suffering caused by the kind of love that was highly valued at the time. Among Pann's volumes, perhaps the best known from the point of view of this eroticism is *Spitalul amorului* [*The Hospital of Love*] (1850–52). Pann is a sort of suburban troubadour who doesn't sing the *Amor de lonh*, but sings of love pursued and captured in a time when the wantonness of customs allowed for many carnal possibilities between young men and widows or married women and between the wealthy bourgeoisie and young girls. A traveling artist, Pann set much of his poetry to music, which was sung especially by the fiddlers in the restaurants of Bucharest and other southern Romanian cities.

The development of erotic themes (and sometimes pornography) in modern Romanian literature can be traced in both poetry and prose. Mihai Eminescu (1850–1889), one of the last great Romantics, wrote of erotic frustration in his best-known poem, *Luceafărul* [*The Morning Star*], which speaks of the impossible love between a young princess and a celestial being, and in works on forbidden love: e.g., *Călin, file din*

*poveste* [*Calin, Pages of Fairy Tales*] and *Povestea teiului* [*The Legend of the Lime*]. But he can also be licentious, as in the fable *Antropomorfisme* [*Anthropomorphism*], which, as can be guessed from the title, takes place among poultry and other animals of the barnyard. Many Romanians today still know a few pornographic quatrains assigned to Eminescu.

The poems of Tudor Arghezi (1880–1967) created a stir by their audacity when they first appeared in *Flori de mucigai* [*Flowers of Mildew*] in 1931. The title recalls Baudelaire's *Fleurs du mal*, but the Romanian is bound rather to naturalism. Arghezi talks about the body in love, as in "Rada": "She unveiled, while jumping, / her black peony, and her sex, / like a box quickly opened and quickly closed, / that hides a jewel of blood." He speaks of the infernal desire of a monk in "Bitterness": "In his cell at the convent, his home, / a lively girl stayed late this night, / with her firm breasts, her fine thigh, / like a Florentine violine"; and speaks of transsexualism in "Hermaphrodite": "You are nearly like a pretty woman, / you, without hair on your face." The poetry of Arghezi is always very naturalistic, but very sensitive also. His language, although metaphorical, has a certain nakedness, audacity, and sincerity, while his eroticism is bound to the sensations and to a sort of aesthetic intelligence of the world. All is picturesque and instinctual, and eroticism can be found everywhere, even in prison, in the dreams of the prisoners. His poetry and, to a lesser extent, his prose are also bound to the aesthetic of the ugly, having its origins in the conceptions of Baudelaire. The sensuality of the texts of Arghezi aren't predicated upon beauty—his characters are sometimes marked by infirmity and an erogenous zone which intermixes normalcy and the pathological.

A true bombshell was Geo Bogza's (1908–1993) *Jurnal de sex și Poemul invectivă* [*Diary of Sex and the Insult Poem*] (1933). From the beginning, Bogza was linked to the Romanian avant-garde, and this volume constituted a protest against convention, against the bourgeois blandness of society and its hypocritical customs:

I write this poem on you, to infuriate the bourgeois girls, / To shock their honorable parents, / Although I turned up them several times, this daughter, / I don't want to praise them, / I want to urinate in their face powder, / on their intimate lingerie, / in their piano, /

and in all these artifacts that their beauty make . . . / and, like a challenging smile / thrown against the continents / the abuses perpetrate themselves / under the ice finger / of the future prophets. ("Offending Poem")

Bogza's is poetry of protest and, at the same time, pornographic poetry, of fetishism, rape, and sexual perversion. When he wrote of a woman who used cucumbers to masturbate, a scandal ensued that brought the young poet before the bar of justice. And only after a terrifying press campaign was the case dismissed.

Nichita Stănescu (1933–1983) was one of the most important Romanian poets due to his innovations in the use of language, his particular lyricism, his philosophy, and his poems of love, well in tune with the sensitivity of the young generation of the 1960s. To this slightly pantheistic eroticism, but for a general readership, he added a new volume of poems, *Argotice*. These are the texts of his student youth, full of vivid expressions and an overflowing imagination and sprinkled with visions concocted for their shock value. One senses the development of a great poet, a future candidate for the Nobel Prize. The strength of his poetry recalls that of Arghezi.

Similar to the style of Stănescu, slang is also used by Gheorghe Astaloș (b. 1933) in his remarkable work *Pe muchie de șurui* [*Over the Edge of the Knife*] (1999). Astaloș was the first to give a programmatic artistic turn to slang in Romanian poetry, while writing twelve long works that combine the rules of classic prosody with the incendiary topic of carnal love. Following Astaloș's traces, Liviu Vișan (b. 1953) created a poetry that employs military slang, e.g., *Licențioase* [*Libertine Poems*] (2001).

The voluptuous rhymes of Emil Brumaru (b. 1939) make of the erotic game a domestic ritual and a dreamlike escape, on the boundary between the romantic imagination and surrealist paranoia, in such works as *Detectivul Arthur* [*The Detective Arthur*] (1970), *Julien Ospitalierul* [*Julien the Hospitalier*] (1974), *Dulapul îndrăgostit* [*The Wardrobe in Love*] (1980), *Ruina unui samovar* [*The Decrepitude of a Samovar*] (1983), and *Dintr-o scorbură de morcov* [*From a Carrot's Hollow*] (1998). Often his racy dreaming employs characters with names of well-known actresses, but Brumaru's most successful poems are those dedicated to his wife, Tamara, from whence the nickname of these verses, "Tamarettes": "If Apollinaire sang the pussy of Lou, / Tamariushka, what

could I sing you? / Your peach wrapped in dew and pepper, / Guarded by an angel with the trembling spear?"

Nina Cassian (b. 1924) is a poet who conveys her erotic impulses with a special talent for resonance. Marian Popa, in *History of Romanian Literature*, defines her as a "Bach of the sensations," cultivating seductive and compelling diabolism. Among her volumes are *Sângele*, [*Blood*] (1966), *Ambitus* (1969), and *Marea Conjugare* [*The Big Conjugation*] (1971).

With Marta Petreu (b. 1955), Romanian erotic poetry in the 1990s became settled under feminine domination. *Poeme nerușinate* [*Shameless Poems*] (1993) seems like the expression of an unlimited fantasy that was the mark of the so-called Generation '90. It also signaled (according to Radu Voinescu in *Today's Feminine Literature*) an intellectual pleasure in eroticism reduced to toying with ideas. *Falanga* [*The Phalanx*] (1998) pushes eroticism to an intense sensuality where carnal love is combined with a sort of mystical devotion.

Thus dominated by female poets, Romanian erotic poetry has become an emancipation of imagination. Much like a new avant-garde, the literary mentality of the 1990s had as its goal indulgence and enjoyment, an exhibitionism certainly driving toward the affirmation of a total freedom. Rodica Draghinescu (b. 1962) tells hitherto inconceivable stories about her experiences, in which a literate woman can valorize and describe her erotic life. She evokes the most intimate places of the body and the most physiological moments of the sexual act and desire, as in her most interesting work, *Obiect de lux ascuțit pe ambele părți* [*Object of Luxury Sharpened by Its Two Edges*] (1997).

Floarea Țuțuianu represents a hermetic eroticism, crossed by sexual symbols and impregnated with cultural but very sensual allusions: "I am naked among artists, / I want to be myself, without success, / I speak in the hose of the ear of Mr. Manet, / and together we take lunch on the grass" ("The Lunch on The Grass"). Her creations are very spiritualized, yet keep the essential note of limitless sincerity in a language that is sometimes cruel. In the volumes *Femeia pește* [*Woman-Fish*] (1996), *Libresse oblige* (1998), *Leul Marcu* [*Mark the Lion*] (2000) her literature makes use of cruel expressions that still remain touching and retain a mysterious charm. It speaks of a femininity lived to its

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maximal intensity with lucidity and rationality. With *Rochia nesupunerii* [*The Dress of Rebeliousness*] (2001), Paulina Popa shows evidence of a very strong courage to deliver experiences at times abstract, at times concrete, that proclaim their authenticity filtered by poetic culture. Her fashionable style of writing is bound to make proselytes.

As for Romanian erotic prose, the short novel of Bogdan Petriceicu Hasdeu (1836–1907), *Duduca Mamuca* [*Lady Mamuca*] (1863) can be considered its beginning. In it, a young student seduces a girl of sixteen years. The seducer's tricks result in the girl's mother falling in love as well. In bed one night, the student looks for his Lolita in the darkness but instead finds the mother and, of course, the delights of love with a well-versed lady. Conceived as a narrative on the erotic tribulations of the characters, the novel also stands against the stereotypes of romanticism of which it represents a true caricature. Hasdeu was indicted for immorality and had to answer to the court. Initially, he lost the case and had to give up his teaching post and pay a large fine; then, he was acquitted and published a new version, *Micuța* [*The Flapper*] (1864), from which he had eliminated the obscene fragments while keeping the progress of the plot and writing a preface declaiming to the ladies and damsels that his book was meant to alert them to the sly tricks of men. The preface is signed "Doctor Artis Amandi," Doctor in the art of love.

A short story in the style of popular literature, *Păcat* [*The Sin*] (1892) by I.L. Caragiale (1852–1912), questions incestuous love. A village priest has a son with a widow, then gets married (Orthodox law obliges priests to marry) and has a girl. As a widower, many years later, he brings the bastard into his house and observes that there is a sexual attraction between his son and his daughter. The priest explains to his daughter that they are siblings, but she doesn't take this into account. Finally, the father kills the two lovers.

An important symbolist poet, Alexandru Macedonski (1854–1920) was also a prose writer. His short story *Thalassa*, which appeared posthumously in an anthology named *Cartea de aur* [*The Golden Book*] (1975), is a tale of unbridled sensualism and exotism. On an island, separated from the civilized world, two youngsters grow up together and in adolescence discover physical love. Their innocence makes the

narrative and the description of their passion more exciting.

Ion Minulescu (1881–1944) is well known as a symbolist poet. But he also wrote a very hardcore novel, *Roșu, galben și albastru* [*Red, Yellow, and Blue*] (the colors of the Romanian flag) (1924). During the First World War, behind the lines of defense in Iassy and far from the tragedy of combat, the hero, a young man who has well-placed connections, is sheltered as an adjutant at army headquarters. He thus has many amorous adventures with the wives of the officers who are fighting in the front lines in combat. Minulescu writes as a great hedonist, and his ironic tone is very caustic.

A poet, fiction writer, and authority on Romanian medicine, Victor Papilian (1888–1956) wrote *Decameronul românesc* [*A Romanian Decameron*] between the two world wars, although it was not published until in 1996. These tales are replete with husbands and wives cheating on each other, in *imbroglios* that may pose many moral problems but which clear the way for the characters to have fun and to find happiness in the moment. The narratives are not told by different characters, as in Boccaccio's work, but by the author, who, at the finale of each tale, reestablishes the order that had been briefly disturbed by the piquant misadventures.

With the novels *Maidanul cu dragoste* [*The Waste Ground with Love*] (1933) and *Sfânta mare nerușinare* [*The Big Holy Impurity*] (1935), G.M. Zamfirescu (1898–1939) shows himself to be one of the most important Romanian erotic novelists. The suburbs of Bucharest offer the topics and heroes. Child love, sadomasochism, rape, prostitution hide no secrets from the astonished reader, who is surprised on every page by the novelist's overflowing invention and his taste for the violence of the instincts, for matings sometimes brutal, sometimes sophisticated. The two novels in fact make a single work, the characters of the first being found in the second, with new sexual feats. Zamfirescu is probably the Marquis de Sade of Romanian literature.

Village customs are explored by Zaharia Stancu (1902–1974), such as love among the peasants, their barbaric customs, the dance with the bride's bloody shirt after the wedding night, the sexual initiations of teenagers by aged women, adultery and its punishment, the sexual abuses or seduction that the boyars practice on farmer's daughters, as in *Descult* [*Barefoot*] (1948).

One of the most important historians of religion, Mircea Eliade (1907–1986) was at the same time a very important novelist. Concerning love, his writings revive some old myths and use archaic patterns about the mystery of the union between man and woman. In *Isabel și apele diavolului* [*Isabel and the Waters of the Devil*] (1930), he is an apologist for the orgiastic atmosphere, where the heterosexual couples use the practices of the *Kama Sutra* and have “artificial unions,” in which one makes love with someone while thinking about another. *Maitreyi* (1933) purports to tell the real-life experience of the young author as a student in India with a girl of the *kshatryia*, or military, caste, the real-life Maitreyi Devi (who later wrote a book of her own to rebut the fiction of Eliade). This forbidden love is very ardent and is conceived of as a ritual of initiation, with the secret encounters between the two lovers in the night having a mystical quality. *Domnișoara Christina* [*Miss Christine*] (1936) is a fantastic narrative in which the heroine is a girl who dies, becomes a vampire who threatens with her deadly erotic fascination, and makes love with living youngsters. *Pe strada Mântuleasa* [*On Mantuleasa Street*] (1968) is a narrative with some elements of a thriller. One of the two narrative lines looks at the destiny of an uncommon girl, Oana. She is physically very big gigantic and copulates with the shepherds in the Carpathian Mountains each night, but is insatiable and finds a fabulous bull for her sexual pleasure, like a new Pasiphae. Finally, she marries a young professor from Lithuania who is as big as she, and they make a beautiful pair.

Three of the novels of Eugen Barbu (1924–1993) are endowed with an intense eroticism. *Groapa* [*The Hole*] (1957) relates the stories of people who live as outsiders or outcasts from society. Theirs is an amoral world that lives, apparently, for only two goals: to have no attachments and to satisfy its sexual desires. *Princepele* [*The Prince*] (1969) demonstrates a rare sophistication in the scenes of erotica and lovemaking. One of the more accomplished scenes is during an orgy, in which several friends practice sodomy with a fish. *Săptămâna nebunilor* [*The Week of The Incane*] (1981) is a story of

lost love between a young prince from Wallachia and a woman of the Venetian aristocracy. The evocation of the luxury and pleasures of Venice in the middle of nineteenth century is saturated by the memories of adventures of love and of sick, sad, and perverse associations.

Vasile Voiculescu (1884–1963) wrote many short stories about love and magic and about sexual abnormality. *Vaca năzdrăvană* [*The Magic Cow*] tells of the strange behavior of a cow. The narrator discovers that the animal receives daily, far from prying eyes, sex from a gypsy. *Sakuntala* [*Sakuntala*] describes an orgy among gypsies. *Zahei orbul* [*Zakey the Blind*] tells of the customs of homosexuals in jail. Marin Mincu (b. 1944) is a critic who also writes prose. His four-volume novel *Intermezzo* (1984–1997) is a postmodernist text which has elements of experimentalism. The author narrates adventures with many women with frankness and frequently even with great pleasure, as a postmodern Casanova. An essayist interested in erotic themes and armed with a vast libertine culture, Luca Pițu (b. 1947) has written *Eros, Doxa and Logos* (1995).

RADU VOINESCU

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## RONSARD, PIERRE DE

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1524–1585  
French poet

Pierre de Ronsard's love poetry was constantly revised and reclassified throughout his career, and his eventual resolve to place it at the head of his *Oeuvres complètes* signifies an admission that it formed his greatest achievement. It divides into three main sequences, the first being *Premier livre des amours*, now often called the *Amours de Cassandre*. This anthology reflects the classical preoccupations of the Coqueret period, with Petrarch as its clearest influence. Hence the emotions expressed reflect standard patterns of intense admiration and desire of the loved one, contrasting a sadness and frustration at her inaccessibility. Ronsard may well have chosen the name Cassandre for its classical associations rather than because he knew (and might have loved) the real Cassandra Salviati, and the poems often read better as exercises in rhetoric than as investigations of the psychology of love. Conversely he will also apply the Platonist topos whereby love elevates the soul to an experience of ideal rather than mortal beauty, whilst elsewhere describing his persona's erotic fantasies, his straying hands, and a franker admiration of Cassandre's body than one tends to find in Petrarch himself.

These latter themes become more frequent in the *Second livre des amours* [*Amours de Marie*], fewer of which are in sonnet form, and in which the intellectual input is diminished, even if classical influences (including Catullus, Tibullus, and Propertius) remain strong. In partial imitation of their work, the persona and Marie enjoy intimate relations, often in a rural setting. They kiss more often, sleep together, and share playful and bantering exchanges, as a teasing lightheartedness develops at the expense of Petrarchism's more tortured emotions. The *Second livre* concludes with a series of poems on Marie's death, a reversion to Petrarchism which came much later in his career.

The third major sequence, the *Sonnets pour Hélène*, was published at the same time as the

verses *Sur la mort de Marie* (i.e., in 1578, in the fifth edition of his complete works), and they certainly constitute his most original, and arguably his richest collection. Petrarchism returns, but with an added psychological realism, for the predominant theme is the love of an older man for a woman much his junior, both represented as members of the royal court. Though one cannot reliably identify the intelligent if not overwhelmingly beautiful Hélène with Hélène de Surgères, a real acquaintance of Ronsard and lady-in-waiting to Catherine de Médicis, this collection explores, not without some irony, the vicissitudes and embarrassments of an incompatible relationship, as the somewhat infirm and certainly aging persona appraises rather than worships his mistress, criticizing her for her Platonist beliefs which deny the physical pleasures of which he fantasizes whilst in reality doing no more than touching or kissing her hand. As Ronsard situates the martial imagery of the love lyric in the genuine context of France's Religious Wars, rounds on Cupid and love as irrelevant to a period of national crisis (Charles IX's death affected him greatly), and finally abandons the relationship with Hélène as unworkable and unworthy, so he achieves something unique in French Renaissance verse.

When responding to Protestant charges of paganism and hedonism, Ronsard frankly admitted (again in a poem), "J'ayme à faire l'amour, j'ayme à parler aux femmes," however a biographical reading of his love poetry remains problematic: the smaller collection of *Sonnets pour Astrée* and the poems on the death of Marie were certainly based on emotions and experiences not his own, and may even have been written on command. What is certain is his intense interest in amorous themes as a well-spring of literary inspiration and creativity. Feeding on a profound and authentic appreciation of classical literature, and ranging from bawdy sonnets on the penis and vagina up to the complex mythography of the *Hymnes*, Ronsard's erotic poetry achieves a matchless variety of form, depth, and expression.

## Biography

Born in 1524, the youngest son of a minor nobleman from the province of Vendôme, Pierre de Ronsard became the major poet of the French Renaissance, displaying a talent unequaled at least until the nineteenth century. After periods spent as a page and courtier he gained a classical education in the late 1540s and rallied to the Brigade (later called the Pléiade), a group of scholar-poets led and tutored by Jean Dorat at the Parisian Collège de Coqueret. His early output of neo-classical odes and Petrarchan sonnets betrayed strong humanist influences coupled with an extravagant sense of his own literary importance, but his output spread rapidly beyond Dorat's academic program to finally include, alongside his uncompleted epic (the *Franciade*) and his didactic poetry entitled the *Hymnes*, some polemical verse written during the early Religious Wars, various miscellanies including the lighthearted *Folastries*, whose eroticism is naive and outspoken, plus the sonnet cycles for which he is now most famous. Once he reverted to a more traditional, easier literary style, his standing at court rose rapidly, until by the late 1550s he was acknowledged as its official poet. Greater fame and wealth were to follow in Catherine de Médicis's regency and the reign of Charles IX (1560–1574), during which period, paradoxically, he may have encountered a weakening in his inspiration perhaps not unconnected with the parlous state of his country and its monarchy. The death of Charles IX led to a change of cultural regime as the new king Henri III brought in other favorites, which factor, along with increasing ill health, caused Ronsard to spend much time

away from the court. However, notwithstanding these vicissitudes, he continued to produce new material, usually compiled into successive editions of his complete works, and his talent certainly burgeoned again with the later sonnets, including some dictated on his deathbed. A tonsured cleric, Ronsard never married, though his religious benefices guaranteed him considerable wealth. The adult years were afflicted by severe deafness and his old age by gout. He was buried in the small priory of St. Cosme, near Tours, but his memorial service took place in Paris to great pomp and ceremony.

JOHN PARKIN

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# ROQUÉ, ANA

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1853–1933

Puerto Rican novelist and journalist

Roqué's only novel and most important work of fiction is *Luz y sombra* [*Light and Shadow*] (1903). An epistolary novel, it follows the lives

of two young friends: Matilde, who marries for love and settles in the countryside, and Julia, who marries for money and social position and hopes to shine in San Juan's upper-class society. It is an avowedly feminist novel about sexual mores in Puerto Rico's patriarchal planter



society at the turn of the twentieth century. Not surprisingly, given its provocative conclusions, it was greeted by Puerto Rican critics with absolute silence, a significant fact on an island where every new publication was widely discussed in the press.

At the center of the plot of *Luz y sombra* is a tale of adultery. While Matilde finds true happiness in her bucolic country retreat despite the death of her child, Julia discovers very quickly that her husband's sexual indifference toward her is at the root of her unhappiness. Having discovered sexual pleasure following her marriage, and finding this pleasure denied to her, she seeks love and admiration from a friend of her husband's with whom she was smitten on the very day of her wedding. The potential lovers' passion is discovered by the husband when it is on the verge of being consummated and prompts from him an acknowledgment of his own guilt in not fulfilling his wife's sexual needs and a promise of greater passion and attention from then on. The eloquent plea for understanding that women's nature is not different than that of men despite society's higher expectations of modesty and purity from women is delivered, surprisingly, by Matilde, Julia's highly conventional friend. The novel ends with the deaths of both Julia and her husband—a death expected given the nature of her transgression and his unprecedented forgiveness—but not before their unconventional tale has given Roqué the opportunity to advance a thesis that was clearly revolutionary at the time.

Roqué's contribution to erotic literature in *Luz y sombra* is rooted in the realistic and detailed portrayal of a young woman's sexual frustration and in Roqué's powerful arguments for societal understanding of women's sexual needs in marriage. The novel's controversial premise led to its being essentially erased from Puerto Rican literary history until the last decade of the twentieth century, when a new edition was published.

### Biography

Ana Roqué de Duprey, author, journalist, educator, and suffragist, was born in Puerto Rico. Orphaned at the age of four, she was raised by her father and grandmother, who took charge of her early education. A precocious child, she

claimed to have learned to read and write by the age of three and a half and knew the fundamentals of grammar, math, and geography by the time she enrolled in school at the age of seven. She finished her formal education by the age of nine, having exhausted the resources of the local school, and continued to be schooled at home, studying piano, embroidery, and sewing with her grandmother and aunts, and math with her father. She returned to school at age eleven, as assistant to the teacher and, at the age of thirteen had founded her own private school, teaching students often older than herself. She wrote a geography textbook for her school, which was later published, and became known for her accomplishments in literature, foreign languages, astronomy, botany, geography, philosophy, musical composition, and history.

In 1872, Roqué married Luis E. Duprey, a sugar plantation owner, with whom she had five children, three of whom survived. Financial troubles following the emancipation of slaves forced them to move to San Juan, where she continued to develop her scholarly interests and became the first woman to join the Ateneo Puertorriqueño, a cultural and scholarly organization. In addition to her scholarly interests, she was one of the first Puerto Rican adherents to Allan Kardec's theories of Spiritualism and communication with the dead through mediums.

Roqué's marriage did not long survive the couple's financial troubles and she began teaching again as a way to support herself and her children. Her career as educator lasted 30 years, mostly in schools that she founded and directed, among them Colegio Mayagüezano and Liceo Ponceño, which continue as thriving institutions today. She established a normal school in San Juan, considered one of the best centers dedicated to the education of women, and was instrumental in the creation of the University of Puerto Rico.

In 1888, Roque began publishing fiction in magazines and newspapers, which she later collected in *Pasatiempos* [*Entertainments*] (1894) and *Novelas y Cuentos* [*Novellas and Short Stories*] (1895). Around the same period, she also began her work as a suffragist. Her writings and activism were an integral part of the history of feminism in Puerto Rico. In 1917 she established the Liga Feminista Puertorriqueña and in 1924 the Asociación de Mujeres Sufragistas.

She founded several newspapers and magazines devoted to women's issues and used the production of these to train women in the printing trades. Roqué became the honorary president of the Liberal Party of Puerto Rico and received an honorary doctorate from the University of Puerto Rico. In 1929, her efforts were rewarded when the right to vote was granted to women who could read and write. Ironically, Roqué was unable to cast a valid vote in the first elections in which literate women were allowed to vote, as she was found not to be properly registered as a voter. Voting rights for all women did not become law until 1935, two years after Roqué's death.

LIZABETH PARAVISINI-GEBERT

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## ROSSETTI, ANA

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1950–

Spanish poet, novelist, short story writer, dramatist, and librettist

In the male-oriented and highly literary poetry scene of early 1980s Spain, Ana Rossetti's poems broke new ground with their disruptive eroticism and ironic way with literary conventions. The poems' feminine-gendered voice explores intricate masturbatory fantasies, hints at incest, and revels in ironically lesbianism. Men are framed, manipulated, violated, elevated, and also reduced to icons: saints, sailors, boys in jeans and leather, mere pictures of desire. In the poems "A la puerta del cabaret" [At the Club Door] and "Chico Wrangler" [Wrangler Boy], the male's jeans-clad form is focused on, and, as in the essays in *Prendas íntimas* [Underwear], 1989, Rossetti displays a fascination with the erotic charge of single items of clothing or of accessories on bare flesh. In *Devocionario* [A Devotional] (1986)—a subversively erotic recreation of the archetext of the fall and an imitation of saintly writings on temptation—this obsession is turned toward the paraphernalia of martyrdom and religious representations of

Christ's body, creating a subversive juxtaposition, in the context of the strong Catholic culture of Rossetti's own childhood and of the instincts of spiritual purity and of sadomasochistic desire. Such tactics are further developed in the limited-edition collection of prints by Jorge Artajo and poems by Rossetti, *Virgo potens* [All-Powerful Virgin] (1994). This is a double-edged confession by a virgin who (proudly) accuses herself of causing the downfall of her confessor with her vivid descriptions of the desires and sensations coursing through her (for example, "the tangled swarms of hummingbirds" beneath her starched robes in Poem 4).

In 1991 Tusquets Editores' well-known series of erotic texts "La sonrisa vertical" [The Vertical Smile] published Rossetti's collection of eight stories, *Alevosías* [Betrayals]. The first story, "Del diablo y sus hazañas" [Of the Devil and his Works], is written in the falsely naive voice of a pubescent boy, Buba, whose initiation begins with fantasies constructed around his older female cousin Nela's breasts, in motion like "giant jellyfish" on a train journey, and of her "front bottom," glimpsed during a bedtime cuddle; it moves on to masturbation—taking the "devil"

in his hand, and making him “spit” into the holy water by his bed headboard—and finally to “sucking the devil out” of Fred, his older cousin. In the second story, a frigid virgin dreams of watching her sister having prolonged and intricate sex with a stranger, recalls her thrill as a child at helping her sister break her hymen with a stick of candy, and resolves, on waking, to break her own with the heel of her shoe, prior to a casual encounter of her own, thus opening up the connection back to her sister. Childhood as a time of delightful, perverse sexual education had been a constant theme in the poems and, more extensively, in an essay on leather and sex shops in *Prendas íntimas* (113–23). Here, watching DeMille epics during Lent as a schoolgirl is seen as having laid down a rich bed of fantasies about torture, torsos, straps, muscles, and harnesses. All this leaves a mark on the stories of *Alevosías* in particular: in “La cara oculta del amor” [The Hidden Face of Love] a woman confides in a friend that she has been brutally half-raped by her lover, whose violence is fueled by his own fantasies of bondage, whipping, and rape—but the friend turns out to be projecting onto the two of them his own sadomasochistic fantasies; in *Et ne nos inducas* [And Lead Us Not] a novice in the confessional reviews his sin (lusting after choirboys), recalls the in-itself lascivious language of admonition (how “the trunks of ivy which are Babylon’s thighs” will strangle the sinner: 117), and submits, naked, to flagellation by his almost equally young confessor.

Rossetti’s dominant vocabulary is of moisture, tingling flesh, and tremors of ecstasy and surrender. The scent, texture, and structure of flowers refer to the body in arousal. Bee stings, lava, and fire condensing in the scrotum assault the novice in “*Et ne nos inducas*”; in “La noche de los enamorados” [Lovers’ Eve] (2002) a spell cast by a woman on St. John’s Eve causes the death of her tiresomely fixated lover but backfires when his spirit—as lustful and thrusting as his body was in life—enters her as “a hurricane of roses” (123). The density of this postmodern baroque language has its own erotic purposes: it stimulates sense and imagination, but it also teases and diverts, delaying narrative closure, dwelling on what would otherwise be passing pleasures, blurring the definitions of gender, preference, and anatomical form. It is also frequently leavened with wit. “La vengadora,” in

*Alevosías*, adopts the sardonic tone and turns of phrase of the woman some way into her marriage facing the twin facts that “when a man turns off the tap, he turns it off” and that “what seemed to her as inert as . . . a fossil is in fact a snail which is perfectly able to wave its lubricious antennae about elsewhere in search of stimuli” (161). “Dedicado a tus plantas” [Dedicated to Your Feet] is an extended, vicariously homoerotic, pedophilic fantasy involving a muscular young artist, a gay gallery owner, and a less than bright protagonist smitten by the former and in futile love with the latter. The artist’s unlikely participation as a barefoot penitent in a Holy Week procession and Lela’s discovery—in a state of quasi-spiritual ecstasy—of his discarded boots on the church altar nicely and mischievously link erotic and religious archetypes in a manner typical of this key literary figure of the late twentieth century in Spain.

### Biography

Born in San Fernando (Cadiz Province, southwestern Spain), Rossetti first gained fame as a poet. Her first novel, *Phumas de España* [Flamboyant Spain] was published in 1988 and she has written and performed for various theatre companies, in 1993 writing the libretto for the opera *El secreto enamorado* [The Secret Lover], on Oscar Wilde. She is a regular reader of her work at public events and on air.

CHRIS PERRIAM

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## ROTH, PHILIP

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1933–  
US novelist and short story writer

Philip Roth is the author of more than twenty books as well as essays, reviews, short fiction, and interviews conducted with other writers. His writing has experimented with many forms, from satire and parable to autobiography and memoir, from realism to postmodernism. Roth has challenged not only conventions concerning the representation of erotic life but also customary distinctions between the modes of fiction and nonfiction.

Subjectivity and intimate relations have provided his subject matter. Roth's work examines the intersections between selfhood and history, with special attention to the problems posed to the male subject by cultural constructions of masculinity, embodiment, male sexuality, and Jewish American identity. Roth's characters often displace their desire for autonomous selfhood into the erotic, and his fiction grows sexually explicit when, through illicit behavior, they resist the regulation of their identities. The erotic life Roth represents therefore signifies several conflicts: the male's social and psychoanalytic repression within a culture that at once constrains him to act morally and encourages a transgressive view of manliness; the subject's inevitable objectification by its own erotic desires; and the deceptions and self-deceptions inherent in the pursuit of desire. Roth has viewed eros through the travails of the Rothian body—typically male and Jewish—not in order to question the ethics of the erotic or to subvert cultural prohibitions against erotic performance but to illuminate the ontological implications of eroticism inevitably situated within a time and place.

No stranger to controversy, Roth in his first book, *Goodbye, Columbus*, offered stories that elicited fierce reactions among some postwar Jewish readers who feared that his unflinching comic portraits would expose American Jews to anti-Semitism. Not until the notorious *Portnoy's Complaint* ten years later, however, did Roth find a truly taboo-breaking voice and a liberating mode of representation to express the condition he called in the novel, following Freud, the "degradation in erotic life." *Portnoy's Complaint* broke ground for its unfettered language, slangy and obscene—with chapters titled, for example, "Cunt Crazy" and "Whacking Off"—as well as for its graphic descriptions of phallic sex and its book-length howl of dismay about the bondage of the self. Shaped, like much of Roth's work, by a psychoanalytic view of instinctual repression, *Portnoy's Complaint* makes Freud's influence visible in its narrative frame, within which Alexander Portnoy recounts his busy history of sexual exploits to an analyst. The anguished first-person confession was so convincing that many readers failed to distinguish Roth from his creation.

Portnoy enters therapy complaining of impotence, caught between the urge to be a "Jewboy" and the call to be a "nice Jewish boy" (*Reading Myself*: 35). His appetites run from compulsive masturbation, presented in hilariously humiliating scenes, to disastrous, objectifying sexual relationships with women whom he desires because they are not Jewish, "as though through fucking I will discover America. *Conquer America*." Portnoy feels himself the butt of a "Jewish joke," as he labors under the yoke of a superego displaced from his mother, whose smothering, Oedipal presence causes him at last

to cry that he wants to “put the id back in Yid!” Shocking to some readers, the novel became an American cultural event, bringing the title into common parlance as a shorthand reference to sexual liberation from the social repressiveness of the United States in the 1950s.

The range and continuity of Roth’s investigations into the degradations of erotic life are suggested by four other representative novels. Three center around the same protagonist and variously prolong the primal scream that closes *Portnoy’s Complaint*. In the Kafkaesque parable of *The Breast* (1972), David Kepesh metamorphoses into a six-foot mammary gland. Thrust to the border not only of the “human” but of gender, Kepesh discloses the limitations of the cultural construction of a male/female bipolarity that cannot account for sexual desire. The intense arousal of his nipple, which has replaced his penis, cannot bring him to climax but becomes an obsessive desire as the only “human” pleasure remaining to him. In charting Kepesh’s efforts to repress desire in the face of physical abjection, Roth defines “the human” as the confluence of the erotic drive and the will to control it.

Published five years later, *The Professor of Desire* (1977) offers background to *The Breast*, depicting Kepesh’s conflict between sexual cravings and impotence imposed by an ethic of restraint. He seeks after objects of desire—including a “good girl”/“bad girl” pairing of women in a youthful ménage à trois—to define his masculinity in terms of erotic power, only to find himself feminized, hysterical, plagued with guilt, and bemoaning the “totalitarianism” of the desiring body. The novel closes with the juxtaposed images of punishment, figured as castration, and succor, in the nostalgic clinging to a lover’s breast, ironically foreshadowing Kepesh’s fate in *The Breast*. When Roth resurrects Kepesh, no longer a breast, in *The Dying Animal* (2001), the totalitarianism of the body is redefined in relation to aging and mortality. Roth uncovers the naked narcissism in masculine desire that willingly objectifies women and that persists long after the beauty or potency of the flesh. Thrilled by the “radical destabilization” that is the “chaos of eros,” Kepesh in his sixties confronts in the fetishized but diseased breast of his youthful conquest a reminder of his own impending abjection.

The prospect of decay likewise motivates the furious exploits of a death-haunted libertine in *Sabbath’s Theater* (1995). Framed by Mickey Sabbath’s extravagant liaisons with his voracious mistress and his later visits to masturbate and urinate on her grave, the novel traces Sabbath’s antic, self-defining acts as a phallic subject whose masculinist ideology is demystified by the treachery of the aging body. The novel punishes Sabbath for displacing Freudian thanatos into pure id and a will to power, but Roth allows him at last, in a Rabelaisian performance of selfhood, to celebrate both the dying body and the erotic life force. The paradoxical view of the erotic in *Sabbath’s Theater* as a sign of both human frailty and the power of the human subject stands for Roth’s career-long appreciation of the opportunities desire offers for self-invention, his acknowledgment of the wages of desire, and his refusal to censure the desiring subject.

### Biography

Born March 19, Newark, New Jersey. Attended Newark College, Rutgers University 1950–51, Bucknell University for BA 1951–54; University of Chicago, MA, 1955 and further study 1956–57. Married Margaret Martinson Williams, 1959 (separated, 1963); married actress Claire Bloom, 1990 (divorced, 1994); no children. Taught at universities from 1956 to 1980, most notably as writer-in-residence at the University of Pennsylvania, 1965–80. Received a National Book Award for his first book, *Goodbye, Columbus* (1959), and subsequently received numerous other literary prizes, including the National Book Critics Circle Award (1986 and 1991), the PEN/Faulkner Award (1993), another National Book Award (1995), and the Pulitzer Prize in Fiction (1997).

DEBRA SHOSTAK

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## RUIZ, JUAN

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1282?–1349?  
 Spanish poet

### *El libro de buen amor*

Possibly composed sometime between 1325 and 1345, this narrative poem is a masterpiece of medieval Spanish literature. The title of the work is posthumous, assigned to it in the late nineteenth century. Three manuscripts of the work survive, as well as a few isolated fragments. Numerous annotated editions are available today in several languages. This work is considered one of the most significant literary productions of the Spanish Middle Ages, and has given rise to a rigorous and ongoing critical discussion on questions of meaning, sources, and authorship.

A dynamic and engaging narrative poem written in several different meters and poetic styles

of the period, *El libro de buen amor* centers on a number of amorous episodes in the poet's life as well as didactic, allegorical, and satirical pronouncements on other issues. The poem is narrated in the first person, and the poet is identified as the archpriest of Hita, Juan Ruiz. Basically episodic in structure without compromising an ultimate sense of unity, the poem incorporates a wide variety of topics, ranging from the clearly religious (prayers to the Virgin, didactic assertions) to the blatantly erotic (pursuit of women, descriptions of female anatomy). The structure of the poem discourages a coherent plot summary, for the episodes are not tied to one another primarily as functions of a linear plot. This is further emphasized by the continual insertions of fables, tales, and parodies which weave into and out of the first-person narrative at several junctures.

The work has inspired numerous interpretations, many of which have sought to throw light on the seemingly contradictory stances it takes toward physical love from alternating secular and religious standpoints. The very concept of “buen amor” (good love) has generated abundant discussion among scholars. Much debate has occurred on the topic of whether “good love” refers to secular or Christian love.

Coexisting alongside the allegorical and spiritual threads of the poem, one substantial core of the poem is the narrator’s account of his amorous pursuits. Aided by three parties—an old go-between, the God of Love [Don Amor], and his companion Doña Venus—the narrator attempts to seduce several women, the most memorable of whom are Doña Endrina [Lady Plum] and Doña Garoça the nun. He also tries his luck with a Moorish woman and is at one point forcibly abducted by parodic inversions of the ideal woman—grotesque anti-portraits of femininity—who take advantage of him on isolated mountain roads. Throughout and in between adventures, the outcome of which is at times left ambiguous, the narrator offers musings on women, seduction, and physical love. The pursuits themselves take the shape of heated dialogues among the narrator, his object of desire, the go-between, the God of Love, and Venus, all of whom attempt to outmaneuver and outwit one another rhetorically as they express their views on physical love.

The poem’s achievement as a poetic expression of erotic love is manifold. On the level of plot, it is entertaining and dynamic; the amorous pursuits are presented in lively ways that engage the reader from beginning to end. The frustrations, humorous mishaps, and verbal sparring generated by erotic longing and resistance are chronicled with affection and irony, showcasing the importance of dialogue in seduction. On the level of literary design, Juan Ruiz displays admirable skill in bringing a wide range of sources to his poem and reshaping their function in highly original ways. Present in the poem are references to Ovid, Hebrew and Arabic literature, medieval and ancient fables, medieval Latin comedy, lyric poetry, and the Bible, to mention some of Juan Ruiz’s important sources. All are woven into the

poem from a fresh and often ironic perspective, creating a deeply reflective ambiguity. On the level of meaning, the poem sustains the paradox of erotic love coexisting with divine love with such humor and complexity that it becomes ultimately trivial to attempt to answer the question, What is good love? With its simultaneous celebration of both tendencies—love of the divine and love of the profane—with no attempt to offer artificial and strained resolutions, *El libro de buen amor* represents a masterpiece of medieval literature, given the rich perspectives on human love it offers the reader.

### Biography

Very little is known about Juan Ruiz, the archpriest of Hita. He was born in Alcalá de Henares and held an ecclesiastical post in the village of Hita. The *Libro de buen amor* is his only known work, though he possibly composed other poetry as well.

LEYLA ROUHI

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# RUSSIAN

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The profound sexual phobia of Soviet society was reflected in the almost total suppression of erotic discourse, making “Russian eroticism” something of an oxymoron. The lifting of censorship restrictions in the post-Soviet period, however, has made Western pornography and erotic literature widely available, leading to a rediscovery of Russia’s own erotic past, which differs from that of western Europe in a number of significant ways. For example, the split between the idealized, nonsexual concept of love produced within the “high” culture of the church and the literary elites, and the frank, often celebratory representations of sexuality in the “low” culture of the folk, was greater in Russia than in the West. In addition, refined works of erotic art and literature appeared much later in Russia. In fact, Russia produced nothing similar to the chivalric literature of the West that idealized romantic love, and Russian artists were forbidden to paint naked figures until the late eighteenth century. Moreover, the broad censorship of erotic and/or sexually explicit materials meant that many of the greatest works of Russian eroticism were not originally published in Russia, or were circulated there only in manuscript form, often complicating the establishment of publication dates and even authorship.

Censorship in Russia was largely unrestricted by the principle of freedom of the press, and for most of Russian history no distinction was made between erotic art and pornography. The emigré poet and essayist Vladislav Khodasevich was one of the few to address the problem in an article entitled “O pornografii” [On Pornography] (1932), in which he argued that artistic merit (*khudozhestvennost*) distinguished erotic literature from pornography. The legacy of censorship is evident in the continued preference for such terms as *zavetnaia* or *potaennaia* [secret] and *netsenzurnaia* [unprintable] in referring to erotic literature. Furthermore, censorship lent erotic literature a *de facto* political significance, and eroticism and obscenity were often used to parody the church and the state. To the extent

that censorship mostly affected printed works, it had little effect on erotic folk culture, which was predominantly oral, thus reinforcing the chasm separating the two erotic traditions.

The love idealized in church teachings was godly and platonic and bore little resemblance to the love celebrated in Russian folk culture, which was never ascetic. Overt expressions of sexual desire can be found in a wide range of folk genres, such as tales, songs, poems (*chastushki*), sayings (*poslivitsy*), incantations (*zagovory*), and plays, but these genres may make different use of erotic elements. A.I. Nikiforov, for example, argues that the use of obscenities and even erotic scenes in folktales had a primarily stylistic function, while Andrei Toporkov maintains that folk incantations have as their primary aim the arousal of sexual desire.

Erotic works of folk culture were collected in earnest throughout the nineteenth century by Aleksandr Afanas’ev and Vladimir Dal’, among others, but were not published in Russia until much later. In fact, the first bawdy tales to be published openly in Russia were contained in the collection *Severnii skazki* [Northern Tales] (1908) prepared by the folklorist Nikolai Onchukov. Afanas’ev’s collection of bawdy folktales, *Russkie zavetnye skazki* [Russian Secret Tales], a supplement to his standard collection, *Narodnye russkie skazki* [Popular Russian Tales] (1855–64), was first published in Geneva in 1872 and included an apocryphal attribution of the tales to the Russian Orthodox monks of Varaam. The volume’s preface was signed “Bibliophile.” The tales, which Afanas’ev edited for style, combining some into a single, synthetic text, were soon translated into French and English, but were only published in Russia after the loosening of censorship in 1905 when they were included in the collection *Russkie narodnye skazki*, edited by A.E. Gruzinsky. A collection of erotic writings, *Eros Russe: Russkii erot ne dlia dam* [Russian Eros: Russian Eros Is Not for Ladies], was also published in Geneva, a center of Russian emigré publishing, in 1879.



Russian erotic folktales deal with what Mikhail Bakhtin has referred to as the “lower bodily strata” and were clearly produced to entertain, if not explicitly to arouse sexual desire. They exhibit a fairly limited number of motifs and can be easily classified into a typology. Many of the stories involve the comic misrecognition of body parts, physical—often sexual—acts, and bodily functions. Others depict marital infidelity, sexual impropriety on the part of clerics, and the comic humiliation of old men by young women.

A collection of Russian erotic folk poetry, attributed by some scholars to Afanas’ev, was published in the 1870s under the title *Mezhdruziami: Smeshnaya i pikantnaya shtuki domashnikh poetov Rossii: Pervoe polnoe izdanie* [*Among Friends: Humorous and Piquant Bits from Russian Folk Poets: First Complete Publication*]. The place of publication was listed as Tsargrad (Constantinople). Dal’, most famous as the author of a widely respected dictionary of the Russian language, prepared a collection of erotic folk sayings that was first published in French under the title *Les proverbes erotiques russes: Etudes de proverbes recuillis et non-publiés par Dal et Simoni* (1972).

Russia’s turn toward the West in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries made possible the birth of a secular—and erotic—literary tradition. Romantic poetry began to appear in the late seventeenth century and bawdy *lubok* [woodcut] prints, which contained a short narrative text in either poetry or prose beneath an illustration of an erotically suggestive scene, became very popular in the eighteenth century. The translation and adaptation of foreign—especially French—works of erotic literature occurred with particular intensity following the “pornography boom” that took place in France in the mid-eighteenth century. A dependence on foreign models, however, did not consign Russian erotic literature to mere imitation. Russians, for example, exhibited a marked preference for erotic poetry over prose, which was reflected in a tendency to translate foreign works of prose, mainly novels, into Russian verse. The Russian prose tradition would in fact remain remarkably “chaste” throughout the nineteenth century.

One of the most significant moments in the development of Russian erotic literature was the appearance in the mid-eighteenth century of a collection of erotic poems entitled *Devich’ia*

*igrushka* [*A Maiden’s Toy*], a reference to the male member, believed to have been authored, at least in part, by Ivan Barkov, a seminarian of plebian origins who worked, among other things, as an editor and translator. This collection was circulated in manuscript form and contained original poems and loose translations that parodied the high genres of eighteenth-century neo-classicism through the use of obscene language and sexually explicit content, as in “Oda Priapu” [Ode to Priapus], “Oda pizde” [Ode to the Cunt], and “Ssora u khuia s pizdoi” [Argument Between a Prick and a Cunt]. So influential was the collection that Nikolai Karazin would include Barkov in his *Panteon Rossiiskikh avtorov* [*Pantheon of Russian Authors*] (1802), and Aleksander Pushkin was purported to have declared him “one of the most eminent figures in Russian literature.” Barkov’s significance is attested to by the fact that all erotic works that followed, such as the very popular *Luka Mudishchev*, an anonymous narrative tale in verse, would come to be known as *barkoviana*, or, more derisively, as *barkovshchina*. There may even have been a link between Barkov’s irreverent parodies and political liberalism in Russia, as suggested by one Russian arrested in the Decembrist uprising of 1825, who, when questioned as to the source of his freethinking ideas, replied: “various compositions (who does not know them?) of Barkov.”

Literary parodies played a significant role in the development of Russia’s erotic literature. Some notable works of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries include: V.I. Maikov’s mock epic set in a bordello, *Elisei, ili razdrzhennyi Vakkh* [*Elisei, or Bacchus Enraged*] (1777); Ippolit Bogdanovich’s *Dushenka* (1783), a reworking via La Fontaine of Apuleius’s tale of the love of Amor and Psyche; and anonymous parodies of Mikhail Lermontov’s poem *Demon* [*The Demon*] and Aleksandr Griboedov’s play *Gore ot uma* [*Woe from Wit*].

Many of the greatest Russian poets of the nineteenth century, well acquainted with eighteenth-century French culture, penned erotic verse. Aleksandr Pushkin, for example, wrote a number of erotic and obscene literary works and has long been attributed with the authorship of the erotic tale in verse *Ten’ Barkova* [*The Shadow of Barkov*], although his authorship is today in dispute. That work, which takes place in a brothel in St. Petersburg’s red-light district,

depicts a variety of Russian social types, including a poet and an unfrocked priest, in competition to best “serve Aphrodite.” The priest is in the lead until the ghost of Barkov appears to revive the poet’s flagging member and help him win the victor’s laurels.

Pushkin began writing bawdy epigrams, largely for parodic purposes, while still at the lycée, and his early erotic poems, “Monakh” [The Monk] and “Gorodok” [The Town], reveal the influence of both Russian and French authors—in particular, Barkov and Voltaire. Lengthier works include “Tsar Nikita i ego sorok docherei” [Tsar Nikita and His Forty Daughters] and the blasphemous “Gavriliada” [The Saga of Gabriel]. “Gavriliada” is a mock epic in the tradition of Maikov’s *Elisei*. Pushkin’s “Gavriliada” parodies church teachings concerning the Annunciation and the virgin birth by portraying a competition between the angel Gabriel and the devil for Mary’s sexual favors. God the Father then takes on the form a white dove—a parodic reference to Jupiter as a swan—and makes love to the virgin himself. “Tsar Nikita and His Forty Daughters” tells the story of a tsar’s beautiful daughters who lack but one erotic charm: genitalia. Drawing on both French literary works and Russian folktales, the poem recounts how the tsar attempts to solve the problem with the help of a witch who gives the tsar’s messenger a box “Full of sinful things / Which we adore.” When the box is opened, birds fly out and must be recaptured. Walter Arndt’s English translation of the poem was published in the December 1965 edition of *Playboy* magazine, which hailed it as “a ribald classic.”

The nineteenth-century poets Nikolai Yazykov and Mikhail Lermontov also wrote erotic verse. Yazykov penned a cycle of seven erotic elegies between 1823 and 1825 which were very popular and circulated in manuscript. Lermontov, Russia’s second great Romantic poet after Pushkin, wrote a number of erotic poems, especially during his years in the cavalry cadet school. Among those works, several depict same-sex desire among the cadets, such as “Oda k puzhniku” [Ode to the John] (1834) and “Tizengauzenu” [To Tiesenhausen] (1834). A.F. Shenin, who worked from 1820 to 1845 as an instructor in the Pavelsky Corps of Cadets, also composed a number of erotic poems dedicated to same-sex love, among them “Svidanie”

[The Rendezvous]; “R—u” [To R—], or “Though feminine charms delight all mortals” (“Khot’zhenskies krasies vsexh smertnykh voskhischiut”); and “L—oi” [to L—], or “I swore on glorious Ganymede” (“Klianulsia Ganimedom slavnym”).

The tightening of censorship during the reign of Nicholas I, as well as the increasing popularity of the novel in the second half of the nineteenth century, adversely affected the production of erotic literature in Russia. Notable exceptions include selected works of Mikhail Longinov, such as the narrative poems “Bordel’nyi mal’chik” [Bordello Boy] and “Svad’ba poeta” [Marriage of a Poet]; the collection of verse *Dlia chernoknizhnykh vdokhnovenii* [For Black Magical Inspiration], authored jointly by Nikolai Nekrasov, Ivan Turgenev, and Aleksandr Druzhinin, who repeatedly invoke Longinov and his work; the long poem “Pop” [The Priest] by Ivan Turgenev; and the collection *Mezhdruzh’iami. Smeshnye i pikantnye shutki domashnykh poetov Rossii* [Between Friends: Amusing and Risque Anecdotes by Homespun Poets of Russia]. Many of these works are literary parodies or social satires and, as such, add little that is new to the tradition of Russian erotic literature.

In sharp contrast to the tradition of erotic poetry, the classic Russian novel of the second half of the nineteenth century portrayed sexual attraction in tortured and tragic terms. In the works of Fyodor Dostoevsky, for example, there is an almost unbridgeable gap between love and sexual desire. The latter often involves power and is exemplified in its most heinous form by the sexual abuse of children. So central is this motif to Dostoevsky’s portrayal of sexual desire that Ieronim Iasinkii wrote a short story entitled “Ispoved” (1888), in which Dostoevsky confesses to his literary nemesis, Ivan Turgenev, that he himself had raped a young girl. The inherent sinfulness of sexual desire was also expressed in works by Lev Tolstoy, such as *Kreitserova sonata* [The Kreutzer Sonata] (1889), the unfinished *D’iavol* [The Devil] (1890), and *Otets Sergii* [Father Sergius] (1898). *The Kreutzer Sonata*, which presents sexual relations as sinful even in marriage, was banned in 1890 from the US mail.

This negative portrayal of erotic desire would be challenged in the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of

the twentieth century, a period referred to as the Silver Age of Russian literature. "In the span of a few decades in Russia," notes Viacheslav Sheshtakov, "more was written about love than in the span of centuries." This was due to a number of general social factors related to Russia's rapid urbanization and modernization, as well as more specific ones, such as the loosening of censorship restrictions following the revolution of 1905. In the realm of philosophy, Russians under the influence of neo-Platonism saw the sexual union of male and female as symbolizing the resolution of fundamental antinomies. For Vladimir Solov'ev, one experienced in true love the reconciliation of the earthly and the divine, the individual and the eternal, symbolized by Sophia, or the universal feminine principle of love between individuals. The concept of Sophia, which would become a central theme among the Russian Symbolist poets, reflects the traditional gender archetypes and the essential gender differences at the heart of much Silver Age philosophy.

Nikolai Berdiaev further developed the ideas of Solov'ev, arguing that "sexual difference is the basic law of life and perhaps the foundation of the world," that erotic energy was the eternal source of creativity, and that the erotic was linked to the beautiful. Vasili Rozanov also recognized the central importance of erotic energy and criticized the Christian tradition for denigrating the sexual. In *Liudi lunnogo sveta* [*People of the Moonlight*] (1911), he argued that Christian culture was characterized by latent homosexuality.

In the realm of literature, the Silver Age witnessed a number of important erotic works produced for both elite and mass audiences. Some of the best-selling boulevard literature includes *Sanin* (1907) by Mikhail Artsybashev, *Kliuchi schast'ia* [*The Keys to Happiness*] (6 vols, 1909–13) by Anastasiia Verbitskaia, *Gnev Dionisa* [*The Wrath of Dionysius*] (1910) by Evdokia Nagrodskaia, and selected short stories by Anatolii Kamenskii, such as "Leda" (1906) and "Chetyre" [The Four] (1907). All these works to some degree questioned traditional gender roles and advocated the de-stigmatizing of sexual desire as part of a challenge to middle-class hypocrisy and prudishness, although *Sanin*, with its ambiguous rape scene and the suggestion of incest, represented perhaps the greatest challenge to contemporary morality (see *Artsybashev, Mikhail*).

Erotic works produced by the more elite literary culture of the time include Mikhail Kuzmin's *Kryl'ia* [Wings] (1906), which is considered to be Russia's first "gay" novel, and Lidiia Zinov'eva-Annibal's "Tridtsat' tri urodov" [Thirty-three Abominations] (1907), which treats the subject of lesbian love. Both works were successes by scandal and went through several printings, although in "Thirty-three Abominations" the lesbian affair of the two main characters is overwrought, theatrical, and ultimately tragic, placing it squarely within the Decadent movement, whereas in *Wings* homosexual desire is depicted in positive terms and is associated with both high art and the natural world. In addition to *Wings*, Kuzmin penned a number of highly sensual and homoerotic verse cycles, such as *Aleksandriiskie pesni* [*Alexandrian Songs*]; *Liubo'v etogo leta* [*A Summer Affair*] (1907); *Prervannanaia povest'* [*A Story Interrupted*] (1907); and *Forel' razbivaet led'* [The Trout Breaks the Ice] (1929); as well as the short stories "Kushetka teti Soni" [Aunt Sonia's Sofa] (1907), a reworking of "Le Sofa" by Crébillon fils; "Priklucheniia Eme Lebefa" [The Adventures of Aime Leboeuf] (1907), an adventure tale set in eighteenth-century France that treats the topic of libertinism; "Devstvennyi Viktor" [Virginal Victor] (1914), the story of a young Byzantine nobleman with a strong homoerotic connection to his manservant; and "Pechka v bane" [The Stove in the Bathhouse] (1926), a series of fourteen short sketches on erotic themes. (See *Kuzmin, Mikhail*.)

Another noteworthy contribution to Russian erotic literature of the Silver Age is Aleksei Remizov's *Chto est' tabak?* [*What Is Tobacco?*] (1908), a blasphemous anticlerical tale recounted by a simple monk. Published in a print run of 25 copies, Remizov's tale is accompanied by three illustrations by Konstantin Somov. Somov would also illustrate *Le livre de la Marquise: Recueil de poesie et de prose*, a collection of erotic French epigrams, poetry, and stories, published in St. Petersburg in 1918 and regarded as a classic in the history of Russian erotic book design.

Although the Soviet government would practice a very restrictive censorship, several important works of erotic literature were published in the early post-revolutionary period. Kuzmin put together a collection of homoerotic poems which were published with delicately salacious

illustrations by Vladimir Milashevskii, entitled *Zanaveshannye kartinki* [*Draped Pictures*] in 1920. The place of publication was listed fallaciously as Amsterdam. This volume, printed in only 307 copies for private sale, would adversely affect the poet's ability to find work. Also published in 1920 was Remizov's blasphemous *Zavetnye skazy* [*Secret Tales*], but his cycle of stories *Russkii Dekameron. Semidnevets* [*The Russian Decameron: Seven Days*] was published in Revel (Tallinn, Finland) in 1921, and *Skazy obez'ian'ego Tsaria Asyki* [*Tales of Tsar Asuka's Ape*] in Berlin in 1922. The *Eroticheskie sonety* [*Erotic Sonnets*] of Abram Efros, influenced by the Symbolist poets, was published in Russia in 1922 in 260 numbered copies.

By the end of the 1920s, it had become virtually impossible to publish erotic literature in Russia. The poems of Nikolai Agnivitsev, such as "Galantnaia istoriia" [A Courty Story], with its ironic, playfully erotic depictions of courtly life, and the stories of Aleksei Tolstoi, such as "V bane" [In the Bathhouse] and "Vozmezdii" [Retribution], were circulated in *samizdat*. The avant-garde poet and children's writer Daniil Kharms (pseudonym of Iuvachev) wrote a number of playful and inventive erotic poems which could not be published in his lifetime. Andrei Platonov parodied official Soviet prudery, in particular the war against masturbation, in his short story "Anti-seksus" written in 1925–26 but not published until decades later (see *Platonov, Andrei*). The short story writer Evgenii Kharitonov and the poet Iurii Trifonov, both openly gay, were also prevented from publishing their work.

The loosening of censorship during *perestroika* and in the post-Communist period radically altered the erotic landscape in Russia. It resulted in, among other things, the introduction of hardcore pornography, the publication or republication of suppressed works of Russian erotic literature, and the (re)introduction of eroticism into contemporary Russian literature. Viktor Erofeev's novel *Zhizn' s idiotom* [*Life with an Idiot*] (1991) is a good example of eroticism used as a vehicle for social and political satire. The novelist Vladimir Sorokin has also made use of erotic elements in his often wildly post-modern works. His novel *Tridtsataia liubov' Mariny* [*The Thirtieth Love of Marina*] (1995) features lesbianism, and his novel *Goluboe salo*

[*Blue Lard*] (1998) depicts, among other things, a homosexual relationship between Khrushchev and Stalin. In 2002 Sorokin was charged with publishing pornography by the youth organization *Udushchie vmeste* [*Going Together*].

While it is true that the overwhelming majority of post-Soviet eroticism is directed at the heterosexual male reader, some works, such as *Drugoi Peterburg* [*The Other Petersburg*] (1998), a campy, gay history of St. Petersburg published by the author under the pseudonym K.K. Rotikov, and *Peterburgskaia eroticheskaia prosa: Odná v posteli* [*Petersburg Erotic Prose: Alone in Bed*] (2001), a collection of short works by Russian women writers, offer hope of greater diversity in Russia's erotic literature.

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## SACHER-MASOCH, LEOPOLD

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### 1836–1895

Austrian novelist, short story writer, playwright, historian, literary critic and journalist

Despite Sacher-Masoch's enormous output and his widespread recognition during the nineteenth century as a hugely talented writer and the pre-eminent literary defender of the pan-Slavic spirit, he is currently mainly remembered as the author whose name was used by the sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing in 1890 to designate a "sexual anomaly". "Masochism", as von Krafft-Ebing called it, has since entered both scientific language and popular parlance as the name for a condition whereby someone derives (sexual) enjoyment from being dominated, humiliated and mistreated. Although Krafft-Ebing indicated that Sacher-Masoch had described this "sexual anomaly" in many of his writings, the text to which most people (including Krafft-Ebing's patients) referred was *Venus im Pelz* (1870). During the twentieth century, *Venus im Pelz* remained the most popular and most widely available of Sacher-Masoch's novellas, to the point where the book acquired cult-status as the original manifesto of

masochism. The book inspired films by Massimo Dallamano (1968), Jesus Franco (1970) and, most recently, by Maartje Seyferth and Victor Nieuwenhuijs (1994). It was also immortalised in a song by the Velvet Underground. In recent years, Sacher-Masoch's life and works have enjoyed renewed scholarly attention, and when Graz was named Cultural Capital of Europe in 2003, the city staged a spectacular "Sacher-Masoch Festival", including art exhibitions, concerts, lectures and performances.

### *Venus im Pelz*, 1870

Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's most famous novella appeared as the fifth section of the first volume of a large-scale fictional work entitled *Das Vermächtnis Kains* [*The Testament of Cain*, or *Cain's Legacy*], which he had conceived, rather naïvely, as a grand narrative cycle of philosophical and ideological contemplations on the sources of human conflict. Of the projected six volumes, Sacher-Masoch would publish only the first (on love) and the second (on property), yet he continued to believe in the possibility of finishing his life's work, even during his final days.

The author's overall intention in the first volume was to paint "the battle of the sexes" in its various forms and circumstances. Drawing on Arthur Schopenhauer's bleak picture of human relationships in *Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung* [*The World as Will and Representation*] (1818), Sacher-Masoch set out to describe, illustrate and demonstrate the fallacies of love, and the impossibility of a sustainable sexuo-erotic desire in the relationship between a man and a woman. In the course of five separate and unrelated novellas, Sacher-Masoch portrayed how each of his (male) protagonists, regardless of the intensity of their feelings and whichever their beliefs about the nature of true love, ends up being disappointed, devastated and often betrayed by the women they are in love with. After so much strife and despair, the book's sixth novella (entitled *Marzella oder das Märchen vom Glück* [*Marcella, or the Fairy-Tale of Happiness*]) was then supposed to show the mechanisms of a steady and happy relationship, which Sacher-Masoch situated in a couple's ability to develop their sex-drive into a higher unity of shared interests. Perhaps expressing his own scepticism concerning the value of his solution, Sacher-Masoch called this story a "fairy-tale," and its philosophical arguments were far less convincing than those he had formulated in the "conflict-section" of the book. In addition, the "fairy-tale" was also generally regarded as the weakest story in the volume from a strictly literary perspective. *Venus im Pelz* thus constitutes the culmination of Sacher-Masoch's narration of the war between the sexes—a struggle which remains all the more pressing and unresolved, here, as its supposedly reformative sequel radically failed to deliver the goods.

*Venus im Pelz* opens with the account of a dream in which the anonymous narrator, after having fallen asleep whilst reading a book by Hegel, plays host to Venus, the Goddess of Love, who is sitting by the fireplace dressed in a huge fur. The conversation turns to the cruelty of love and the host's preference for "a beautiful, voluptuous, and cruel female despot who capriciously changes her favourites", when he is suddenly stirred by his valet, who reminds him that his friend, Herr Severin, is expecting them for tea. Herr Severin is described as "a Galician nobleman and landowner," who is "barely over thirty" yet whose eccentricities have made him into someone who is regarded

as a "dangerous fool", "not just by his neighbors but throughout the district of Kolomea". As the narrator recounts his dream to his friend, he is at one point struck by a painting in Severin's room, which uncannily reproduces part of the scene in his dream: a reclining woman covered in nothing but furs wields a whip in her right hand and has her foot resting on a man who lies on the floor like a slave. When the narrator expresses his surprise at the similarity between his dream (Venus in furs) and the painting (which the narrator presumes must have inspired it), Severin responds that he himself actually dreamt the dream "with open eyes." After alerting his friend to the visual connections between this painting and Titian's *Venus with Mirror*, Severin then presents the narrator with a copy of his journal entitled "Confessions of a Suprasensual Man". Apart from the last paragraphs of Sacher-Masoch's novella, in which the narrator closes the manuscript and asks his friend about the moral of the story, the entire text of the book is then made up of the contents of Severin's recollections, as read by the narrator in Severin's room, whilst the latter "sat down by the fireplace" and "seemed to be dreaming with open eyes."

"Confessions of a Suprasensual Man" tells the story of Severin von Kusiemski, a self-identified "dilettante in life" who summers in the Carpathian mountains contemplating the scenery, endeavouring to read, paint and write poetry, musing about beauty, and worshipping a stone statue of Venus at the back of the garden. His wild infatuation with the statue makes him totally immune to the charms of Ms Wanda von Dunajew, a beautiful widow from Lwów who lives above him. Yet one day Ms Wanda von Dunajew finds the postcard showing Titian's *Venus with Mirror*, carrying a poem and the inscription "Venus in Furs", which her downstairs neighbour had accidentally left in the book that he lent her to read. The lucky find prompts Wanda to introduce herself to Severin and before long they engage in a conversation about Greek sensuality, which encourages Severin to say: "Free, lovely, cheerful, and happy people as the Greeks were can exist only if they have slaves." To his amazement, Wanda replies: "Do you want to be my slave?" Severin admits that he quite likes the idea of being dominated by a beautiful woman, yet Wanda does not seem to take him seriously and simply responds that

she likes his depth and enthusiasm, and could potentially start to love him. Severin, however, is completely smitten and asks her to marry him. Instead of accepting his proposal immediately, Wanda explains that she could only imagine “belonging to one man for life” if it were “a total man, a man who commands . . . respect” and who “subjugates . . . with the power of who and what he is”. And so she suggests to Severin that they take a year to discover whether they are suitable for one another.

Almost immediately, Severin starts to fear that Wanda will leave him and expresses his unconditional love for her. Wanda warns him that she might take advantage of the situation and become despotic, to which Severin responds: “Then be that! Be arrogant, be despotic,” “Make of me what you will, your husband or your slave.” Undeterred and seemingly enjoying the power attributed to her, Wanda immediately confronts Severin with her decision: “You were imprudent enough to leave the choice up to me. This is my choice: I want you to be my slave! I am going to turn you into my plaything.” Severin readily complies and subsequently engages in elaborate digressions concerning the origin of his suprasensuality. During the following weeks, Wanda more or less succeeds in realizing Severin’s sexual fantasy, yet it does not stop Severin from being shattered by the thought that Wanda will leave him. All the while, Wanda is simultaneously warning Severin that she might start to enjoy her despotic act a bit too much, becoming more cruel than he wants her to, and apologizing to him for her inadequacies in meeting his demands, which she nonetheless continues to do out of love for the man she has loved like no other man before. To prove to him that she is serious, she draws up a contract for Severin to sign, in which he agrees that he will be her slave until the moment when she is willing to set him free. Severin is surprised that he has no say in the contract’s clauses, and insists that Wanda at least include that she will never leave him and that she will always wear fur when being cruel. Wanda promises that she will revise the contract accordingly and offer it to Severin for signing “in the right place.”

Unexpectedly, she instructs Severin to prepare for a trip to Italy, during which he will be known as Gregor and act as her servant. In the province’s district seat, Wanda buys a first-class ticket for herself and a third-class one for

Gregor. In Vienna, Wanda gives Gregor’s clothes to the hotel waiters and equips him with a new set of clothes, appropriate for a servant. In Florence, she allocates him to a hotel room without heating and prohibits him to share a meal with her. Yet when she summons him to her room, she reveals how much she loves him and how much she wants to give him her fur so that he can keep warm during the night. “I’m more in love with you than ever”, says Severin, to which Wanda replies: “So you love me when I’m cruel. . . “Go away! You bore me! Don’t you hear?” Eventually, Wanda decides to rent a villa on the banks of the Arno. Reserving the entire second floor for herself, she allocates Gregor to one room on the ground floor, nicely equipped with a fireplace. Shortly after settling in, Wanda gives Gregor the contract for signing. Although stipulating that Wanda will always wear fur when being cruel, the contract does not say that she will never leave Gregor and is also accompanied by a second document, in which Severin details his decision to commit suicide, which effectively gives Wanda the opportunity to kill him when she wants to. Wanda and Severin both sign the contract, and as if to celebrate the occasion she calls in three African women, orders them to tie Severin to a column, and proceeds to whip him. During the following month, Gregor is forced to work in the garden, while Wanda is being entertained by a score of admirers. Severin suffers terribly: “Tears came to my eyes; I felt how deeply she had degraded me—so deeply that she didn’t even think it worthwhile torturing me, mistreating me.” Wanda, for her part, confesses to Severin during a moment of intimacy that she is only doing it to provoke him and to ensure that she does not lose him. And so she explains that she is compelled to take a lover. When a young German painter moves in, she orders him to paint her stretched out on velvet cushions, only dressed in furs, clutching a whip and with one foot resting on the submissive body of Gregor at her feet. The painter decides to call the painting “Venus in Furs.”

One day, Wanda apparently falls in love with a handsome Greek. Severin implores Wanda not to give in to her desire, yet she ignores his plea and employs him as a go-between in her seduction ritual of the “arrogant despot.” Finally, Severin decides that he has had enough and leaves the villa. Yet he soon discovers that even



if he had the money to go somewhere, he wouldn't know where to go. He tries to commit suicide by jumping into the Arno, yet he fails because the image of Wanda appears above the surface of the water and beckons him back. At the villa, Wanda accepts him with utter disdain, yet Severin notices how Wanda and the Greek seem to be involved in an acrimonious argument. When Severin confronts her, she confesses that they had been arguing about him and that the Greek had been violently jealous. Severin and Wanda in turn start to argue and at one point Severin grabs her by the wrist, throws her to the floor and threatens to kill her if she decides to marry the Greek. Wanda replies: "You appeal to me like this," "Now you're a man, and I know at this moment that I still love you." A moment later, she explains to him "that everything was just a game, just make-believe." Wanda accepts to be Severin's wife and they start preparing their departure from Florence. The next day, Wanda is stretched out on the ottoman in her bedroom, contemplating her love for Severin, when she suddenly offers to tie him up in order to see him "truly in love." Severin is completely entranced and asks her about the whip. "So you absolutely want to get whipped?" asks Wanda. "Yes," says Severin. "Then whip him!" she cries. Enters the Greek, who gives Severin the most violent whipping of his life. As he lies there bleeding in his ropes, Wanda and the Greek take their leave from the villa. More than three years later, long after Severin has been "cured" from his suprasensual desires, Severin receives a letter from Wanda in which she concedes that she had been truly in love with him, but that her love had been "smothered" by his "fantastic surrender." Referring to the disastrous events at the villa, she ends with the words: "I hope that you were healed under my whip; the therapy was cruel but radical. To remind you of that time and the woman who passionately loved you, I am sending you the portrait painted by the poor German."

If *Venus im Pelz* has succeeded in stirring and consolidating the imagination of many a "masochist", as Krafft-Ebing learnt from his patients and as Sacher-Masoch himself was eager to confirm, then the novella is definitely more than a treatise of sexual cruelty and a specialised sample of erotic literature. Both in style and conception, the book stands out amongst the

cornucopia of flagellation books that were produced at the end of the nineteenth century, because it delves into the extraordinary complexity of power (im)balances within human sexual relationships and demonstrates the tragic fate of all attempts at bringing these to a satisfactory resolution. *Venus im Pelz* also plays magnificently on the constant blurring of fact and fiction, reality and semblance, in the realm of love and sexuality. Severin is an idealist who derives pleasure from transforming a woman he loves into the desirable figure of a cruel despot who occupies the centre stage of his sexual fantasy. For as long as she resists and he does not succeed in realising his "dream", he suffers unbearably, yet he simultaneously suffers from the possibility that his fantasy is realised into a scene over which he no longer has any control. Severin desires Wanda for as long as she is desirable as a compliant object, yet desire turns into anxiety when she shows no desire at all to satisfy his desire, and equally when she seemingly gives up on responding to his desire by showing a desire of her own.

The multi-layered structures and constantly shifting perspectives of *Venus im Pelz* are further complicated by the peculiar relationship between the contents of the novella and certain events in Sacher-Masoch's own life. It is generally accepted that "Confessions of a Suprasensual Man", the book within the book, was based on Sacher-Masoch's relationship with Fanny Pistor, who called herself Baroness Bogdanoff and who had allegedly contacted the author after reading his novel *Die geschiedene Frau* [*The Divorced Woman*] (1869), which was in itself based on his earlier affair with Anna von Kottowitz-Wasserzieher. In *Die geschiedene Frau*, the unhappy Anna von Kossow tells Sacher-Masoch about her passionate affair with a young writer called Julian von Romaschkan, who had given her a copy of his book *Venus im Pelz*, after which Anna had tried to impersonate its heroine Wanda. Apparently inflamed by this story, Fanny Pistor and Sacher-Masoch started their own relationship in 1869, which was also regulated through the terms of a sexual contract, similar to that which is signed by Wanda and Severin in *Venus im Pelz*. With Fanny Pistor, Sacher-Masoch travelled to Italy as her servant Gregor and during the (contractually determined) time of the relationship he wrote *Venus im Pelz*. Yet when the book was published, he

was in turn contacted by Aurora Rümelin, who presented herself to him as Wanda von Dunajew, and who would subsequently engage in a relationship with the author along the lines and conditions set out in the book. With Sacher-Masoch, it is thus very difficult to distinguish between fact and fiction, reality and fantasy, not only within the narrative space of a novella, but also within the wider framework of the author's life and works. Through his fiction, Sacher-Masoch narrated and gave shape to crucial events in his love-life, yet through his love-life he simultaneously validated and elaborated on crucial events in his fictional world.

### Biography

Leopold Ritter von Sacher-Masoch was born on 27 January 1836 in the city of Lwów (currently in Ukraine, but then known as Lemberg and part of the Galician province of the Austro-Hungarian Empire) as the eldest son of the city's police commissioner. In 1848, the family moved to Prague, where he studied law, history, philosophy and mathematics, and developed an interest in theatre. The family left Prague for Graz in 1853, where he obtained a degree in law in 1855 and was appointed "Privat-dozent" in German history at the University of Graz one year later. He published his first literary work in 1858, which prompted him to give up his academic career and become a full-time writer. Between 1858 and 1895, Sacher-Masoch published some eighty volumes of fiction, historical studies and criticism, and was widely regarded as one of the most important European writers. In 1873 he married Aurora von Rümelin, who had contacted the author after reading his novella *Venus im Pelz* [*Venus in Furs*], and who adopted the identity and persona of Wanda, after the name of its cruel heroine. In 1881, Sacher-Masoch and his family left Austria for Germany, so that he could escape four days of imprisonment as a penalty received for his slanderous portrayal of a renowned publisher in one of his writings, and they settled in Leipzig. Two years later he received the "légion d'honneur" from the French government for his contributions to literature. At the end of January 1883, Sacher-Masoch separated from Aurora Rümelin and went to live with his secretary and mistress Hulda Meister, whom he subsequently also married, in the German town of Lindheim,

near Frankfurt am Main. During these years, Sacher-Masoch's reputation as a literary genius gradually dwindled into that of an inferior pulp-author and pornographer. He died on 9 March 1895.

DANY NOBUS

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# SADE, MARQUIS DE

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1740–1814

French novelist, dramatist and philosopher

Donatien-Alphonse-François de Sade (1740–1814) was the author of a large number of novels (many of which are perfectly respectable), of plays (all conventional in style and content), journals, letters, and a few essays, but those writings on which the Marquis's sulphurous reputation rests, and which have been of particular interest to critics as much as to the general reader are the four "libertine" novels composed over a 12-year period from 1785 to 1797. The essential interest of Sade's writing lies less in its literary qualities (although these are certainly not lacking), than in its transgressive power generating the relentless movement of the narrative towards excess that underpins all Sadean eroticism. The so-called "libertine" or "obscene" novels – *The 120 Days of Sodom*, *Justine*, *Philosophy in the Boudoir* and *Juliette* – are among the most excessive works of erotic fiction ever composed. The novels explore the murkier depths of human sexuality, shunned by earlier writers of erotica: coprophilia, and of course, the practice of sexual sadism that bears his name, are probably the most extreme.

Sade's libertine fiction is on one important level the expression of his philosophy, a combination of atheistic materialism and the utopian vision of total sexual freedom. His atheism was

heavily influenced by the work of two materialist philosophers of the Enlightenment: La Mettrie's *L'Homme Machine*, published in 1748, and d'Holbach's *Système de la nature*, which appeared in 1770. Materialism rejected belief in a soul or afterlife, reducing everything in the universe to the physical organization of matter. According to La Mettrie, scientific observation and experiment are the only means by which human beings can be defined, and this method tells us that Man is quite simply a machine, subject to the laws of motion like any mechanism of eighteenth century science. The sole purpose of existence, in this scheme of things, is pleasure – a doctrine espoused with relish by so many of Sade's libertine characters. Baron d'Holbach views the human being as a collection of atoms, so that even the conscience has a material origin, acquired from our education and experience. d'Holbach's system does not, therefore, allow for free will, since all our decisions are determined by our personal interest. For d'Holbach, then, all morality is a matter of social utility or pragmatism. Sade described *Système de la nature* as the true basis of his philosophy and a book he would be prepared to die for, and indeed, lifted whole passages from it practically verbatim to place in the mouths of his protagonists, as they railed against the various dogmas of religion.

Although these writers furnished Sade with the essentials of his thinking, and he certainly plagiarised from them liberally, it is also possible to identify features of his philosophy that are peculiarly his own. The most important of these is his conviction that every human being is utterly alone. This “isolisme” helps to explain the lack of expression in his work of any fraternal feeling: if we are fundamentally cut off from all others, then our only motivation can be self-interest. Sade wants to abolish the social, not merely in the form of the *ancien régime* society that he constantly attacks, but in the guise of any society worthy of that name, that is, one based on a code of ethics which protects the individual while observing what Rousseau called “the general will”.

The self-interest at the heart of Sade’s thinking, which makes possible the unfeeling exploitation of others, is justified because it is “natural”. Since nature treats us all equally, and so does not allow for any special cases, we are free to dominate others; indeed, in doing so, we are conforming to nature’s wishes, expressed in the universal “law of the jungle”, according to which the strong survive at the expense of the weak. All laws are therefore inimical to nature’s plan, since they are designed to protect the weak, and neither God nor morality has any meaning in a universe governed entirely by natural forces. Nature in fact needs crime in order to preserve a necessary balance (for instance, for the purposes of population control). Any absolute distinction between good and evil breaks down because the preservation of this natural equilibrium will have different requirements in different societies and at different times. There are thus no moral absolutes, only culturally and temporally relative values. On the shifting sands of Sade’s moral universe, reason alone is Man’s guide. As the seat of prejudice, emotion can never be trusted. On the other hand, reason can only operate on the basis of physical sensations. Taking materialism to its logical extreme, Sade locates reason in the body, and the Sadean body being entirely subordinated to sexual desires, only these desires make any sense.

The laws of Nature are the only laws to which we are subject, and these do not obey any ordering intelligence – Nature is blind. It is this dependency on forces that are arbitrary but also unpredictable that elicits an ambivalent response from the Sadean hero. While, on the one hand,

Nature justifies all his crimes (which in fact cease to be crimes because they are simply necessary to the natural order), Nature completely lacks either rationale or compassion, either reason or emotion. In the psychoanalytic perspective of Melanie Klein, Nature is an absent mother, a “bad breast”, stirring up feelings of longing but also of resentment and hatred, and prompting a power-struggle by the child against its parent. Like the Kleinian infant, Sadean Man thus experiences an intense desire to destroy the absent and yet all powerful and all nurturing maternal breast that Nature represents to him. But Nature is infinite, and if Man is to best Nature, then he too must achieve the power and status of infinity. This quest for infinity, for a transcendence that will challenge mother nature’s monopoly on power is a dominant and recurring theme in the Sadean text, especially in the four libertine novels for which Sade is best known and which now deserve our close attention.

### *The 120 Days of Sodom*

*The 120 Days* is often considered as Sade’s final work, as the peak of a steep curve of ever more pornographic writing. This impression is apparently confirmed by the Introduction to the work, in which the narrator proudly describes his narrative as “the most impure tale that has ever been told since our world began”. It was in fact Sade’s first long work of fiction. Its unfinished nature perhaps fuels this particular misapprehension, and the dramatic circumstances surrounding its composition and eventual loss have also contributed to the creation of the work’s mythical status. Sade began it in prison on 22 October 1785, writing in microscopic handwriting on long narrow roles of paper that he glued together into a roll that was eventually 14.7 metres (49 feet) long, kept hidden in a hole in the wall of his cell in the Bastille. He wrote every evening after dinner for three hours or more in the paradoxically named Tower of Liberty where his cell was located, taking only 37 days to produce a novel-length draft of the first of four sections and detailed notes for the remaining three. When Sade was suddenly moved from the Bastille ten days before it was stormed during the Revolution of 1789, he became separated from this rudimentary manuscript and never saw it again. When the Bastille was taken, the work was discovered and found its way into the hands of the

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Villeneuve-Trans family, remaining in their possession until its sale in around 1900 to a German collector. In 1904, the German psychiatrist, Dr Iwan Bloch, published a limited edition of 180 copies under the pseudonym of Eugen Dühren. Maurice Heine, the father of modern Sade studies, acquired the manuscript in 1929 on behalf of Viscount Charles de Noailles, and provided a much revised version in the early 1930s – also in a limited print-run of fewer than 400 copies, reserved for the members of the *Société du Roman Philosophique*. Both of these early editions were aimed at those doctors and scientists working in the new field of sexology who saw the novel as providing the first-known encyclopedia of sexual aberrations, predating the work of Freud and Krafft-Ebing by more than a century.

Sade's own admission that he wept tears of blood at the loss of the work has also probably helped to give the impression that this was his most important and therefore most mature undertaking. Although his first and not his last work, however, the *120 Days* is for many, quite simply the foundation-stone of the Sadean edifice, containing many of the features that would become characteristic of his novel-writing: a passionate concern with order and categorization, a preoccupation with numbers, the uniquely Sadean rhythm of orgy following dissertation or narrative, of practice following theory, and above all, the encyclopedic mission to “say all” in the area of human sexuality. The work represents an audacious attempt to catalogue all known sexual perversions (or “passions”, as Sade called them), and in both conception and form clearly seems inspired by Boccaccio's *Decameron*.

Four libertines have planned an orgy that is scheduled to last 120 days or four months, during which they will hear about and themselves enact 600 “passions” or perversions at the rate of 150 per month or five per day. These passions will be narrated by four story-tellers, one for each month and for a different class of perversion, which are to be illustrated by “case-histories” of an increasingly violent nature, from the “simple passions” of November via the “passions de seconde classe ou double” of December, and the “passions de troisième classe ou criminelles” of January, to the “passions meurtières ou de quatrième classe” of February. Sade in fact only completed Part 1, but wrote detailed notes for the remaining three parts.

Sade's aim was to cover all conceivable sexual manias, in other words, to produce a veritable encyclopedia of sex, in which incest, coprophilia, torture, and murder are given pride of place.

The work is set in the first decade of the 18th century during the last years of the reign of Louis XIV. The novel's four libertines are wealthy enough to embark on a murderous three-month orgy thanks to the huge profits they have made from Louis XIV's expansionist wars. As in all of Sade's narratives, the violence is framed by a violent historical context, one sufficiently long ago to be “just outside the collective memory of the writer's contemporaries”, as Joan De Jean puts it, but nevertheless a past not too distant to suggest an underlying critique of the entire contemporary period, that is, of a century whose rulers all share some responsibility for the impoverishment and ruin of both the Sade family and the French nation. In a negative image of Rousseau's fraternal utopia, the libertines form a pact cemented by their wealth and influence. Right from the start, Sade distances himself from his characters, holding up a mirror to a corrupt society in which money is power. The four main characters and orchestrators of the four-month orgy, which forms the main subject-matter of the novel, represent the four sources of authority and power in 18th-century France (the nobility, the Church, the courts and high finance), and their largely negative portrayal reinforces the impression gained by the reader in the opening lines that one of Sade's aims is political satire. The book presents the reader with a gallery of social types as physically and morally unattractive as the four libertines: bankers, lawyers, magistrates, priests, courtiers, landowners, military officers, all old, rich and powerful, they represent a wide cross-section of the ruling classes, whom Sade had every reason to hate. In this work, if not in Sade's later novels, libertinage is certainly not painted in seductive colours.

The orgy takes place in a remote castle, the château of Silling, located on a high peak in the depths of the Black Forest. Sade emphasises Silling's total inaccessibility, “a remote and isolated retreat, as if silence, distance, and stillness were libertinage's potent vehicles”. Silling offers no hope of rescue or survival to those unfortunates captive within its impenetrable walls, and womb-like security to their nefarious captors. Completely cut off from the outside world for the four winter months of their protracted orgy, the

main characters realise a universal unconscious fantasy of unlimited power over others. In this more than any other of his works, Sade was creating the fantasy of total licence as an antidote to the restraint of his own circumstances. Writing in his cell in the Bastille each evening, Sade created an exaggerated libertine utopia in his unfettered imagination to make up for the physical freedom he had lost. This utopia of total sexual and ethical licence is indeed only possible in the imaginary world conceived in and framed by prison walls. In this sense, the *120 Days* may be, in De Jean's words, "the ultimate work of prison literature".

### Philosophy in the Boudoir

Unlike the *120 Days*, *La Philosophie dans le boudoir* (*Philosophy in the Boudoir*) was composed during Sade's extended period of freedom during the 1790s, and its upbeat tone reflects this. Published in 1795, the work fizzles with self-confidence, and is by far the most light-hearted (some have called it the least cruel) of his libertine works. The language is certainly obscene and there are moments of sadism, but these features are counterbalanced by a tongue-in-cheek and often self-reflexive humour that is both verbal and physical. The work also operates on a number of complex levels – dramatic dialogue, philosophical and political polemic, literary parody, Chaucerian farce – which make it Sade's most innovative and, at the same time, most accessible piece of writing.

At one important level, the work reads as a savagely ironic denunciation of Robespierre's "virtuous republic", founded on repression and the guillotine. *Philosophy in the Boudoir* was begun in 1794 during Sade's confinement in the Picpus sanatorium, in a room from which he could see the guillotine and its operations. (It had by now been moved from the Place de la Concorde because of complaints about the smell of blood). Its victims were even buried in the grounds of the sanatorium, "1,800 in thirty-five days", and Sade's letters leave little doubt that the horror of this spectacle marked him profoundly.

Not surprisingly, then, *Philosophy in the Boudoir* is strongly satirical in character and conception, in appearing to justify vice and, above all, murder, on the grounds that such things are good for a republic. Set sometime

between 1789 and 1793, the work positions itself unambiguously in the middle of the French Revolution, and can be read as a powerful critique of its aims and methods. *Français, encore un effort, si vous voulez être Républicains* [*Frenchmen, One More Effort if You Wish to Become Republicans*], a polemical pamphlet intercalated in the middle of the work, is itself, on one level, a pastiche of the many political and philosophical "libelles" or underground pamphlets that circulated during the revolutionary period. But the work's main impact has always been as sexual pedagogy. Here, Sade was almost certainly influenced by two earlier models. The first of these was *L'École des Filles*, produced by Michel Millot and Jean l'Ange in 1665. Published in England in 1688 as *The School of Venus*, this relatively innocent tale concerns the sexual education of a young girl by her older female cousin. The second, Nicolas Chorier's more sexually explicit *L'Académie des dames* of about 1660, consists of a number of dialogues in which one young woman instructs another in the art of love-making. The similarly dialogic form of *Philosophy in the Boudoir* is obviously a development of Chorier's technique.

The title itself seems to sum up the whole Sadean project, which is to bring the body, and in particular the female body, back into philosophy. The work's subtitle, "or the immoral teachers", reflects the author's growing boldness at this time, explicitly acknowledging its immoral content. Suggesting its status as possibly the first modern work of sex-education for young girls, the subtitle also implies the legitimization of bodily desires within an accepted framework of instruction – the school classroom – while the adjective "immoral" undermines this legitimacy, announcing with titular pride the illicit pleasures associated with the sexual corruption of innocence. The binarism of both title and subtitle, then, encapsulate the two dominant impulses in Sade: the intellectual and the erotic, the mind and the body, the proselytising and the transgressive.

The actors of this obscene tragicomedy are all fit, healthy and, above all, young – Dolmancé at 36 is the eldest of the whole group. Eugénie, whose sexual initiation is the pretext for the party, is a delicious young virgin of 15 (her father, himself a well-known libertine and one of the richest merchants of Paris, has given permission for all that both daughter and mother

are to undergo). The bisexual Madame de Saint-Ange, who will play a leading role in Eugénie's debauchery, is 26. Her brother, the Chevalier de Mirval, is at 20 the youngest of the libertines, and his youthful vigour seems emblematic of a sexual athleticism, which is also enhanced by the extraordinary size of his penis: "Oh, dearest friend, what a monstrous member!... I can scarcely get my hand around it!" cries Eugénie on seeing it for the first time. He prefers women, but can be persuaded to engage in sodomy with "an agreeable man" like Dolmancé. In addition to these five principals, there are two minor characters: Augustin, a young gardener of "about eighteen or twenty", who is even more impressively endowed than the Chevalier, his member measuring 14 inches in length and having a circumference of eight and an half, and Lapierre, Dolmancé's similarly well equipped but syphilitic valet.

Seven actors who, in the course of seven "dialogues" or scenes, will reenact Christianity's founding myth, inverting its central message, as the Eve-like Eugénie's rejection of God and her passage from sexual innocence to sexual knowledge are celebrated rather than lamented. It is Eugénie's pious mother, Madame de Mistival, not the sacrilegious and debauched daughter, who is finally expelled from this perverse paradise of the body. Madame de Mistival's expulsion follows a gruesome scene of black comedy in which Eugénie is instrumental in punishing her mother for her prudishness by infecting her with venereal disease and sewing up her vagina.

A paradisiacal space of sexual freedom for women (if not for mothers) as well as for men, the boudoir becomes a kind of model state, and like all states, it has to have a constitution, embedded in philosophical thought: hence the pamphlet, *Frenchmen, One More Effort if You Wish to Become Republicans*, whose hundred or so pages form the centrepiece of the work. Dolmancé, who just happens to have bought this pamphlet, hot off the press, at the Palais de l'Égalité, reads it out in response to a question from Eugénie about whether morals are necessary to government.

The pamphlet temporarily suspends the fiction of the dramatic dialogues and takes us outside the text, so to speak, and into the politics of the French Revolution. This part of Sade's text, at least, is firmly rooted in its historical context. In a sense, the insertion of the pamphlet into an

anonymously published work of fiction provides a further protective barrier against discovery. Sade is thus able to express his views on topical ideas and events from a position of relative safety.

In spite of its final scene, *Philosophy* is probably the most optimistic of Sade's libertine works. Like its mythical model, the libertines' own Eden is a "delightful boudoir", a privileged and almost timeless space isolated from the outside world, but unlike the Christian version, the joys associated with it are physical, not spiritual. The only serpent is Augustin's delightfully monstrous penis and Eugénie and her mentors display an awareness of their nudity that is completely without shame.

### *Justine*

There are no fewer than three separate versions of *Justine*, which grew from a mere infant text of 138 pages, to mature some ten years later as a triple-X rated adult entertainment of more than a thousand. The original version, *Les Infortunes de la vertu* [*The Misfortunes of Virtue*], not so much a novel as a short story with satirical aims (critics describe it as a "conte philosophique" or "philosophical tale"), was composed in 15 days in the Bastille in 1787. Largely conventional in style, and lacking any characteristics that might now be termed obscene, this short, snappy novella could safely be recommended nowadays to most maiden aunts. Some critics have found this first draft of Sade's tale of virtue despoiled to contain an intensity and clarity of vision absent from the two subsequent versions, but it was destined never to reach the reading public in the author's lifetime. The unpublished *conte* was, nevertheless, to grow into the novel-length, *Justine; ou, Les Malheurs de la vertu* [*Justine; or, Good Conduct Well Chastised*] which appeared in 1791, a year after the author's release from Charenton. Sade claimed that money problems and editorial pressure had forced him to write a "spicy" bestseller. The editor must have been delighted with the result. *Les Malheurs* was considerably more violent and sexually explicit than *Les Infortunes*, and sold so well that five further editions had to be printed in the space of ten years. While the public's appetite for Sade's first published work was evidently insatiable, critical responses of the time were mixed. An article of 27 September 1792 praises the author's "rich

and brilliant” imagination, while exhorting young people to “avoid this dangerous book” and advising even “more mature” men to read it “in order to see to what insanities human imagination can lead”, but then to “throw it in the fire”.

In spite of the popular success of *Les Malheurs*, Sade’s financial affairs remained in the doldrums. Maurice Lever tells us that *Justine* did not make its author any money, nor did any of his other books. It did however achieve a *succès de scandale*. This apparent success and the writer’s continued impecuniousness doubtless provided sufficient incentive for the composition of the much extended and more openly obscene final version of Justine’s adventures, entitled *La nouvelle Justine; ou, Les Malheurs de la vertu* [*The New Justine*], which appeared six years later in 1797 in a ten-volume edition that also included *L’Histoire de Juliette*. *La nouvelle Justine* is, in a number of important respects, significantly different from the two earlier versions. According to Rétif de la Bretonne and Sébastien Mercier, writing at the time, sales were brisk among the booksellers of the Palais Royal, and it was more than a year before the authorities began to seize copies. Gradually, however, the work and its author were systematically hunted down. Sade was accused of having written “l’infâme *Justine*” in a press article that appeared in 1800, and despite his vigorous denials, he was eventually arrested the following year, together with his publisher, Nicolas Massé, for the authorship of these “dangerous” and “detestable” works, and detained without trial at the “maison de santé de Charenton” until his death in 1814.

In a sense, then, Sade fell victim to his own creation. Perhaps all along, as his narrative became increasingly bolder, more challenging to the censor, the Marquis was unconsciously driven to a point of coincidence with his fictional heroine, for both author and character are acutely aware of their own status as victim. After all, it was not Juliette, but Justine that preoccupied him for more than ten years of his own less than happy existence to the point of composing three separate versions of her woeful tale. Such, in fact, was the association of Sade with his less fortunate heroine that he would be known throughout the 19th century as the author, not of *Juliette* but of *Justine*. This identification of the writer with his ingenuous creation

outside of the text can perhaps be explained by what some have seen as an unconscious authorial identification on psychological and emotional levels with the character herself. How justified are we in positing such an identification between author and character? In the first-person narratives of *Les Infortunes* and *Les Malheurs*, the young woman often appears to speak with her creator’s voice. Sade’s appreciation of feminine beauty, for example, certainly shows itself in Justine’s all too enthusiastic evocation of the beauty of other young women. There is, moreover, a marked discrepancy in the first two versions between the stereotypes of Justine’s initial portrait and the more positive ways in which, through her own words and actions, she is subsequently portrayed.

From the outset, Justine appears to us as a passive creature, destined for martyrdom. A devout young girl of 12 at the beginning of her remarkable odyssey, her religious faith remains implausibly unshaken by the unending catalogue of disasters that befall her throughout her relatively short and miserable existence.

In a few lines at the start of the narrative, Sade deftly sketches the charm of this “delicious” young creature in terms of what we would now consider to be a stereotype of feminine beauty (big blue eyes, teeth of ivory, lovely blond hair). For the modern reader, the same physical features make up another stereotype – the dumb blonde – which is reinforced here by character traits connoting “girlishness” and vulnerability (ingenuousness, sensitivity, naivety). Like her beauty, these traits can be also read on her physiognomy, at the very surface of her body: modesty, delicacy, shyness, and above all, the “look of a virgin”. In fact, in line with her creator’s materialist thinking, physique and temperament become one in Justine, naivety is graceful, vulnerability attractive, sexual innocence seductive. Justine is the first “girly girl”, the young ingénue so beloved of 19th- and 20th-century theatre and film, a blonde whose dumbness here means ignorance of sexuality, an essential prerequisite of the female victim. Justine’s physical appearance immediately suggests that this is the part she will play: in Sade’s terms, she is primed to be a victim of her own virtue (which will prevent her from enjoying the sexual attentions forced upon her, but which more importantly will determine the very nature of her attraction for the men and women who abuse



her). She will also be the victim of the religious and social prejudices of a society that places a high value on the status of virginity, and in so doing, creates a taboo that cries out to be transgressed. Innocence, virtue, beauty are all synonymous in Justine, who initially at least is nothing more than a cluster of nouns and adjectives. She is simply, we are told, the embodiment of virginal innocence and sensibility, having a potentially erotic vulnerability, “an ingenuousness, a candor that were to cause her to tumble into not a few pitfalls” (*Good Conduct*, p. 459). A construct of Platonic ideals expressed nonplatonically in physical terms, Justine exists in abstraction only, as an object promised to the reader’s sexual curiosity – until the narrative brings her to life, that is.

When both parents die, Justine and her 15-year-old sister, Juliette are left penniless orphans. Juliette’s only response is the pleasure of being free. Even if we had not already been told at the beginning of the narrative of the fortune her beauty will help her to amass, we would know from this display of lack of feeling that, far from being a victim, the insensitive and self-serving Juliette will be one of life’s winners. Not so the “sad and miserable Justine”.

Justine’s narrative follows more or less the same pattern in all three versions, although in the second and especially the third versions events are narrated in considerably more detail and there are some new episodes and characters. For a thumb-nail sketch of Justine’s tale up until her reunion with her sister, Juliette (or Madame de Lorsange, as she is known by then), the reader is referred to the young woman’s own summary of her wretched life, told to her sister, Juliette and her lover, as she waits to be hanged for a crime she did not commit.

In the first two versions, when she finishes her sad tale, Justine is recognized by her sister Juliette, whose rich and powerful lover succeeds in rescuing her from the gallows, and she goes to live with them in their château. Fate, however, cruelly cuts short Justine’s life and her newfound happiness. In a savage metaphor for the sheer perversity of providence, she is finally split asunder by a thunderbolt during a violent storm. The evolution of this scene and its repercussions in the narrative reflects both the increasingly transgressive sexualization of *Justine* from one version to the next and, perhaps also, the author’s changing attitude to his heroine. In

*Les Infortunes*, the bolt enters her right breast and comes out through her mouth, whereas in *Les Malheurs* the bolt exits through her abdomen and in *La nouvelle Justine* through her vagina. Furthermore, in the final version, in which there is no happy reunion, Justine’s horrific death is not so much an accident, as an event engineered by Juliette and her libertine friends, who sadistically drive her outside as the storm reaches its peak.

The common theme of all three narratives is that the heroine’s unreasonable attachment to virtue (and in particular, to her virginity) attract nothing but misfortune, as she is exploited and abused physically and sexually by almost everyone she encounters, and is even framed for crimes of theft and murder. Like Voltaire’s *Candide*, which Sade had almost certainly read, *Justine* was originally conceived as a satire, attacking the corruption of contemporary institutions, including the judiciary, banking, the bourgeois-dominated world of finances in general, and above all the Catholic Church, with divine providence the principal religious target. In these respects, Sade’s *conte* is decidedly Voltairian, but where Voltaire never quite found a satisfactory solution to the problem of physical and moral evil, other than to posit the totally implausible concept of an indifferent God, Sade’s libertines dismiss belief in a deity altogether, and draw somewhat different conclusions from the observation, familiar to *Candide*, that the virtuous perish while the wicked survive. *Candide* and his fellow truth-seekers do eventually find a kind of contentment in the simple virtue of hard work. In contrast, Justine is repeatedly reminded of what the author-narrator had told the reader on the very first page: that “in an entirely corrupted age, the safest course is to follow along after the others” (*Good Conduct*). Rousseau’s idealistic faith in Man’s natural goodness is directly challenged in a dissertation delivered to Justine by Roland the counterfeiter: the only truth is the law of the jungle according to which the strong not only survive but flourish at the expense of the weak. In the original version, even Justine herself comes to the conclusion on encountering the monstrous counterfeiter that “Man is naturally wicked”. The note of optimism on which *Candide* ends is completely absent from the far bleaker vision of life and death that closes *Justine*.

### *The Story of Juliette*

Sade's most violent and most shocking complete work, the marathon picaresque novel, *The Story of Juliette* was published between 1798 and 1801, following the appearance in 1797 of its companion, *The New Justine*.

*Juliette* and *The New Justine* provide the reader with an unadulterated account of Man's inhumanity to Man, and in this sense are the cynical product of their author's personal and painful experience of the Terror and its evil. Geoffrey Gorer called *Juliette* "the final vomiting of de Sade's disgust and disappointment". As Gorer's observation implies, the novel represents a savage attack on the corruption of 18th-century French society, in which money is power, and power facilitates the unrestrained pursuit of pleasure. *Juliette* can also be read, of course, as the barely unconscious expression of a desire for such unfettered freedom – a utopian vision of power that is almost divine in its totality: "Oh, my love" cries the libertine, Saint-Fond to Juliette, "how delicious are our crimes when impunity veils them, when duty itself prescribes them. How divine it is to swim in gold and, as one reckons up one's wealth, to be able to say, here are the means to every black deed, to every pleasure; with this, all my wishes can be made to come true, all my fancies can be satisfied; no woman will resist me, none of my desires will fail of realization, my wealth will procure amendments in the law itself, and I'll be despot without let or hindrance."

Only the leisured upper classes could afford to use sex recreationally as well as procreationally, and only the political masters of a land could indulge with impunity in a perverse sexuality that favoured rape and murder, manipulating the justice system for their own ends. More generally, *Juliette* has been read as an implicit indictment of male sexuality as utterly selfish, intrinsically violent and fundamentally tyrannical, and yet, paradoxically (or so it seems), Sade chooses a female rather than a male character as the central focus of this sexual tyranny. Indeed, the novel is dominated by the activities of a number of violent and depraved *femmes fatales*.

Sade's longest novel is scandalously provocative with regard to the role and status of women, as well as to a whole range of moral and philosophical issues, and there is no doubt that many will continue to find both the ideas contained within its pages and its outright obscenity unpalatable.

On the other hand, it is a work of breath-taking geographical and historical scope and of remarkable scholarship, replete with learned allusions and references and detailed philosophical arguments. But at the simple story level, too, the novel's sheer nervous energy carries the reader along with its heroine as she races through a Europe ruled by sexual deviants and ruthless megalomaniacs. Among its hundreds of characters, we encounter lascivious monarchs and psychotic politicians, atheistic clerics and man-hating lesbians, giants and sorcerers, vamps and virgins. The entirely fictional rub shoulders with the verifiably historical; the real blends with the surreal (a black mass at the Vatican, the giant Minski's "human" furniture) to produce a work of layered complexity. Sade's *Juliette* can be read on many levels: as an adult fairy-tale and a manual of sexology, as a political and philosophical satire and a Gothic horror, as an Italian travelogue and an 18th-century road movie, above all, perhaps, as a terrifying journey into the murkier depths of human eroticism. On all of these levels, *Juliette* goes much further than *Justine*. The narrative moves faster, the crimes are greater, and the reader feels swept along from one location to another to encounter ever more extreme situations and behaviour.

Juliette, Justine's beautiful but wicked elder sister, is her opposite in every way. Like her sister Justine, her character and temperament are initially expressed in physical terms: not blond, but brunette, with eyes not credulously blue but dark and "prodigiously expressive"; not timid but spirited, not naive but incredulous, not innocent, but worldly wise thanks to the best possible education that a father's untimely ruin will deny her younger sister:

(...) she was brought up (...) in one of the best convents in Paris where, until the age of 15, she was never denied good counsel or teachers nor good books or talents. (*The Misfortunes of Virtue*)

She has, in fact, much in common with Eugénie, the mother-hating apprentice libertine of *Philosophy in the Boudoir*. Fifteen years old when she and Justine are orphaned, she is Eugénie let out of the boudoir into the great, mad, bad world. Already awakened to the pleasures of the body as well as to its power by the mother superior of the convent where the two sisters had resided before their father's financial ruin, she immediately sets out to make her living as a

prostitute, becoming the mistress of two extremely dangerous libertines, Noircueil and Saint-Fond. The latter is a government minister who abuses his position to line his pockets and to evade the consequences of the rapes and lust-murders that he and his associates regularly commit. Under the protection of these two monsters, she embarks with her lesbian lover, the equally bloodthirsty Clairwil, on an epic tour of Europe, in particular Italy, encountering en route a series of libertines, each more depraved than the last, and leaving a trail of pillage, death and destruction in her wake. These libertines include a number of historical figures, such as Catherine the Great, the atheistic Pope Pius VI, and two of Marie-Antoinette's homicidal siblings, Grand Duke Leopold of Tuscany and the wife of the King of Naples. Unsurprisingly given the revolutionary period in which the novel was written, kings and pontiffs are seen as surpassing all others in their debauchery and corruption. Eventually, following many gruesome and often gratuitous crimes, which include the murder of her friend, Clairwil, Juliette returns to France considerably enriched. There she is reunited with Noircueil, whose iniquities are seen to be rewarded when the King makes him prime minister, assuring him and his fellow criminals of a glorious future. With a note of self-referential irony, Noircueil draws the obvious moral from their story:

Come, good friends, let us all rejoice together, from all this I see nothing but happiness accruing to all save only virtue – but we would perhaps not dare say so were it a novel we were writing.

In continuing ironic vein, Juliette adopts and defends the real author's point of view:

Why dread publishing it, said Juliette, when the truth itself, and the truth alone, lays bare the secrets of Nature, however mankind may tremble before those revelations. Philosophy must never shrink from speaking out.

So the novel ends with Juliette stepping out of the pages of her own story to take a cheeky swipe at the censor, who is implicitly positioned as the enemy of truth.

Sade's world is an interior world, a world of castles and dungeons and boudoirs and monasteries in which the reader can feel as trapped as Justine. The claustrophobic sexual arena of the Sadean imagination reflects the loss of physical and sexual freedom the author was forced to

endure. Though stages for the *mise-en-scène* of the body, the interior spaces of the fiction are, at the same time, therefore, both representations and projections of the internal world of the mind. In the dissertations and footnotes and philosophical dialogues that alternate with and seek to justify the acts of extreme violence and sexual abuse conducted by his libertine anti-heroes, Sade invites us to rethink received wisdoms, and reinterpret long-standing values, challenging essentialist conceptions of morality and truth.

If Sade is now worthy of a place in the local bookstore and public library, as well as on university syllabi, it is not only because of the enormous and undisputed influence of his writing and thought over the last two centuries, but also because, in so many regards, his work once again finds resonance with the current artistic climate: our suspicion of modern political credos, the fragmentation of our value-systems and the ubiquitous pursuit of sexual ecstasy and physical immortality. Although, like all writers and thinkers, undeniably a product of his own times, Sade raises moral, social and even political questions that are as relevant now and everywhere as they were in 18th-century France: the threat of religious fundamentalism, the repression and persecution of non-normative forms of sexuality, the obsession with physical perfection, the sexual motives underlying our fascination with violence, and the emergence of greater pluralism in the way we organize our societies, for example, are all important Sadean themes.

Sade deserves to be called a great erotic writer because of the extraordinary modernity of his thinking, because of the breadth of his vision and the novelty of his perspectives, because he alone dares say what others before him considered unmentionable, because he says it in a form of some artistic depth and complexity, and perhaps most of all, for the unambiguous warnings he so fearlessly and stubbornly sounds against the ever-present dangers of self-deception and ignorance:

I authorize the publication and sale of all libertine books and immoral works; for I esteem them most essential to human felicity and welfare, instrumental to the progress of philosophy, indispensable to the eradication of prejudices, and in every sense conducive to the increase of human knowledge and understanding. (*Juliette*)

JOHN PHILLIPS

## Biography

Born in Paris, 2 June 1740. Educated at Collège Louis-le-Grand, Paris, 1750–54; then attended a military school in 1754, becoming 2nd lieutenant in 1755. Served in the French army during the Seven Years War: Captain, 1759; resigned commission, 1763. Married Renée Pélagie Cordier de Launay de Montreuil in 1763 (separated 1790); two sons and one daughter. Succeeded to the title Comte, 1767; arrested and imprisoned briefly for sexual offences, but pardoned by the king, 1768; condemned to death for sex offences, 1772, but sentence commuted to imprisonment; held in Miolans, 1772–73 (escaped); convicted again and imprisoned in Vincennes, 1778–84, Bastille, Paris, 1784–89, and Charenton, 1789–90; liberated and joined Section des Picques, 1790: organized cavalry and served as hospital inspector; made a judge, 1793, but condemned for moderation and imprisoned, 1793–94; arrested for obscene work (*Justine*) and imprisoned in Sainte-Pélagie, 1801, and confined again in Charenton, from 1803 until his death on 2 December 1814.

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# SADO-MASOCHISM

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Sado-masochism, a term derived from sadism and masochism, is the name given to the group of sexual behaviours and attitudes that combine sex with pain, or which use pain symbolically for erotic pleasure. The word sadism derives from the Marquis de Sade (1740–1814), whose writings can be characterised as extreme sexual violence towards, and humiliation of, the ‘victim’, and masochism from Baron Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (1836–95), who eroticised the subaltern’s treatment. These terms, however, are far from able to capture the complexity of the theoretical manifestations of sado-masochism in sexological discourses, and the other literary writing, throughout history, let alone more recent writings by aficionados of such practices. For this reason, alternative names, such as BDSM (bondage and discipline (BD), dominance and submission (DS), and sadism and masochism (SM)), algolagnia, and algophily have been proposed by some authors. Furthermore, there are significant epistemological problems with assuming that sado-masochistic behaviour is able to be addressed as trans-historical. As such, this entry follows many of the sexological discourses in their location of prior sado-masochistic acts, even though many of these acts were recorded before the concept of sado-masochism was first formulated, and would not be counted as such today by practitioners of sado-masochism.

One of the key organising points of sado-masochism throughout all of the writings addressed is the passive and active aspects of sexual expression which are manifest in extreme form in sadism and masochism. In these discourses, sadism is active, while masochism is passive. There are highly gendered connotations for these two phases that are formalised within the sexological discourses and in some of the other sources: the feminine sexual impulse being masochistic and a masculine one being sadistic. Nevertheless, these gendered notions are a part of a long history of writing about sexuality which has been used by both sexologists and readers who were aroused

by descriptions of flogging and sexual domination.

The early writing about sado-masochistic acts can be traced to the ancient world. In these discourses we see the first formulations of a masochistic feminine sexual impulse, and a sadistic masculine one. For example, the eighth Dialogue of Lucian’s *Dialogues of Courtesans* (Lucian 299; Lucian, vol 7, trans. M.D. MacLeod, Loeb Classics, Harvard UP, p.403), asks “If a man isn’t jealous or angry, Chrysis, and never hits you, cuts your hair off, or tears your clothes, is he still in love with you?”, although this text can be read as an enquiry about the role of jealousy in love. Ovid’s *Ars amatoria* explains less equivocally that:

Though you call it force: it’s force that pleases girls:  
 what delights  
 is often to have given what they wanted, against their  
 will.  
 She who is taken in love’s sudden onslaught  
 is pleased, and finds wickedness is a tribute.  
 And she who might have been forced, and escapes  
 unscathed,  
 will be saddened, though her face pretends delight.  
 Phoebe was taken by force: force was offered her  
 sister:  
 and both, when raped, were pleased with those who  
 raped them.

Plutarch’s *Life of Pompey* described the relationship of the courtesan Flora with Pompey, noting that “she could never part after being with him without a bite.” The historian Livy retells the legend of how the Sabine women were snatched from their families at a religious festival to populate Rome and how their hearts and minds were won over by violence followed by sweet words and childbearing. In all of these instances, it is the domination of women by men that captures the later sexological basis of female masochism—that women truly love when they are dominated—and male sadism, that they prefer to dominate women against their wills.

Although these examples play up female passivity and modesty as the basis for true sexual

desire, there are some examples of men being sexually excited when punished; for example, in Petronius' *Satyricon*, Enothea whips Encolpius with nettles, a practice which sexually excites him.

These Western examples are not the only ones that underlie the 'naturalised' basis of sado-masochism as a gendered manifestation of the sexual impulse. The classic Indian text, the *Kama sutra* of Vatsayayana, specifies the place in which a woman should be struck (the shoulders, the head, the space between the breasts, the back, the middle part of the body, and the sides). This striking is of four kinds: with the back of the hand, with the fingers a little contracted, with the fist, and with the open palm of the hand (*Kama sutra*, part two, chapter 7, trans. Richard Burton, 1883). There are also remarks made about biting and scratching during sexual congress that are worth further considering.

Having established that it was sometimes considered normal and natural in the Ancient world for men to behave aggressively during sex towards women, and that women responded positively, it is worthwhile considering how this tradition was maintained. There are a number of examples from the early modern period, up until the Enlightenment, which are worthy of mention, such as Johann Heinrich Meibom's (1590–1655) medical text, *Tractus de usu flagrorum in re Medica & Veneria* (1639; English trans. Edmund Curll, 1718): "there are Persons who are stimulated to *Venery* by *Strokes of Rods, and worked up into a Flame of Lust by Blows*, and that the Part, which distinguishes us to be Men, should be raised by the Charm of invigorating Lashes" (pp. 34–35). Other texts that followed a more traditional line concerning the sexual domination of women included Pierre de Brantôme, whose 1587 *Recueil des Dames* [*Les Dames Galantes*], noted that a woman who is "a little difficult and resists gives more pleasure to her lover." (cited in Ellis *Love and Pain*, 1903, p. 79). If we are to believe Enlightenment author, Restif de la Bretonne, writing in his 1798 *Anti-Justine*, "All women of strong temperament like a sort of brutality in sexual intimacy and its accessories" (cited in Ellis, *Love and Pain*, 1903, p. 79), these ideas persisted from the Ancient world.

One of the most famous Enlightenment descriptions of masochism was recorded by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in book one of his

*Confessions*, where he annotated his erotic awakenings, aged eight, when he was whipped by Mlle Lambercier. Rousseau noted that "this punishment increased my affection for the person who had inflicted it. All this affection, aided by my natural mildness, was scarcely sufficient to prevent my seeking, by fresh offences, a return of the same chastisement; for a degree of sensuality had mingled with the smart and shame, which left more desire than fear of a repetition. . . . Who would believe this childish discipline, received at eight years old, from the hand of a woman of thirty, should influence my propensities, my desires, my passions, for the rest of my life, and that in quite a contrary sense from what might naturally have been expected? . . . Even after having attained the marriageable age this odd taste still continued and drove me nearly to depravity and madness."

These rather coy descriptions of sadistic and masochistic desire were seriously overshadowed by the first of the eponymous authors with which this entry is concerned: Donatien Alphonse Francois, Marquis de Sade. Sade's novels, which were written while he was imprisoned, graphically describe a 'philosophy of evil', derived from La Mettrie and Holbach's Enlightenment philosophies which conceived of nature as a system that exists without God. A logical extension of these atheistic philosophies is a world that is not governed by morality, in which pleasure is sought and an egocentric domination of the world is permissible, because any appeal to a higher morality is precluded by the denial of the existence of God. This is the world that Sade created. In his works, the most famous ones including *One hundred and twenty days of Sodom*, *Justine*, *Juliette*, and *Philosophy in the Bedroom*, the reader is exposed to tales of rape, sodomy, torture, coprophilia, etc. These are organised under the rubric of imposing one's will on one's lover. Sade is not interested in the moral aspects of these acts—for he does not believe in conventional Christian morality. Rather, he is pushing the boundaries of philosophical convention by celebrating the individual ego, and by exerting his desires onto the world. It is the association of cruelty with sexuality that gave us the name sadism, although it is a rather superficial linkage that denies Sade's philosophical system, and focuses only on the erotic aspects in a way similar to that in which many people seem to have since read him.

There are other ways of imposing one's will than humiliating and torturing one's paramour. Baron Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (1836–95) is famous nowadays for having his name given to the forms of erotic submission known as masochism, although he was not pleased with this appropriation by Austrian sexologist, Richard von Krafft-Ebing (1840–1902), who in turn borrowed it after one of his patients referred to themselves as a masochist. Masoch was an historian and novelist who emphasised contractual domination by women. An important novel that encapsulates this is *Venus im Pelz* [*Venus in Furs*, 1870], in which the heroine, Wanda, is made to treat the protagonist like a slave, and to socially and sexually humiliate him. As with sadism, there are strong power relations at play in this scheme, but it is the masochist who is in power, controlling the ways his mistress maltreats him through carefully devised contracts. The sexological use of this word has denied these power relations, and focuses on arousal by submission.

Before finishing with pre-sexological writing about sadism and masochism, it is important to note other relevant forms of erotica which are not considered classical, high literature, or Enlightenment philosophy, such as the erotic writing produced in England in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is noteworthy that flagellation was considered the 'English vice'. Throughout Victorian erotica, there are numerous descriptions of flagellation and birching, more often than not of young women with big bottoms, either by strict mistresses or old *roués*. Often after such a scene, the young girl is deflowered, having been aroused by the domination with the rod. Occasionally, it is the man who is dominated, a point which is also cast in 'high literature' by Algernon Swinburne in some of his poems, such as "Athur's flogging," written under the name 'Etonensis.' This poem details the whipping of a young boy on many occasions in a manner that is difficult to remove from any homoerotic associations, describing in graphic lines the state of Arthur's bottom as it is flogged by his school-master.

As the discipline of sexology emerged, it soon began to focus on sado-masochistic issues, and it reformulated the relationship between sex, pain, and power accordingly. There had always been some form of medical interest in these issues, from the forensic work on rape, although rarely did these texts attempt to understand these

forms of behaviour. Some of the early work of Chicagoan biologist and psychiatrist, S.V. Clevenger, addressed the gendering of active and passive sexuality. This work was based on the notion that in the early history of life, there were two ways for bacteria to combine heritable material: either by eating or being eaten. Bacteriophages were considered active; those that 'submitted' to being eaten in order to pass on their genetic material were considered passive. The "hunger impulse" developed from this primordial desire, and later so did the sexual impulse, according to Clevenger. Another Chicagoan psychiatrist, James Kiernan, began to apply Clevenger's ideas to the sexual impulse more directly, arguing that the active phases of sexual desire were masculine, and the passive feminine. He also formulated the doctrine that these impulses were normal in their more restrained manifestations, which allowed copulation, but that they could become exaggerated and thus pathological. This idea was picked up by Krafft-Ebing, who denoted the two behaviours as sadism and masochism in the third edition of his *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1890). After Krafft-Ebing, there was a general sexological consensus about sado-masochism, although some dissenters emphasised other aspects. For example, Munich hypnotherapist, Albert von Schrenck-Notzing, developed the concept of algolagnia to emphasise the relationship of pain and lust, derived from Kiernan. Kiernan himself later preferred the term 'algophily', as neither Schrenck-Notzing nor Kiernan believed that either Masoch or Sade were the ideal masochist or sadist, and both Schrenck-Notzing and Kiernan thought that the two mechanisms were linked. English sexologist Havelock Ellis agreed, and preferred to think about the pain as a form of erotic symbolism that stimulated the otherwise evident sexual deficiency of the patient. Ellis also emphasised that there were perfectly normal phases of erotic play that had the same roots as sado-masochism, including kisses, love bites, spanking, etc. He further agreed with the ancient writers that there was a gendered differentiation of the sexual impulse, with women being naturally passive and deriving pleasure from being dominated, and men being naturally inclined to dominate during sexual play. He considered it difficult for a woman to be a pathological masochist, as they were predisposed to this behaviour, and thus it was basically

normal except in the most extreme manifestations. He also thought that instances of male masochism and female sadism were similar in aetiology to homosexuality, which he considered a form of gender inversion with a congenital basis. Male sadism, he believed, was the extreme signification of male domination that had to be controlled, as it vitiated his otherwise feminist beliefs in the importance of consensual, non-harmful sex.

This sexological trajectory did much to formalise the approach to sado-masochism prior to activists within the community gaining a voice for themselves on the fringes of popular culture and on the internet. Other contemporary evidence for the existence of sado-masochistic behaviour was being sought by ethnologists and anthropologists, who found such behaviours in practices of marriage capture, as described in the works of John MacLennan and E. B. Tylor, and more subtly described by Edward Westermarck and other later anthropologists. Many of these ethnological texts were enrolled by sexologists as supporting evidence, as were historical descriptions of sadistic practices, such as marriage by capture, which was graphically portrayed in Fustel de Coulanges *Cité d'Antique* (1864). In all cases, there was a maintaining of the gendered distinction between sadistic and masochistic behaviour, and this historical and cultural evidence did much to support this theory.

Significant sexological developments were made when the distinction was forged between perversions of aim and perversions of object. Perversions of aim included sadistic and masochistic practices, because it was not penetrative sex that was desired, but practices of sexual domination. Berlin sexologist, Magnus Hirschfeld, stressed this distinction, which had an important impact on the sexual psychology of Sigmund Freud. After Freud, within sexology as well as psychoanalysis, sado-masochism began to be treated not only as a simple paraphilia involving pain, but became emphasised as a personality trait (especially in psychoanalysis) and as a basic phenomenon that was manifest in many other sexual activities. In this vein, another Chicagoan psychiatrist, Harold Moyer, described both lesbianism and bestiality as forms of sadistic behaviour, the former being a masculine desire to dominate other women as sexual partners, the latter as the desire to actively seek

non-compliant sexual partners and to dominate them. Some of Moyer's more extreme examples come from sadistic lesbians who forced their (masochistic) partners to fellate dogs before having sex with the same dogs. In all of these instances, Moyer employed a significantly modified interpretation of sadistic and masochistic behaviour that was much more in line with current psychiatric conceptions of the issue. Within psychoanalysis, there was a tendency to utilise the existing sexological categories in a similar way. Further theoretical developments were contributed by Clara Thompson and Karen Horney in particular, as they strove to overcome many of the overtly gendered assumptions of psychoanalytic theory, and began treating their female patients as individual women rather than embodied theory.

Some resistance, or at least alternatives, to these emerging scientific conceptions of sado-masochism came from contemporary literature. For instance, Freud's early critic, Viennese author Robert Musil, in *Confusions of Young Törless* (1906), described the homoerotic humiliation and beating of one boy in a military academy. Musil rejected many of Freud's ideas about the upbringing of a child impacting on the later sexual development, preferring a volition-based scheme derived from Friedrich Nietzsche which superficially shared much with Sade. Other texts which explicitly made use of social and sexual conceptions of sadism and masochism include the character Baron de Charlus, in Marcel Proust's *A la recherche du temps perdu* (1913–25). Charlus is both sadistic in his sexual and social behaviour, but also masochistic in his old age, needing to be beaten violently in order to be sexually satisfied (as shown in the scene in the Hotel during the war). Neither Proust nor Musil maintained the Freudian ideas about sado-masochism that would become important later in the century, in works such as Georges Bataille's *The Story of the Eye* (1928), which employed sadism to symbolic ends, including descriptions of defiling a priest, and other eroticised violence.

Philosophically, there was a growth in interest in Sade's work after the Second World War, partially as it was perceived as a precursor to some of Nietzsche's ideas which had become popular in the early 1900s, but also because it was published in better editions in the early part of the century when works previously considered missing came to light. Important philosophical



engagements came from assorted French philosophers, including Pierre Klossowski, whose *Sade mon prochain* (1947) put the Enlightenment philosopher back on the agenda (although he had written an important psychoanalytic treatment of Sade in *Le revue français de psychanalyse* in 1933). Others who engaged with Sade in this early period included Simone de Beauvoir ("Faut-il bruler Sade?" *Les temps modernes*, 1951–52), Georges Bataille (who wrote two essays in 1947 and 1953, and who also translated the 1440 trials of the serial killer, Gilles de Rais), and Maurice Blanchot (who wrote series of essays on Sade in 1946–48). This work was later followed by Roland Barthes' *Sade, Fournier, Loyola* (1971). In all of these instances, there was no interest in criticising Sade, but rather employing him as a test for further sexual and social possibilities. In this, Sade was hailed as a champion, although the readings became more and more sophisticated, with Barthes declaring that Sade had created an erotic utopia.

Significant literary examples of masochism were produced after the Second World War, including Dominique Aury's (under the pen name of Pauline Réage) *The Story of O* (1954), an instant erotic classic which was lauded for its literary ability and awarded the *Prix Deux-Magots* in 1955. In many ways, the publication of this work, when considered concurrently with the growing philosophical engagement with Sade, was a significant step towards the acceptance of sado-masochism as a part of the mainstream sexual and social world, a position that it had not enjoyed since before the Enlightenment, and which had never been as explicit in earlier times. Other evidence for this acceptance might include the demise of Widmerpool into a subservient character in Anthony Powell's epic *Dance to the Music of Time* (1954–75), or some of the masochistic fantasies in Nancy Friday's *My Secret Garden* (1973), which contributed to the de-pathologization of sado-masochism as it showed the extent to which 'normal' female fantasies could operate. Although one could maintain that these gendered ideas about dominating that are so central to most thought about sado-masochism are not abandoned in Friday's work, a more general idea about the restrictive earlier ideas being gendered is exploded by demonstrating the breadth of female desire, for there are more dominating fantasies as well.

The explosion of contemporary erotica, greatly facilitated by the internet, has allowed for the growth of writing about BDSM, a term used to capture some of the variation of sado-masochism. In this respect, it would seem that sado-masochism is a widely accepted and practiced sexual manifestation, if amplified in some circumstances, although it should be remembered that different fields define sado-masochism in different ways, and thus is it problematic to speak as if it was one trans-historical phenomenon. There are numerous erotic websites and stories devoted to it, and there are nightclubs which laud its practices in public. It should, however, be noted that contemporary psychiatry fits sexual masochism and sadism under the general heading of paraphilias in the latest edition of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual—Text Revised, 2000*. Both behaviours are recognised as extreme manifestations of normal sexual desires, but of course, they are heavily gendered as well, which provides for a certain 'scripted' performativity which has been adopted and exploited by readers and writers in many fields, as well as by practitioners of these desires.

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## SADOVEANU, MIHAIL

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1880–1961.

Romanian novelist and short story writer

### *Creanga de aur [The Golden Bough]*

The novel was published in 1933. Upon its appearance, critics and ordinary readers were shocked by the exquisite style and by the esoteric significance of the book. In *Creanga de aur*, Eros becomes a fundamental epistemological experience surpassing the limitations of time, space and senses.

The novel purports to be a posthumously-discovered manuscript written by the author's alter ego, a researcher named Stamatin, a narrative device that lends verisimilitude to the story. The author presents his lyrical fiction as nonfiction. In the tradition of moralizing or "improving" literature, the novel offers the reader a moral lesson. At the same time it is a very moving love story. The story begins in 1926, when Stamatin returns from an expedition to the Eastern Carpathian mountains, claiming to have discovered a manuscript from the eighth century. In 780 CE, the venerable master of the old law—the ancient traditions of the Dacian (Romanian) priests, who lived somewhere in

the Eastern Carpathians—sends Kesarion Breb, the best of his apprentices, to Egypt to become an initiate. He is to study ascetism for seven years, and to learn to transcend matter and open his spirit to the divine. This foreshadows the love story, for Kesarion will close off not only his senses, but any bodily feeling from now on. After he completes his studies and initiation—which leaves a physical trace on his body in the form of three wrinkles forming a triangle on his forehead between his eyebrows—he is to go to Byzantium and rejoin human society by immersing himself among ordinary people.

The human world that he rejoins in Byzantium is tormented and polluted, especially as he has arrived during a time of great upheaval. The conflict between the Iconoclasts (the destroyers of icons) and the Iconodules (those who venerate them) has recently ended, leaving the Iconodules with a shaky victory. The conflict is not only religious, but political. Empress Irina, an Iconodule who above all loves power, does not want to give executive powers to her son, Emperor Constantine. Therefore, she breaks her son's engagement with Rotruda, the daughter of Charlemagne, and decrees that Constantine will marry a Byzantine girl. The decision has

serious political implications. Had Constantine married Rotruda, it would have cemented an alliance between Byzantium and the Frankish empire, but Irina and her faction can control a Byzantine maiden much easier. Kesarion Breb befriends Bishop Plato of Sakkoudion, the eminence grise of the Iconodoule party and one of Irina's advisors. He is responsible for vetting bridal candidates. While the advice that Kesarion gets at the beginning of his journey is reminiscent of Polonius' famous speech to his son, his quest most resembles that of the prince from *Cinderella*. The girl's foot must fit the glass slipper. But literary references do not stop here. Like Tristan, Kesarion is looking for a bride for a royal master, but he will fall in love with his her himself. He becomes completely besotted with the winning candidate, the maiden Maria of Amnia, the poorest but most virtuous of the candidates. There is only a single, immortal instant that connects Kesarion and Maria forever. The power of this encounter is stronger than any physical desire, and merely seeing each other is more satisfying than sex. Sadoveanu implies that Bishop Plato also has a role in introducing them, but leaves open the possibility of supernatural action as well.

The emperor and Maria do not live happily ever after. Maria is only a toy for the tempestuous Constantine, who is soon at open war with his mother, the dowager empress Irina. A coup d'état meant to restore Constantine to power is thwarted with Maria's inadvertent help—she reports the Emperor's bedroom talk to his mother. A second coup is successful, although it is too late for any reconciliation in the imperial marriage. Maria is exiled to Halki, and Teodota, an aristocratic courtesan, replaces her. Kesarion also suffers: his ability to transcend the material world has been compromised, even though the only interaction he has with Maria is completely chaste. Eros is an intoxicating illusion, which Kesarion knows full well, but he cannot resist falling in love. Eros will be for these two a lost moment that will haunt them both forever. Maria is for Kesarion a vision of Beauty incarnate, and it is not accidental that their affair, a purely spiritual one, is conducted under the shadow of the Cathedral of St. Sophia. Beauty is wisdom and wisdom is Beauty. Finally, the Emperor is deposed and mutilated—blinded—by order of his mother. Maria takes holy orders at Halki and Kesarion, now known as the

Egyptian, returns north of the Danube to assume the duties that had been those of his mentor, the old priest of the Dacians, in the Eastern Carpathians. It is only at their final separation that Maria and Kesarion the Egyptian discuss their feelings openly and give some physicality to their erotic impulses. They touch hands and the Empress rests her head on his shoulder. For them, Eros is the knowledge and the awareness of the transience of the material world. Expressed in terms that echo the Gnosticism predating Byzantine Christianity, long after the destruction of “this delusion”—the material world—their love will continue to glow beyond the confines of space and time like a golden bough.

Stylistically brilliant and beautiful, *Creanga de aur* is a unique novel of delicate, discreet but pervasive eroticism that escapes the possibility to be ever satiated by physical acts.

### Biography

Born in 1880 in Pascani, Romania. Died in Bucharest in 1961. Debuted in 1904 with four books: *Povestiri*, *Soimii*, *Dureri inabusite*, *Crasma lui mos Precup*. The last book is dated 1905, although it was already being sold in bookshops in 1904.

Sadoveanu wrote several novels, short story collections, and travelogues. Some of his books are masterpieces of the twentieth century Romanian literature. He contributed to practically all the Romanian literary magazines of his time and his style is unique. After 1945 he made several compromises with the Communist regime, which ensured him a privileged political and social status.

MIHAELA MUDURE

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## SALE, ANTOINE DE LA

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c. 1386–c.1461  
 French writer

As is frequently the case with medieval writers, modern scholarship has argued the authorship of texts ascribed to Antoine de la Sale. This is especially true for *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles*, *Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage* and the *Livre des faits de Jacques Lalaing*. It is possible, however, that he is the author of tale 50 [“Like Father, Like Son”] and tale 98 [“The Star-crossed Lovers”] in *Les Cent Nouvelles Nouvelles* (most likely between 1456 and 1461). The former tells the story of a prodigal son who returns home after a 16-year absence. His grandmother is much more joyful that his parents about his return and kisses him profusely. As there are only two beds in his parents’ cottage, he reluctantly shares his grandmother’s bed while his parents share the other one. Not knowing why, the young man starts to make advances to his grandmother. Her crying wakes up her own son who, once he discovers the incestuous intent of his son, swears that he will kill him. The son runs out of the house and escapes. After having promised his mother that he would avenge her, the father finds the lad a few days later. He tries to stab him but is retrained by a throng. The son explains that his father is mad at him for once wanting to lie with his mother while he has never said a word to his father for

doing the same thing over five hundred times with his own mother. Everyone laughs at this answer and eventually the father and the son are able to forgive each other. In another fugitive tale, “The Star-crossed Lovers,” a young couple flees the girl’s father’s court to avoid an unwanted marriage. While they spend the night at an inn, four ruffians who want to rape her kill the young knight she is in love with. Rather than submit to their assault, and realizing that her love has been killed, she cuts her own throat.

The author of *Les Quinze Joyes de Mariage* uses satire to relate the difficulties of married life. After a prologue that begins by stating that “(...) man hath greater felicity in this world when he liveth frank and free (...)”, there follows a description of each *joie* told from the point of view of the husband and designed to correspond to the various episodes of married life, such as monetary and material concerns, changes that occur with the birth of children, and the couple’s changing interests. The first ten *joies* as presented in a quasi-chronological order while the last five discuss less frequent occurrences such as remarriage or extra marital affairs.

### *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré*

Antoine de la Sale’s most important text is *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré*. This prose romance is

## SALE, ANTOINE DE LA

composed of 86 chapters of varying length. It tells the adventures of a young page who finds that a cousin of the queen reciprocates the love he feels for her. With her support and his own prowess, he becomes a great knight who overwhelms many knights during tournaments. My Lady, as she is commonly referred to, has made some very specific stipulations as to the comportment of her young lover, in a manner that will remind of the tenets of a relationship – such as maintaining secrecy, accepting blame in public without flinching, and obeying the every command of the lady – as it progresses, step by step, within the realm of courtly love.

One day, the young knight decides of his own initiative to perform knightly deeds, she lets him go reluctantly. Concerned over her physical and mental state, the queen suggests that she go home to rest. Soon after she reaches her ancestral home, she responds favorably to the advances of a young abbot. When the knight comes looking for her, there ensues a fight between the abbot and the knight in which the latter is ridiculed by his adversary and his former love. The knight finds his revenge in an inn where both combatants put on a coat of armor. This time, the knight is victorious and enjoys his revenge. At the same, the knight removes My Lady's blue girdle tipped with gold. At the end of the romance, back at the king's court, Saintré retells all that has happened in his relationship with the unnamed lady up to the moment when he removed the girdle. The lady's identity is soon revealed when Saintré returns her girdle.

Much discussion has been generated as to whether Antoine de la Sale favors or condemns chivalry in *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré*. The author's interest in chivalry is amply demonstrated by the many chapters that deal with this subject matter that is also demonstrated by his work on tournaments mentioned above. Saintré offers also interesting glimpses into court life in the fifteenth century.

### Biography

Antoine de la Sale was born in southern France (either in Agenais or near Arles-en-Provence) the illegitimate son of Bernard de la Sale and

Périnète Damendel. After his father's death in 1391, Antoine was taken into the service of Louis II of Anjou and continued to serve this house for most of the next fifty years. In the early 1400s, he resides in Italy, as the Princes of Anjou were also Kings of Sicily, and in Flanders, where he is known to have attended two tournaments. In Italy, it is possible that Antoine de la Sale met a Marshal of France, Jean le Meingre, called Boucicault, introduced in the 47th chapter of La Sale's *Little John of Saintré*. In 1420, Antoine de la Sale fights for Louis III in his war against Alphonse of Aragon. His early writings, such as his *Excursions aux Iles Lipari* are of limited literary value especially when compared to his latter works. What little is known of his life at that time does not seem to indicate any interest on his part for the budding humanist spirit to which his repeated stays in Italy should have exposed him. In the 1430s, he is also known to have held a magistrate position in Arles.

Once Louis III selects him to become the tutor to his son John, Duke of Calabria, Antoine de la Sale begins to work on a text entitled *La Salade* for his student that is of very limited literary worth except for some personal reminiscences. After he leaves the service of king Rene of Anjou, he becomes tutor to the sons of the Comte de St Pol in 1448, for whom he writes *La Sale* (1451), another pedagogical treatise that relies on classical writings to bring forth lessons in morals. In 1459, Antoine de la Sale wrote *Des anciens tournois et faictz d'armes*, a subject matter with which he had already dealt in some details in *Le Petit Jehan de Saintré* (1456). Antoine de la Sale most probably died in 1461 in Châtelet-sur-Oise where he had spent most of his time and written some of his better known works after leaving the service of the house of Anjou.

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## SALTEN, FELIX

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1869–1945

Austrian novelist, dramatist and journalist

The position in German-language Literature of the novel *Josefine Mutzenbacher* (1906), “the story of a Viennese prostitute, told by herself,” can be compared to that of John Cleland’s novel *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure (Fanny Hill)*. It is likely the best-known example of German erotic literature and, like its English eighteenth-century predecessor, has frequently been the subject of court cases seeking to prevent its widespread distribution. The ban of one edition (Rowohlt, 1978) caused a long-term court battle in Germany, which ended in a ruling by the Federal Constitutional Court in 1990. It revisited the delicate relationship between the freedom of artistic expression and the protection of minors from writings considered harmful to them by stating that “a pornographic novel can be art” and should therefore be constitutionally protected, thereby forming the legal basis for decisions on similar cases.

While other names such as Arthur Schnitzler have been mentioned in connection with the anonymously published novel, it is nowadays usually attributed to his friend Felix Salten, who is best-known for his novel *Bambi, Eine Lebensgeschichte aus dem Walde* (1923), the literary basis of Walt Disney’s classic film *Bambi* (1942). In 1931, a first English translation of the book under the title *Memoirs of Josefine Mutzenbacher. The Story of a Viennese Prostitute* came out in Paris. A sequel under the title *Meine 365 Liebhaber* was, again anonymously, but probably not by the same author, published sometime between 1917 and 1925, and 1970 saw the release of the first of a number of films (*Josefine Mutzenbacher*, Germany) based on or loosely connected to the novel.

Even though the fictitious narrator claims ignorance concerning previous “biographies” by prostitutes, *Josefine Mutzenbacher* continues a long tradition of such works in German-language literature, one of its better-known predecessors being *Aus den Memoiren einer Sängerin*

(1862[–]75). Josefine begins the narrative of her life with a short look back and a reflection on the reason for writing down her story: she wants to show her clients how she and other prostitutes became what they are. Josefine grows up as the youngest of three children in a poor family in mid-nineteenth century Vienna. At the age of five, she has her first sexual contact with a boarder in her family’s apartment and, two years later, her brother Franz becomes one of her lovers. Soon, neighbors, friends, and strangers, both male and female, are added to her array of sexual partners. When she is thirteen years old, her mother dies, and, after a sexual relationship with a teacher is exposed, her father begins having intercourse with his daughter on a regular basis. After another boarder finds out about the incestuous affair, he persuades Josefine to become a prostitute, with her father as her pimp. The long remaining portion of the novel then describes her experiences during her first day in the sex trade. As if to mirror the introduction, Josefine finishes her narrative by looking back on her life, the disintegration of her family, and the estimated 33,000 men with whom she had sexual intercourse over her thirty years as prostitute.

*Josefine Mutzenbacher* has been called a “grotesque mechanical ballet” (Hellmuth Karasek, *Die Zeit* 47, November 21, 1969), which at first seems an accurate assessment. Except for the introduction and the conclusion, the book appears to contain nothing but blatantly explicit descriptions of the encounters between a sexually curious Josefine longing for her defloration, and her always willing partners. In line with existing prejudices, the novel names the sexual insatiability of women, not social circumstances, as the major reason for prostitution. The characters, except perhaps for Josefine in her reflective passages and her oldest brother, are mostly reduced to their sexual drive, “Körper sind hier funktionale Maschinen des Geschlechtsverkehrs” (bodies are here functional machines of sexual intercourse) (Ruthner, *Gegen-Pornographie*).

Also, the fact that the novel describes the sexual education of a girl between the ages of five and thirteen, an education that consists “im Wesentlichen aus einer Serie von Akten sexuellen Misbrauchs” (essentially of a series of acts of sexual abuse) (Ruthner, *Gegen-Pornographie*), may leave readers with mixed feelings towards the book.

Besides this criticism, however, critics have also pointed out the artistic merits of *Josefine Mutzenbacher* and called it the “einzigsten deutschsprachigen Klassiker des Erotik-Genres” (the only classic of the erotic genre in the German language) (Ruthner, *Gegen-Pornographie*, 166). One of the factors meriting a positive evaluation is the language that is used, especially in the dialogue passages. By having the characters speak a version of the local Viennese dialect that is frequently interspersed with sexual expressions, the author adds a naturalistic touch to the description of the heroine’s environment. Another point concerns the conclusion, which disrupts the otherwise unreflective character of the narrative. After the uncritical casting of women in the role of sexual objects, with men ever willing to accept their offerings, the last paragraph suddenly questions, from the point of view of an aging prostitute, the whole concept of (physical) love. She considers it to be absurd and states that the only difference between the genders is that men lie on top, while women lie on the bottom.

Critics have also seen a connection between *Josefine Mutzenbacher* and Sigmund Freud’s theory of infantile sexuality, which was published just one year earlier (1905) in *Drei Abhandlungen zur Sexualtheorie* (Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality). According to Freud, infantile sexuality has previously been generally ignored; yet it is of central importance in *Josefine Mutzenbacher*. Freud claims that in early childhood the foundation for a person’s later sexual development is laid, a fact that Josefine’s creator corroborates in the novel. Freud further states that seduction can lead to a child’s proneness to sexual excesses, since its mental defenses against such excesses do not yet exist, which again is reflected in Josefine’s narrative. The author of *Josefine Mutzenbacher* might well have used the story of the fictitious character both to profit from the uproar following Freud’s publication and to comment upon his theories.

## Biography

Born 6 September 1869 in Budapest (modern-day Hungary) as Siegmund Salzmann. Married to actress Ottilie Metzl on 13 April 1902 (two children: Paul, Anna-Katherina). Traveled to the USA at the invitation of the Carnegie Foundation in 1930, returned to Austria in 1931. Fled to Switzerland after the German annexation of Austria to avoid persecution as a Jew in 1938. Died October 8, 1945 in Zürich, Switzerland. 1927–1933 President of the Austrian P.E.N.-Club. Wrote for *Berliner Morgenpost*, *Wiener Allgemeine Zeitung*, *Neue Freie Presse*

MARKUS WUST

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## SAMANIEGO, FÉLIX MARÍA DE

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1745–1801

Spanish poet and man of letters

### *Jardín de Venus*

*Jardín de Venus* is the name given by the twentieth-century publisher Joaquín López Barbado to a collection of erotic poems by Samaniego, which he claimed to have edited from an eighteenth-century manuscript. Samaniego's poems had circulated in this format among his contemporaries, and the celebrated writer and statesman Gaspar de Jovellanos recounted his amusement at hearing some of the texts read by the author. A few poems were apparently

included in the currently unlocatable *Álbum de Príapo* (ca. 1860), but sixty-three compositions were attributed to Samaniego in the collection entitled *Cuentos y poesías más que picantes*, believed to be compiled by the French scholar Raymond Foulché-Delbosc and printed in Barcelona in 1899. However, it was the 1921 edition in the series “Obras festivas” by Joaquín López Barbado, which put the poems on the map under the title *Jardín de Venus*. Renewed interest only resumed after the end of the repressive Franco regime when Emilio Palacios Fernández followed up his thesis on the author with the first scholarly edition of the *Jardín de Venus*. Palacios has continued his researches and in



his Biblioteca Nueva edition of 2004 (used in the references below) includes a total of 77 erotic compositions, having added some newly-discovered texts.

While some of the poems in *Jardín de Venus* reveal a clear debt to Jean de la Fontaine's *Contes et nouvelles en vers* of 1665[–], others draw on the French and Italian fable traditions, though the author's domestication of the stories gives no hint of their origins. All share the characteristic of popular or folk literature of revealing few concrete aspects of historical timing or geographical location, though one has a Turkish context (5), another the Holy Land (44), and two are set in Ancient Greece (23, 49). Six are clearly situated in Spain and feature Galicians (19, 65) in addition to inhabitants of Madrid (29, 37, 40) and Extremadura (33). Whereas most participants are nameless, being referred to by their roles or professions (farmer, monk, nun, soldier, muleteer, student, Inquisitor, widow, young man, married woman), religious figures feature prominently (Augustinians, Benedictines, Capuchins, Carmelites, Franciscans, Jeronimites, Trinitarians), to the extent of their alleged sexual powers being compared (25). Cardinals, Bishops, Priests, friars, monks and nuns are usually presented as more subject to uncontrollable sexual desire than lay figures and the author skilfully manipulates the reader's expectations in this respect (16, 31, 39, 56, 59).

As is usual in the popular style the poems exhibit great narrative economy, focusing quickly on sexual matters, though nevertheless revealing a masterful handling of elements of suspense and closure. The shortest of the compositions has a mere eight lines, three are sonnets, while others range from 20 to 212 lines, though the norm is around 80. Two poems have sequels (25, 42), and another is presented in alternative versions (46, 47). The author mixes seven- and eleven-syllable lines in accordance with the reasonably free Spanish 'Silva' form; rhyme alternates between full consonantal rhyme, frequently in couplets, and the characteristically Spanish, assonantal rhyme.

The erotic practices portrayed are mostly heterosexual, though a few poems feature homoerotic behaviour (1, 5). Enthusiasm for sexual pleasure is equally matched in male and female participants and can be made the subject of comedy when mis-matches occur (37, 44, 65). Humour often derives from behaviour featuring

the polarities of experience and inexperience (16, 19, 32), knowledge and innocence (9, 13, 15, 17, 27, 30, 41, 61), sometimes with evident folk origins. The Spanish world of Catholic Christianity is evident in the prominence given to Catholic practices, especially confession and its opportunities for sexual abuse of penitents by confessors (33, 48). The supposedly enclosed world of convents of nuns and monks is portrayed in which the inhabitants give full rein to their bodily desires (4, 8, 16), while priests and friars are the most frequent protagonists in the narratives, almost without exception shown as oblivious of their vows of chastity, and with voracious sexual appetites.

The poems present the exaggerations to be expected of poems whose intention is humour derived from human sexuality. So if in one poem all the nuns in a convent enjoy the sexual services of a willing young man (4), a Jeronimite Friar is similarly capable of servicing his partner 11 times in a single session (25). And the hyperbole extends, as is common in such literature, to the size of male sexual organs (18, 42, 6). The economy of style focuses on the centrally featured activities in these tales to sharpen the humorous effect and expose human hypocrisy in not accepting as natural the reality of sexual passion. Samaniego's linguistic skill is evident in the choice of language, which exhibits the clarity of expression to be expected from a neo-classical poet who rejects complex metaphor but can also make wit derive from word play involving figurative language when the opportunity for humour allows (20). Sexual organs, often subjects of humour in themselves, are most frequently described in euphemistic terms; occasionally more earthy language appears, though minimally (35). The overall thrust of the poems is the celebration of sexuality and an implicit accusation of hypocrisy against clerical guardians of morality who belittle its importance.

### Biography

Born into a wealthy Basque family, and great-nephew of the progressive cultural and political figure, the Count of Peñaflores, Samaniego is best known for his moralizing *Fábulas* (1781–4), which enjoyed immense success in Spain and its overseas possessions. He was educated in Bayonne and on returning to Spain devoted himself to culture and public works. Literary

friends were aware that, like his model La Fontaine, Samaniego also wrote erotic poetry, often versions in Spanish of the French author's originals. Such poems could not be published in Spain in the author's lifetime but evidently circulated in manuscript copies. One of these must have come to the notice of the Inquisition, but the author was tipped off and, through the offices of the Basque politician Eugenio de Llaguno, was seen privately by the Inquisitor General. No trial ensued and the matter was buried without the poems or their author being officially named in an Edict of condemnation.

PHILIP DEACON

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## SÁNCHEZ, LUIS RAFAEL

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### 1936–

Puerto Rican prose writer and dramatist

In Luis Rafael Sánchez's work, the idealised collectivity of traditional Latin American nationalism is humorously replaced by a Puerto Rican communality rooted in everyday popular culture, eroticised, and set in the context of Puerto Rico's rapid modernisation under U.S. colonisation since 1898.

The internationally acclaimed novel of 1976, *La guaracha del Macho Camacho*, [*Macho Camacho's Beat*], explores Puerto Rico's stagnation under American capitalism. In this situation, the incapacity of official politics to conceive a postcolonial project that might fulfil national aspirations is countered by a type of carnivalisation of capitalism and its commodities. Carnivalisation takes place according to

the physical terms of the human body as the centre of popular communal life exemplified by the importance of music in the lives of all the characters. The novel traces how the mass media commodification of music parallels that of personal relationships under capitalism. At one point, the sexual act takes place as a sequence from a pornographic film, while amorous assignations are set in supermarkets, featuring characters who model their identities on media stars with the intention of attracting rich sexual partners who can feed their overwhelming consumerism. However, modernisation is represented as a two-way process that, though commodifying physical pleasure, only partially does so with regard to popular culture. The latter still allows physical freedom and pleasurable fellowship. Meanwhile, in his 1985 play *Quintuples*

[*Quintuplets*] commodified versions of gender identity are fetishistically erotised by the six characters, all played by two actors, in a compelling masquerade that pushes Puerto Rican stereotypes of masculinity, femininity, and nationality over the edge of credibility, thus clearing a space for the reinvention of Puerto Rican identity.

The concern with reinventing Puerto Rican identity was initiated by Sánchez in his 1966 collection of short stories, *En cuerpo de camisa* [*Shirt Sleeves Unbuttoned*], particularly in the short story, 'Aleluya negra' [Black Halleluyah], where essentialist associations of black Caribbeaness with a lyrically fervent sexuality are coarsely parodied in favour of contextualising Afro Puerto Rican eroticism in the island's colonial history and its ensuing racial tensions. The process of reinvention continues in the novel-length text of 1988, *La importancia de llamarse Daniel Santos* [The Importance of Being Daniel Santos], a book which, by ironically representing the mythical extremes of masculine sexuality in the Caribbean and Latin America offended many readers, who criticised it of exalting machismo and sexual aggression. The explicit homoeroticism of several lengthy passages was also daring in the context of the Caribbean's traditional homophobia, so savagely satirised earlier in the short story '¡Jum!' This book constitutes perhaps Sánchez's most explicit and sustained exploration of eroticism. In it, the idealised collectivity of nationalism is replaced by a Puerto Rican communality that is both part of a greater Latin Americanism and a dynamic agent of the inevitable divisions of national identity. Travelling to several Latin American towns and cities, a narrator carries out research and interviews fans of the bolero singer Daniel Santos, as part of an investigation into the legend of the historical Puerto Rican artist. By using a series of popular vernaculars in his chronicle of first-hand reports, the narrator gives free rein to a barrage of enjoyably coarse language, sexual imagery, and an admiring portrayal of Daniel's monumental machismo. Through these, the author perhaps ironically expresses his sympathies with what, through a low-life brazenness opposes social inequality and the entrenched official culture that upholds it. As a popular hero, Daniel offends by not lending himself to assimilation into the easy categories of conventional virtue misrepresented

by corrupt politicians and the exploitative classes to which they belong. Moreover, as a mulatto, Daniel offends the bourgeois myth of Hispanic values traditionally promoted by elite powers in Puerto Rico. Though the book has been accused of deploying a distorting Caribbean masculinity, it is more likely that his recourse to stereotypes with powerful resonances constitute a strategically offensive position from which to attack the supposedly virtuous machismo traditionally promoted by Puerto Rican writers and politicians. Sánchez's Daniel represents a humorous vulgarisation of the supposedly noble virility they believed was necessary in the emasculating context of modernising American colonialism. Meanwhile, the author's concern with bad language, gross sexuality and machismo is far from gratuitous. Instead, in ironic dialogue with literary and political tradition, the book portrays a type of popular self-assertion taking the form of histrionic sexual aggression. Such machismo attempts to compensate for the degrading status of Latin American men who, as third-world, colonised, or tentatively democratised subjects of, in all cases, economically dependent nations, are incapable of measuring up to the nostalgic masculine ideal of nationalism. Furthermore, it is clear that an exclusively heterosexual reading is untenable. Certainly the book's exhaustive assertion of male physicality may also be read as a homoerotic discourse, where masculinity is staged, takes place and is imitated in all-male environments as a baroque display of machismo. With regard to this, the singer's *machista* prowess is commemorated by the narrator as a series of tales recounted to him in accompaniment of Daniel songs, which are heard in countless Latin American bars and billiard halls. The extended eroticisation of identity in this novel-length text is the culmination of Sánchez's challenge to traditional nationalism in favour of an informal Caribbean nationhood and Pan-American affiliations that emerge surreptitiously as popular rituals of belonging in the absence meaningful nation-statehood in the Caribbean and Latin America.

### Biography

Born in Humacao, Puerto Rico, 17 November 1936, into a working-class family. Family moved to San Juan, 1948. Actor for Puerto Rican radio in his late teens; also acted in the theatre.

Studied at Humanities Faculty of the University of Puerto Rico, 1956. Scholarship to Columbia University, New York, 1959. Master's degree from New York University, 1963. PhD from University of Madrid, 1967. Lecturer in Hispanic Literature, University of Puerto Rico, 1969. Awarded Guggenheim Fellowship in 1985, which allowed him to start writing *La importancia de llamarse Daniel Santos* [The Importance of Being Daniel Santos]. From the 1990s spends half the year teaching at the City University of New York (CUNY) and the rest of the time travelling and writing.

JOHN D. PERIVOLARIS

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# SARDUY, SEVERO

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1937–1993

Cuban prose writer and poet

In Sarduy's texts eroticism is a mercurial element that serves as the vehicle for a deconstructive drive. Revisiting Latin American writers' traditional search for their origins, Sarduy's texts reveal the fissures, fluidity, and plurality behind the myths of nationality and identity underpinning Cuban and Latin American literary tradition. Influenced by the ideas of Jacques Lacan, structuralism, and, eventually, post-structuralism, with which Sarduy had come into contact in Paris, novels such as *Gestos* [*Gestures*] (1963) and *De donde son los cantantes* [*From Cuba with a Song*] (1967) subvert those myths.

The realization of such myths is constantly deferred and diverted by the inability of culture and language to fulfil the desire for stability, essence, unity, and origins. For example, in *De donde son los cantantes* gender roles are confused by the switching of Spanish grammatical genders when referring to the two protagonists, a pair of transvestites. As a result, the impossibility of ascertaining their true sex is associated with their freewheeling, polymorphous sexuality. Desire becomes perversion through a sexual role-playing which, in turns, parodies the heterosexual, political, religious, and scientific desire for power, unity, and fulfilment which is explored in this and subsequent novels, such as *Cobra* (1972), *Maitreya* (1978), *Colibrí* [*Hummingbird*]

(1984), *Cocuyo* [*The Glowworm*] (1990), and *Los pájaros en la playa* [*The Birds on the Beach*] (1993).

Traditionally, sexual, nationalist, and cultural politics in the Caribbean and Latin America have been publicly transacted through patriarchal discourses. Therefore, the absence of conventionally nuclear family groups, the parody of patriarchal and matriarchal authority, and the haphazard, nonreproductive sexual relations that take place in Sarduy's novels highlight eroticism as a subversive but also liberatingly dynamic force that allows change to take place. In this context, the characters' desire often enables them not only to cross genders but also to metamorphose into other biological species. In Sarduy's world, freedom involves breaking free from the gravity of historical, ideological, cultural, and even biological, origins, to achieve a free-floating, promiscuous indeterminacy that is by definition erotic. This is increasingly matched by the transnational or indeterminate geographical settings of the novels. *De donde son los cantantes* involves a journey across Cuba from east to west; *Cobra* a journey through India, Cuba, and China; and *Maitreya* a pilgrimage from Tibet to Cuba, Miami, New York, and Iran on the eve of the Islamic Revolution.

*Colibrí*, *Cocuyo*, *El Cristo de la rue Jacob* [*Christ on the Rue Jacob*] (1987), and the essay *La simulación* [*Simulation*] (1982), mark a shift towards autobiographical representations of the *bildungsroman* and a greater concern with the individual's survival of his fragmentation in the face of culture, language, and repression by historical authority. Sarduy's reflections on the individual's endurance, albeit as a fractured self, is lent poignancy by Sarduy's rise to fame as a writer associated with the cultural upheaval of the Cuban Revolution and his subsequent self-exile in France during the persecution of homosexuals in Cuba. The autobiographical vein intensifies in the posthumously published novel, *Los pájaros en la playa* and the miscellaneous collection, *Epitafios, Imitación, Aforismos* [*Epitaphs, Imitation, Aphorisms*] (1994), written after the author had been diagnosed with AIDS and dealing respectively with life in an island AIDS sanatorium and his own personal reflections while experiencing the illness. In Sarduy's last novel eroticism constitutes a release from

the abjection of identity, with *pájaro* being a derogatory term for identifying homosexuals. Homosexuality is cast out to the margins of society in the novel's very title, and in the situation of the sanatorium on the beach, a liminal space between land and sea. However, *Cosmógrafo*, a central, autobiographical, character with AIDS, escapes the confines of identity through cosmological meditations that he vainly hopes will lead him to the origins and cure of the illness. These reflections resemble Sarduy's own in his 1987 essay *Nueva inestabilidad* [*New Instability*].

Part of the complexity of Sarduy's skepticism towards language and culture, as an eternally receding series of repressive structures, is his eternal, inescapable return to their promise of freedom. In this sense, they are structures synonymous with an eroticism that is both transcendental and hopelessly text-bound. Hence, at the end of *Cosmógrafo's* diary, with which Sarduy's novel also ends, a poem by the Soviet lesbian poet Marina Tsvetayeva is reproduced, in a gesture of citation and literary collage that characterizes Sarduy's work in general. This is textually promiscuous, built out of layers of intricate reference to mass culture, painting, literature, and other cultural texts, and tenuously holding together as a body of literature whose linguistic extravagance is both pleasurable and fatally infectious.

### Biography

Born in Camagüey, Cuba, 25 February 1937. Attended the Instituto de Segunda Enseñanza de Camagüey; Faculty of Medicine, University of Havana, 1956–60; École Pratique des Hautes Études at the Sorbonne. Contributed to the journal *Lunes de Revolución*, 1959, and in the same year left Cuba to study in Paris. Lived in Paris for the rest of his life; became a French citizen in 1967. Director of the Latin American collection at the publishing house Editions du Seuil, 1969–1990, and of the Latin American division at the publishing company Gallimard, 1990–1993. Received the Medicis International Award, 1972 for *Cobra*; Paul Gibson and Italia Awards for radio and television, 1983. Died of AIDS in Paris, 1993.

JOHN D. PERIVOLARIS

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## SARTRE, JEAN-PAUL

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1905–1980

French philosopher, novelist, dramatist, essayist, and critic

Jean-Paul Sartre is not primarily regarded as an author of erotic literature, yet characters of dubious or deviant sexuality, enmeshed in bizarre or dysfunctional relationships, abound in his major works of fiction and theater. The three *dramatis personae* of his best-known play *In Camera*, for example, are a lesbian, an infanticidal nymphomaniac, and a macho philanderer who torments his wife by entertaining his mistresses in the marital bed. The hero of his famous political drama, *Dirty Hands*, is an impotent young intellectual who has a pseudo-incestuous, yet seemingly asexual, relationship with his girlish and apparently frigid wife, who

finally falls into the arms of the mature 'Proletarian Party' boss, provoking his overdue assassination by her husband's hand. The central character of Sartre's last original play, *The Condemned of Altona*, sustains a fully incestuous relationship with his sister, and attempts for good measure to seduce his sister-in-law, while the entire family is under the same roof!

In his first novel, *Nausea*, Sartre's *alter ego*, Antoine Roquentin, exacerbates his debilitating apprehension of the viscous plenitude and disconcerting flux of contingent physical existence, by indulging in perfunctory sexual intercourse with the landlady of a local bar. Additionally, three episodes of child molestation in the book (recounted by Roquentin, rather than involving him) caused his publisher's lawyers to advise a toning-down of the more vulgar and explicit

vocabulary. In Sartre's later trilogy of novels, *The Roads to Freedom*, the protagonist Mathieu divides his energies in the first volume, *The Age of Reason*, between trying to procure an abortion for his mistress, Marcelle, and trying to seduce his androgynous and probably lesbian pupil, Ivich. He fails on both counts, and Marcelle finally marries their mutual friend Daniel, a repressed and self-loathing homosexual, who views marriage as an exquisite punishment for his guilt-ridden deviancy.

However, it is Sartre's second work of fiction—a collection of short stories entitled *The Wall*—which reveals his potential as an erotic writer. These five novellas brought him, simultaneously, commercial and critical success (the *Prix du roman populiste* of 1940) and widespread notoriety. Critics in the press made comparisons with Céline's *Voyage au bout de la nuit*, and accused Sartre of, *inter alia*, “sexual obsession,” “crudity,” and “visceral realism.” Even Albert Camus, although laudatory in the main, queried the “use the author makes of obscenity.” In fact, three of these stories contain little reference to sex. The first, “The Wall,” includes some scatological details, but these are not gratuitous in the context of a prison cell holding Spanish Republican partisans faced with torture and execution. The fifth story, “Childhood of a Leader,” is the length of a short novel, and contains episodes in which the hero, Lucien Fleurier, indulges adolescent homosexual tendencies before confirming his conventional heterosexuality with a young woman whom he regards as his social inferior, yet a necessary stage on his way to male, bourgeois respectability. The second story, however, introduces a sexual theme which builds throughout the third into a kind of “dry orgasm” in the fourth, where the focus is emphatically, perversely, and paradoxically upon impotence, frigidity, masturbation, abstinence, and frustration.

“The Room” recounts the visit of Monsieur Darbédat to his daughter Ève, whose husband—a psychotic invalid called Pierre (meaning “stone”)—refuses to leave his darkened room where he is tormented by flying statues, terrifying hallucinations in which he implicates and humiliates his submissive wife by calling her “Agathe,” a name in French which sounds like that of the mineral “agate.” The nub of the narrative is Monsieur Darbédat's realization that his wife's intuition is right: Ève stays with Pierre

only because “they still do *that*.” The mesmeric fascination of exclusively sexual—and subliminally sadomasochistic—relations is implicitly privileged, and ironically reflected by the evidently continent relationship existing between Monsieur and Madame Darbédat, who are exemplars of middle-class propriety, and transparent parodies of Sartre's grandparents, who slept separately from the early days of their marriage, according to his account in *Words*.

“Erostratus” concerns the ambition of Paul Hilbert, a petty employee in Paris, to make himself immortal—like the eponymous arsonist of the Temple at Ephesus—by means of a gratuitous act of violent destruction, namely the random shooting of people in the street, followed by suicide: both projects fail abjectly. His sexual quirk is a voyeuristic auto-eroticism, evoked explicitly, yet subtly, in a scene where he employs a prostitute to parade naked in front of him, and then to masturbate with his walking-stick, until he ejaculates spontaneously while himself remaining fully-clothed, “right down to his gloves.” So audacious or titillating was this passage for the British publishers of Lloyd Alexander's 1949 translation of the book—as *Intimacy*—that it is crucially censored by a combination of judicious excision and deliberate, or possibly inept, misconstruction.

“Intimacy” is the story that attracted most vehement censure in France, and most extensive censorship in the English translation, no doubt because—as Geneviève Idt has observed—its theme is *female* sexuality. Lulu is married to the impotent Henri, but having an affair with the sexually accomplished Pierre. Through a promiscuous combination of stream-of-consciousness monologues, dramatic dialogues and orthodox third-person narration, the story explores Lulu's dilemma: should she abandon Henri for a new life in Nice with Pierre? She is actively encouraged in this by her girlfriend, Rirette, who appears to be sexually voracious, yet is actually lonely, celibate, jealous of Lulu, and apt to flirt pathetically with café waiters, whilst secretly fantasizing about eloping with Pierre herself. The obvious attraction of life in the sun with an attentive lover is, however, vitiated for Lulu by the revulsion she feels for the sexual act, her accounts of which place vivid stress on the repellent hardness of taut male muscle—particularly of the erect penis—and on her object-status as a “musical instrument being played upon by a

maestro,” whose legacy is nevertheless a cold, damp, soiled bed. By contrast, the sweet softness of Henri’s impotent “thing” is a reassurance of purity and a justification for her habit of masturbation: “Only I can give myself pleasure,” Lulu tells herself, “the doctor said so, it’s a medical fact.” Constructing a socially respectable and morally plausible pretext, Lulu eventually rejects Pierre because she is “indispensable” to Henri, who would “kill himself” without her. Rirette is disappointed that Pierre does not consequently turn his attention to her, and both women revert to the *status quo ante* in an atmosphere of muted desperation.

These overt references to female auto-eroticism were evidently taboo at the time and were completely excised in the first English translation. However, it is clear from the body of his work as a whole that Sartre is not especially interested in the erotic as such. Rather, in *The Wall*, he exploits the erotic as a vernacular idiom in which to transpose metaphorically one of the central preoccupations of his philosophy, namely the characteristically human paradox of simultaneous aspirations towards thing-like stability (the “in-itself”), and self-conscious subjectivity (the “for-itself”), and the tension between freedom and responsibility that flows from this contradiction.

### Biography

Born Paris 21 June 1905. Lives with widowed mother (Anne-Marie Schweitzer) and her parents in Meudon, 1906–1911, then in Paris, attending Lycée Henri IV, until mother’s remarriage, 1917. After “three unhappiest years of [his] life” in La Rochelle, returns to Paris, Lycée Louis-le-Grand, then École Normale Supérieure. Fails Agrégation de philosophie 1928, but graduates first 1929 (with Simone de Beauvoir second). Military service 1929–1931, teaching in Le Havre 1931–1936, except for scholarship in Berlin to study under Husserl, 1933–1934. Appointed to Lycée Pasteur, Paris, publishes *La Nausée* and *Le Mur*, 1937–1939. Mobilized, captured, released, 1939–1941, assumes post at Lycée Condorcet, Paris. Makes mark in philosophy and theater with *L’Être et le néant*, *Les Mouches* and *Huis clos*, 1943–1944. “Existentialism” enjoys post-war vogue with publication of novels, plays, essays, and periodical *Les Temps modernes*, 1945–1950.

Increasingly active politically, as critical fellow-traveler of French Communist Party and opponent of government policies in Indochina and Algeria, 1950s. Refuses Nobel Prize for literature, 1964, chairs Russell Tribunal on American war-crimes in Vietnam, 1966–1967. Supports “Prague Spring” and student-led “events” of May 1968, condemns Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. Remains close to extreme-left movements, notably Maoists, post-68, becomes nominal editor of banned newspapers, *La Cause du Peuple* and *Libération*. Deserts Marxism, espouses “libertarian socialism,” 1970s. Sight failing, devotes last years to interviews and vocal support of dispossessed until death, 15 April 1980.

BENEDICT O’DONOHOE

### Selected Works

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# SCANDINAVIAN LANGUAGES

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In the three Scandinavian countries censorship is as old as printing itself. It was directed against papal heretics, people with dangerous political messages, and obscene writers. But since history differs, we will deal with them separately.

In Denmark, censorship was formalized in 1537. Except for a short period from 1770–1773 censorship was exercised until the first democratic constitution of 1849. With the Act of Liberty of the Press in 1799, a direct prohibition on offences against public decency was for the first time installed. But at that time the first ban on an erotic book had already taken place. In 1783, Thomas Christopher Bruun's *Mine Frie-Timer* [*My Free Hours*], a series of versifications of Boccaccio and Fontaine, was seized by the police by order of the government. Actually, Bruun was sentenced not only to a fine but also to a reconfirmation since his knowledge of Christian values "seemed to be too weak."

There were attempts to translate European erotic classics such as de Laclous' *Les Liaisons dangereuses* or Crébillon's *Le sophia*, but both were banned. Modern realism was introduced with Georg Brandes' path-breaking lectures at the University in 1872 in which he defined living literature as 'literature putting things under debate.' With his radicalism a new naturalist literature grew dealing with, for instance, marriage and sexual relations. An uproar was caused by the novel *Haabløse Slægter* [*Hopeless Kindred*] (1880) by Herman Bang. The book tried to give passion a new and more realistic voice. This was too much for the court and the book was banned

and Bang fined. He rewrote the book without the passages criminalized by the court in order to have the book published.

In the same decade the first publications commercially exploiting the borders created by police and court were printed. A collection of short stories with erotic themes were published with the title *Forbudne Frugter* [*Forbidden Fruits*] (1886). These stories were deliberately written within the legal border of decency, and they paved the way for an erotic, underground a specific spicy genre, which published work; secretly until abolition of the anti-porn regulations in the penal code.

From the 1880s, how to integrate the sexual world into text became a problem for literature. To make representations of erotic scenes directly was out of the question. But it was possible to let these scenes begin, for instance, with a kiss and then continue with ellipses (...). Or the result could be indirectly referred to by a pregnancy or a birth. The possibilities for authors were thus to use their imaginations to create lust-provoking settings. One bestseller was, for instance, written as a book about atrocities committed by the Germans in World War One and called *Barbarkvinder* [*Barbarian Women*] (1917). It came out in seven printings before the police discovered the fraud and confiscated it.

A new phase began around 1920 when modernism hit Danish culture in many aspects. The introduction of psychoanalysis as well as literary modernism prepared the way for making the fight for sexual reform an issue for the progressive culture. All the modernist themes were

introduced and articulated by a group of intellectuals later known as *cultural radicals*.

The new phase was marked by the trial against an expressionist collection of poems by Rudolf Broby called *Blod* [*Blood*] (1922). The book introduced a series of sexual motives which the court didn't like. For instance, a poem describing a prostitute provoking an abortion on herself with a knitting pin. The poems were not in any sense arousing, but still they were considered pornographic, banned, and were fined.

When Josephine Baker visited Copenhagen in 1928, one of the leading cultural radicals, the architect Poul Henningsen, wrote an article in a journal on 'The Pedagogic Value of Pornography.' He defended the rights of artists, but also the rights of adults to be aroused. He thought of it as a democratic issue. The police took the opposite position: they didn't care to ban *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in English, since it was expensive and in a foreign language. Only men of the elite would be customers and therefore of no harm. But a Danish translation saw daylight only in a censored version.

During the 1930s, the fight for sexual reform was integrated in the anti-fascist struggle. In this the cultural radicals associated themselves with the freedom-discourse going back to the Enlightenment. But the decade was also the first period for home-grown Danish pornography. In the police archives we find what the police termed 'typewritten books': the producers of porn simply wrote the novels on a type-writer and bound them. Then they were hired out (often with photos glued to the blank pages) from second-hand bookshops in Copenhagen. Printed pornography was still imported from the mass-producing countries: Britain, France, and Germany.

In the last years of the 1930s and during World War II, the police were busiest. Pictures were banned, and even paintings with erotic motifs were prohibited. The Obscenity Act was made more severe, and there was a series of cases against a sexual reform journal, *Sex og Samfund* [*Sex and Society*]. Also translated American crime fiction with erotic elements was prosecuted.

Although the police suggested many possible cases to the Public Prosecutor, none came to trial after the war. When Henry Miller's *Tropic of Cancer* was translated into Danish in 1954, no trial followed. The following year, *Tropic of*

*Capricorn* was translated without repercussion. The Public Prosecutor had reflected the public mood by renouncing a trial against Miller's publisher. This was really the beginning of the abolition of the Obscenity Act. To understand this change, we must call attention to at least two important changes in Danish culture: first, the opening of Danish culture to modern life had happened through the cultural radicalists and their emancipatory program; second, the democratic culture in Denmark had favored a relativistic view on class cultures and as a famous Danish female politician, Else Merete Ross, formulated the problem: "Why should one class dictate to other classes their view on sex, when sex is a private affair?"

A new wave of translated erotic books created a new open market and even new Danish books were published. The translation of John Cleland's classic *Fanny Hill* was the last battle. In 1965, the Supreme Court acquitted the Danish publisher and numerous Danish and translated books were published before the Obscenity Act was abolished for texts in 1967 and for pictures in 1969.

The period 1961 to 1969 was the golden period of Danish erotic literature. Both commercial and artistic books sold very well and stimulated the market. A milestone was publication of the author Sven Holm's anthology *Sengeheste* [literally: *Bedstaves*, but in Danish: *Bed-Horses*] in three volumes (1965–1967) in which well-known Danish authors published short stories with erotic themes. But the flourishing market began to dry up when picture-porn was legalized in 1969.

Although the market for erotic fiction as such dried up, it never completely disappeared but lived more or less through translations. Most important was, however, that a new fictional language had grown from this experience and erotic scenes were more or less easily integrated into artistic fiction. The porn language could be used in connection with the opening of all spheres of human activity for fiction works. The sexual revolution was thus also a textual revolution.

Norway was constitutionally and legally a part of Denmark until 1814 and in a union with Sweden until 1905. The breaking up of the old society caused a new public discourse on the modern society. Henrik Ibsen's plays *Et Dukkehjem* [*A Doll's House*] (1879) and *Gengangere* [*Ghosts*] (1881) displayed an emancipatory

outlook towards marriage and womens' role and spoke of venereal diseases. They were accused of indecency.

Ibsen and the modernists in Kristiania (now Oslo) were adherents of Brandes' radicalism. In the 1880s, this trend clashed with the legal system. In 1884, Hans Jæger published the two-volume novel *Fra Kristiania-Bohømen* [*From the Kristiania Bohemian*]. It is a naturalistic book about two young men and the pressure they experience from their sexuality. Jæger was probably the first one to go as far in describing intercourse, and the book was seized only an hour after its release. He was imprisoned and fined. He later issued the book under the title *Julefortællinger* [*Christmas Tales*] and the printer sold them in Sweden. But the Swedish legal system put Jæger on trial again in Norway, and he was sent to jail again, he lost his job as a stenographer in Parliament and was kicked out of university.

In 1886, Jæger's friend, the painter Christian Krohg, published the novel *Albertine* about a poor and beautiful girl who becomes a prostitute. Not only a graphic rape scene, but also the outspoken way in which he addressed prostitution and social conditions, caused confiscation—but it was said in a contemporary newspaper that it was because of the author's critical attitudes towards the police.

At the same time, Arne Garborg published his book *Mannfolk* [*Men*] which was much more outspokenly erotic than Krohg's novel, and actually Garborg demanded his novel be seized also. But it wasn't. Perhaps the reason was that Garborg's novel was written in 'landsmål,' the Norwegian language spoken in the countryside in opposition to the official Danish-like 'bokmål.'

Both Jæger and Garborg saw sexuality as determined by societal (dis)order and wrote their novels in the wake of naturalism. And they both pursued this tendency in the following books, especially Jægers trilogy *Syk kjærlihet* [*Sick Love*], which he published privately in France, where he lived in exile, which is a very radical book also in its erotic passages. The love is considered sick not only because it has certain sadomasochistic traits, but most of all because it tends to rule Hans Jæger's (the main character) life. The book was reviewed by a Danish journalist, Jean-Jacques Ipsen, and he was then sentenced to one month in jail due to this review.

Cultural radicalism also had a strong impact in Norway in the inter-war period and brought

erotic fiction back on the agenda. In 1931 one of the leading Norwegian cultural radicalists, the author Sigurd Hoel, published the novel *Syndere i sommersol* [*Sinners in Summer-sun*] about four young men and four young women living together one summer while on vacation. The novel is based on psychoanalysis as well as on a kind of sensual rite. Sex, the body, moving, and eating is a pleasure which is humanly divine. The book caused a lot of religious indignation most of all because the women were described as sexually hungry and self-confident—they were more emancipated than contemporary men thought feminine. Later, in the 1930s, Hoel became a pupil of Wilhelm Reich who lived in Norway before emigrating to the United States.

We have to go to the 1950s to find the next wave of erotic literature. One of its peaks were the case against Agnar Mykle's *Sangen om den røde rubin* [*The Song of the Red Ruby*] in 1956. Also his novel *Lasso rundt fru Luna* [*Lasso Around Mrs. Luna*] in 1954 should be mentioned with the *Ruby* as some of the finest erotic books in Norwegian literature. Both books are about a young man, Ask Burlefot, from a puritanical background, who becomes an adult and seeks his own way. The first book ends in a kind of failure of his, but the second one shows that passionate love can also be part of a solution.

Mykle's description of intercourse search caused a scandal. And the details were too much for the public prosecutor and so were his attacks on puritanical Protestantism. After some months of public witchhunting, the prosecutor, in February 1957, accused Mykle of offending public decency. In October, he was acquitted, but the remaining books were still confiscated. In May 1958, they were also acquitted by the supreme court. The book was a tremendous success (17 printings the first year), but for Mykle, the outcome of the witchhunt was disastrous. He withdrew from public life and stopped writing.

In the wake of Mykle's book, an order of confiscation was made against the Norwegian importers of the Danish translation of Henry Miller's *Sexus*. In 1959, the supreme court found the book obscene and the confiscation was sustained.

The most significant legal process was the one against Jens Bjørneboe's *Uten en tråd* [*Without a Stitch*] in 1966. The book came out anonymously and was written as many pornographic books are: with only erotic scenes, and little else.

Bjørneboe became known as the author and turned the process into a farce. He accepted that the book wasn't of very high artistic value, but it had been necessary for him to write in order to arrive at his next novel. The book was confiscated and in 1967 the supreme court sentenced Bjørneboe to a fine of 1000 Nkr. and a fine of 10,000 Nkr. to his publisher.

Although both Denmark and Sweden lifted the ban on pornography, Norway didn't and Section 211 of their penal code is still in force. The actual enforcement of it has changed, however. Pornography is in fact sold in Norway without police action.

In Sweden, censorship has been the rule. From 1684 a royal ordinance was issued with the result that everything to be printed was pre-censored. With the exception of a short period of freedom under Gustav III this system functioned until the military coup in 1809 and the Freedom of the Press Act of 1810. The new legal system required all press cases to be tried by a jury, which might be the reason that many press cases ended in acquittal.

The first legal case against literature was the famous case against August Strindberg's *Giftas*, part 1 [*Getting Married*], a collection of short stories from 1884. They were about marital relations and quite open and realistic. But one story, 'Dygdens lön' [The Reward of Virtue], was read as blasphemous, and he was prosecuted, but later, acquitted. It labelled him as obscene for many years, and he had difficulties in getting the play *Fröken Julie* [*Miss Julie*] published in 1888.

In 1896, Gustaf Fröding published *Stänk och flikar* [*Splashes and Flaps*]. In one of the poems, 'En morgondröm' [A Morning Dream] there was a description of intercourse, which both in words and in rhyme was considered highly obscene. There was an uproar in the press and a demand for confiscation. Fröding was actually prosecuted and the book confiscated. As in the case of Strindberg it was tried by a jury, the jury voted not guilty, and Fröding was acquitted. But as the collection was re-edited, the lovemaking passage was omitted. As a result of the Fröding-case, the press law was changed. The old wording about texts that "furthered a demoralizing manner of life" was changed so that these texts would be criminalized if they offended "decency and morality."

In the inter-war period, Nazism and extreme-Rightist tendencies were rather strong in Sweden,

and surfaced during the so-called Krusenstjerna-fight in 1934–1935. In 1930–1935, Agnes von Krusenstjerna published the seven-volume novel-cycle called *Fröknarna von Pahlen* [*The Misses von Pahlen*] about some Swedish noble-women. In these novels she describes sexuality rather openly and especially a lesbian scene and one scandalous lovemaking scene between a brother and a sister. She was heavily attacked from the Right. Her novels became a theme in the fight between democracy and women's rights on one hand and Right-wing morality and the church on the other. But it never went as far as a legal prosecution.

In Sweden in the inter-war period there was a radical movement for sexual enlightenment (RFSU). The movement represented some of the same points of view as cultural radicalism in Denmark and Norway. In the post-war period these enlightened views became the leading trend. One of the first instances came with Ivar Lo-Johansson's novel *Geniet* [*The Genius*] (1947) in which he wrote about the sexual misery of youth, and especially about masturbation and the propaganda against it. Also Bengt Anderberg's novel *Kain* of 1948 with some descriptions of intercourse and his *Svensk Decameron* [*Swedish Decameron*] from 1949 were also in this first round.

Influenced by the openness of Swedish film-making, literature also moved towards more openness. Even though the film *491* by Vilgot Sjöman was banned in 1963, other films by him and by Ingmar Bergmann in the 1960s broke through the walls of censorship.

In 1965, Bengt Anderberg started the series *Kärlek* [*Love*] published in 14 volumes until 1970. The books contained short stories by Swedish authors produced for the exotic market. Anderberg wanted to produce 'good pornography for everybody,' and the series was a tremendous success. Pornography was a "legitimate need," wrote a Swedish intellectual. The acknowledged Swedish literary journal *Ord och Bild* [*Word and Picture*] even published an issue with pictures from porn magazines.

As a result of the ban of the film *491*, a parliamentary commission was set up, and in 1969 it recommended the abolition of censorship for adults. The parliament didn't agree, and even today, films are pre-censored in Sweden. But in 1970 the regulations in the penal code on obscenity were abolished, and even in the

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area of film the trend became rather liberal. In the 1970s, it even became possible to see 491.

MORTEN THING

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# SCHNITZLER, ARTHUR

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1862–1931

Austrian dramatist and narrator

Through his composition of early poetry and aphorisms, scandalous plays, innovative short stories and novellas, and select novels Arthur Schnitzler is known today as one of the most important Austrian authors of the turn of the century. The entirety of his oeuvre reflects both inner and outer mechanisms of late-Imperial Austria and its subjects, often leaving his readers with the task of coming to terms with the conundrum of what is truth/being or just appearance/semblance, the German *Sein und Schein*. His works, including Schnitzler's 8,000-pages-long diary manuscript, offer a detailed chronicle of the Viennese fin-de-siècle period (1890–1925) and thematize among many issues the dilemma of assimilation for Austrian Jews (*Der Weg ins Freie*, 1908; *The Road into the Open*), the Catholic Church's promoting of anti-Semitic prejudice against established professionals (*Professor Bernhardi*, 1912), and, in general, his times' attitudes, beliefs, prejudices, and political and social practices. In this vein, his play *Fink und Fliederbusch*

(1917), which depicts a duel between two rivaling journalists, is equally about the enduring fascination with the militaristic honor code and the influential as well as calculating power of contemporary media outlets.

Despite this broad range of themes, Schnitzler is perhaps best known for exploring in his narratives and plays the erotic and decadent stimuli that linked the entirety of society, regardless of noted social differences. His introduction into literature of the *süßes Mädel* type, the sweet girl, exemplifies such constant exploration of sexuality that transcends all class barriers. The *süßes Mädel* is described aptly as a young girl from the *Vorstadt*, the Viennese outskirts, who both lovingly and frivolously pursues sexual adventures with young men of better social standing, only to reach in later years perfect petit bourgeois haven by marrying the solid, ordinary workman type. Her sexual openness and availability together with the understanding that the sweet girl will not pursue her relationship beyond a certain point cultivate her intense attraction. The frailty of bourgeois respectability and of society's demands of moral decency thus take center

stage in Schnitzler's quest to unveil sexual libido as the defining element that links all social classes. Sigmund Freud, whose *Traumdeutung* [*Interpretations of Dreams*] (1900) mirrors Schnitzler's understanding of sexuality as the key mover of mankind's behavior, expressed in a letter to Schnitzler in 1922 to what degree he viewed the writer as an intimidating double of himself. Schnitzler's talent for portraying his characters' inner processes, albeit primarily through what is unspoken, shows how close his literature of the subconscious is to Freudian concepts.

Easily the most controversial Schnitzler play, *Reigen* [*Hands Around: A Cycle of Ten Dialogues*] (1903) unmasks its characters' moral façade as each experiences the full circle of a sexual merry-go-round in which society's entirety is linked in both directions from the prostitute up to the aristocrat by ten implied sexual acts. Illustrating these acts only by means of dashes in the written play, Schnitzler's concern is to highlight the duplicity of verbal exchanges before and after each encounter. The play's scenes, which have been compared to a medieval *Totentanz* (a traditional Austrian ritual of the dance of death), exemplify a simultaneous presence of anticipation and dissatisfaction, subordination and brazenness, the desire for adventure and marital duty, frivolity and naiveté, all bundled in the constant expectation of achieving pure sexual pleasure. After the 1920 premiere of the play in Berlin and its 1921 performance in Vienna, a wave of disapproval spread across the German-speaking lands and denunciations of Schnitzler as pornographer were ubiquitous. Organized public disturbances in Vienna and Berlin, initiated by nationalistic and anti-Semitic organizations, culminated in a trial involving the entire Berlin ensemble and ultimately in Schnitzler's withdrawal of his permission to have his play performed. Only after his son, Heinrich, lifted the sanction in 1981, could it be seen once again in European theaters. Max Ophüls' celebrated French film adaptation, *La Ronde* (1950), was banned as well until the United States Supreme Court overruled a ban in the state of New York in 1954.

Defying the literary convention and what is familiar to readers, in the three-act play *Liebelei* [*Light-O'-Love*] (1895) the sweet girl disobeys the stereotypical relationship. Christine reveals unexpected emotions that go beyond the comprehension of her surroundings as she falls in love with her cheating lover Fritz, and this despite

her awareness of the evanescence of their relationship:

CHRISTINE: Love!—He?—I was nothing else to him but a way of passing the time—and he died for another woman!—And I—adored him!—Did he not know?...

### *Light-O'-Love, Act 3*

Fritz's affair with a married woman betrays his initial affair with Christine, only to die in the end during a duel with the married woman's husband. Yet again, the vision of sexual desires and engagements becomes the primary determinant in unveiling tensions and emotions, underneath the veil of a deceptively ordered life, in what appears to be a stable society. In this example, sexuality takes shape in what many view as the typically Austrian duality of politeness and malice.

Schnitzler's plays rarely reach the level of erotic explicitness as in the interior monologue of the novella *Fräulein Else* (1924). It exposes a young woman's psychological state that is torn between respectful love for her father and the powerful sexual desire to reveal her virginal body to unknown onlookers. She finds a seeming exhibitionist solution to this dilemma in the covering of her naked body with only a coat, which she drops in front of everyone in a hotel, only to lose consciousness and eventually commit suicide. Once again, hints of frivolity that were so provocative to the superficial prudery of Schnitzler's contemporaries are engulfed by more complex arrangements. Else is trapped in a psychological and in a social conflict, since her wish to expose herself originates in a need to sell her body in order to guarantee the financial survival of her family. Without a doubt, it is because of such sexual thematics and because of these hermeneutic possibilities that many of Schnitzler's plays are still frequently performed today. And for similar reasons, many of his texts have been reinterpreted by film makers, such as the well-publicized adaptation of *Traumnovelle* [*Rhapsody: A Dream Novel*] (1926) in Stanley Kubrick's *Eyes Wide Shut* (1999).

### **Biography**

Born in Vienna, Austria, May 15, 1862. Youngest of four children of the well-known laryngologist

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Johann Schnitzler. Educated at the Akademisches Gymnasium (1871–1879); attended the University of Vienna medical school (1879–1885; MD 1885). Served as assistant and intern to Theodor Meynert, one of Sigmund Freud's teachers, in the Wiener Allgemeines Krankenhaus (1885–1888); assistant to his father in the Polyklinik (1888–1893). After his father's death (1893), Schnitzler ran a private practice and specialized in nervous disorders. His increasing literary productivity reduced the focus on medical practice. In the 1890s, Schnitzler had close contact with the Zionist Theodor Herzl, but he did not support his ideals. Schnitzler's literary assessment of the dubious qualities of the Austrian military honor code in the novella *Leutnant Gustl* [*Lieutenant Gustl*] (1901) culminated in a court's revoking of his reserve officer title. Recipient of numerous literary awards: Bauernfeld Prize, 1899, 1903; Franz Grillparzer Prize, 1908; Ferdinand Raimund Prize, 1914; Vienna Volkstheater Prize, 1920. He died in Vienna on 21 October 1931.

ARNE KOCH

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# SCIENCE FICTION AND FANTASY

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Science Fiction and Fantasy (SF/F), at least in theory, allows writers considerable leeway in the presentation of explicit or alternative material. It is possible to explore themes under the cloak of the alien or the fantastic that would be too risqué in a mainstream format. SF/F publishing has always been culturally marginalized and while this fact is often lamented by practitioners, publishers, and readers, it does allow for a modicum of invisibility. SF/F publishing, broadly defined, includes a wide spectrum of publishing practices, from large commercial publishers to fan-produced items with limited circulation. Since much of this latter material exists “under the radar” it pays little regard to commercial considerations, “community standards,” or copyright. Then there is the nature of the genre itself: as Stanislaw Lem writes, “only in science fiction does a writer have room to vary biological and cultural phenomena so that they extend beyond the reader’s experience” (2).

Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (1897) and J. Sheridan Le Fanu’s earlier lesbian vampire tale, *Carmilla* (1872), are foundational narratives in which fear of the alien is conflated with fear of a more powerful sexuality. Fear of women is evident in many early texts, exemplified by *She* (1887) by H. Rider Haggard, a fantastic voyage narrative in which two explorers encounter an ancient and powerful seductress. There are similar scenarios in Edgar Rice Burroughs’s novels and Robert E. Howard’s *Conan* series of the 1930s. But in all these texts sexuality, though powerful, is only implied. John Clute writes that “traditionally sf has been a puritanical and male-oriented literature” (1088). From early in the twentieth century until the “new wave” of the 1960s, publishers assumed a readership of male adolescents, which meant that the titillation promised by lurid covers featuring semi-clad women menaced by multi-tentacled aliens (see Harrison) was rarely mirrored in the texts. Throughout its early history, then, SF/F placed considerable emphasis on fear of women and sexuality, and on violence,

but while it engaged with sexual themes and images, it was usually in a cautionary way.

By the 1980s there was a “radical exploration of alternative sexual possibilities” (Clute 1089), in part due to ground-breaking work by writers and publishers in the preceding two decades. Robert A. Heinlein’s *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961), though dated today, was a landmark in its exploration of free love. Ursula K. LeGuin’s classic *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) describes a society of androgynous humans who can take on the characteristics of either sex during their period of “kemmar.” John Varley created a culture of polymorphous sexuality in his Gaen trilogy (*Titan* [1979], *Wizard* [1980], and *Demon* [1984]), and gender-as-costume has become a convention in various high-tech futures, as in Iain M. Banks’s *Culture* novels (*Consider Phelbus* [1987] and *Passim*) in which characters regularly change sex.

Samuel R. Delany’s *Aye and Gomorrah* was “the first major work about gender (and sex!) to win an award [a Nebula award in 1967] in the field” (Notkin, x). Sex is a literal metaphor for the interface between humans and technology in J. G. Ballard’s taboo-breaking *Crash* (1973) and in the intervening decades, cybersex, defined by Richard Glyn Jones as “sex that depends to a greater or lesser extent on technology” (xv), has become a given of the genre.

The increased visibility of women writers had an incalculable impact on the field. A number of women-only utopias were published in the 1970s, radically different from the sexless utopias of earlier periods such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman’s *Herland* (1914). Joanna Russ has been credited for introducing lesbian feminism to SF/F with *When It Changed* (1972) (Garber and Paleo, xi). Suzy McKee Charnas’s *Motherlines* (1978) and Sally M. Gearhart’s *The Wanderground* (1979) are also central texts.

In 1999, Wendy Pearson wrote that “lesbians and gay men have become less alien in the world of sf in the last little while; we have, indeed,



experienced a minor boom in the publishing of stories of ‘alternative sexuality’” (53). Theodore Sturgeon is often considered to have pioneered the use of gay themes in SF/F with his story “The World Well Lost” (1953) about two aliens exiled from their culture for homosexuality (Garber and Paleo). Marion Zimmer Bradley incorporated gay themes into her *Darkover* series in the same period. Samuel Delaney’s *Stars in My Pockets Like Grains of Sand* (1984) is a densely beautiful proclamation of same-sex desire. Melissa Scott and Nicola Griffiths are both award-winning authors who feature lesbian characters. Some other contemporary writers who treat gay and lesbian themes are Clive Barker, Perry Brass, Pat Califa, Jewelle Gomez, Keith Hartman, Jeffrey N. McMahan, Mercedes Lackey, Maureen F. McHugh, Severna Park, Anne Rice, Lawrence Schimel, and Jean Stewart.

In a relationship parallel to that between mainstream literature and erotica, there is also a subgenre of erotic science fiction. Universal’s Beacon Books claims to have published the first true “science fiction pornography” in its “Galaxy Prize Selections” series between 1959–1961 with titles like *Sin in Space* by Cyril Judd (pseud. of C.M. Kornbluth and Judith Merrill, 1961). Greenleaf was an important publisher of SF erotica in the mid-1960s with over fifty titles. After the US Supreme Court ruling on pornography in 1967 there was an outpouring of SF/F erotica. Essex House, an imprint of American Art Enterprises with “unusual aspirations” (Clute, 392), published forty-two titles in less than two years, half of which have SF/F themes. David Meltzer, Michael Perkins, and Philip José Farmer were all important writers for Essex House (Jakubowski, 55–61) whose works have become collectors’ items. Farmer’s three Essex House novels have been described as “probably the best known examples of SF pornography” (Johnson, 5) and his novel *The Lovers* (1961) is credited by several critics as having played a significant role in opening up sexuality as an acceptable SF theme (Lem, 5–7; Stevens, 30). Other notable presses were Olympia (*Satyr Trek* by Ray Kainen, 1970), Ophelia (*A Flutter of Lashes* by Morgan Drake, 1970) and Travelers’ Companion (*Frankenstein 69* by Ed Martin, 1969), all imprints of Maurice Girodias’s Olympia. Bee-line Books (*Pleasure Planet* by Edward George, 1974) was also a prolific publisher of SF/F-themed erotica. By the end of the 1970s,

the flurry subsided, though in recent years there has been a resurgence, notably with the various collections edited by the prolific Cecilia Tan, author of *Telepaths Don’t Need Safewords* (1992) and founder of Circlet Press, publishers of “the cutting edge” of erotic SF/F. Other presses include Alyson (gay and lesbian themes), Cleis, and Leyland (gay male press with some SF erotica).

SF/F art is itself a genre with calendars and coffee-table books by artists such as Frank Frazetta and “adult” graphic novels such as *Morbus Gravis*, a series which features the gravity-defying Druuna, by Paolo Eleuteri Serpieri. Originally published in France by Dargaud Editeur, translated episodes appeared in *Heavy Metal: The Illustrated Fantasy Magazine* and in book form (*Heavy Metal/Kitchen Sink in the International Album Line*). Eurotica and Catalan are also prolific publishers of adult graphic narratives.

Fan-produced texts are an important lode of eroticism in SF/F. According to Eric Garber and Lynn Paleo, some of the first gay and lesbian publications in North America were fannish publications in the 1950s. Considerable academic attention has been paid to “slash,” named for the Kirk/Spock narratives and artwork that predominated the field for so long. Print is still strong but the mimeographed zines of the past, sold from boxes under the tables at conventions and through the mail, have given way to Web sites.

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# SEDUCTION

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The concept of seduction implies notions of persuasion and power. In order for techniques of seduction to be necessary, there must exist some obstacle to the sexual encounter: one party's unwillingness to comply, whether it be for reasons of morality or more pragmatic fear of the potential consequences of the act. As such, the structure of seduction has historically been associated with the masculine conquest of female resistance. However, modern representations of seduction often diverge from this model and in the process highlight the neglected history of seduction by the female. Equally, acts of seduction are not limited to the characters depicted in an erotic narrative, but form a vital part of a text's strategy with regard to the reader. Modern critics have begun to theorize this relationship in terms of seductive behavior, the story acting as a 'flirt' in order to attract readers.

The word 'seduction' finds its roots in the Latin *seducere*, to lead astray or apart (se—apart, ducere—to lead). This meaning is explicitly figured in perhaps the earliest literary instance of seduction, that of Odysseus by the Sirens. Aware that many a sailor has altered his course to seek out the source of the Sirens' enchanting song only to find death on the treacherous rocks of their island, Odysseus plugs the ears of his crew with wax and ties himself to the mast. Already in this ancient representation of seduction, sexual pleasure is offered only in association with compulsion and danger. The Siren is also the first of many mythical creatures (vampire, succubus, sylph ...) endowed with supernatural powers to overcome the will of mere mortals.

The word's etymological meaning persisted into eighteenth-century libertinism which many have seen as the ultimate expression of seduction. Titles such as *Les Égarements du cœur et de l'esprit* by Crébillon fils [*The Wayward Head and Heart*] (1738) preserved connotations of corruption and diversion from the proper moral course. But by this time the gender structure of seduction had been inverted. A long tradition of courtly romance dating from the Middle Ages

had fixed the positions of male and female as ardent suitor and reluctant maiden respectively, as can be seen in the many Troubadour love ballads of the time, or even in Shakespeare's sonnets.

It was at about this time that the legend of the (male) serial seducer gained widespread popularity. From Molière (1665) through Mozart (1787) to Byron (1819–1823), the character of Don Juan gave rise to the enduring figure of the 'love-'em-and-leave-'em' cad, whose sexual stamina and number of conquests are virtually unlimited. Such fictional achievements were paralleled by the real-life antics of Casanova recounted in his *Mémoires [History of My Life]* (1821), whose journeys to the cultural capitals of Europe were always accompanied by a generous sampling of the local female talent.

This focus on quantity was not, however, at the expense of quality. Many of the eighteenth-century libertine novels describe in detail the minute manipulation of language and situation required to effectuate a successful seduction. Seducers like Valmont in Laclos' *Les Liaisons dangereuses [Dangerous Liaisons]* (1782) seem to view the challenge of persuading one virtuous woman to give herself up as emblematic of their triumph over the entire female sex. But the novel ends unhappily for this character as Valmont is himself overcome by the persuasive power of his own language—falling in love with his victim, he spends his last days tormented by regret.

The advent of Sade's fiction marked the end of a libertine tradition that pinned its reputation to obtaining the female's consent despite herself. Violence and compulsion outweigh persuasion and rhetoric in his texts, destroying the delicate balance of active and passive participation required by the act of seduction. Sigmund Freud's development of a 'Seduction Theory' around the turn of the twentieth century did little to enhance the bad reputation the act had acquired. Freud's theories of hysteria posited a real or imagined event of sexual trauma in the patient's

past, which, when repressed, would emerge in the symptoms of the illness. This event, first described as 'attack' or 'abuse' came later to be known as 'seduction.'

One of the main reasons why Freud's seduction theory caused controversy was its application to describe the 'seduction of the daughter' by her father. The idea that a potential victim of child abuse could somehow be complicit in an act of seduction shocked many. Once more, this reaction highlights the delicate balance of persuasion and consent at work in strategies of seduction, by assuming the female participant's essential collusion in the act. Scenes depicting the seduction of men by women have existed throughout history, but twentieth-century representations were to magnify and popularize this theme, increasingly placing women in a position of power over men. The character of Mrs. Robinson in *The Graduate* (1967, Mike Nichols) employs the persuasive techniques of an experienced older woman against the resistance of a younger man in a gender reversal of the traditional initiation scene. Nevertheless, for women, power still stems from physical allure and it is only when combined with beauty that female seductive discourse may be assured of success.

This structure remains even when the act of reading is itself transformed into one of seduction in Barthes' *Le Plaisir du texte* (1973, *The Pleasure of the Text*). Here, the narrative acts as a female seducer, attempting to persuade the reader of its meaning through striptease, revealing just enough to whet his appetite and offering pleasure "où le vêtement baille" ("where the garment yawns"). More recent theoretical endeavors have tried to break down this male-female opposition, viewing the seductive encounter as a potential space for the exposure and reconfiguration of desire through language, with the potential for transgender and anti-patriarchal effects (Baudrillard, Clément). Seduction has always been premised on the existence of an unequal relation of desire, and on a struggle for power. But recent critics have shown that it is a struggle not always won by the dominant party.

SUSAN GRIFFITHS

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# SEI SHÔNAGON

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c. 965–c. 1013  
Japanese diarist

## *Makura no Sôshi* [*The Pillow Book*]

*Makura no Sôshi* is the unique example of “zui-hitsu,” or essay for the Heian period. It is a rare testimony on a woman’s life and her surroundings. The conditions in which Sei Shônagon wrote this essay are still unknown, and different versions exist. Some parts of it are similar to the “nikki” (diaries). It forms a chronicle of court life, especially of gallant intrigues. The author gives a personal glimpse of Heian’s life and sensibility, with a special sense of irony and humor. *The Pillow book* is part of the “kanabungaku,” written in a phonetic writing (the kana), without any Chinese elements; “onnade,” writings of women, were written in hiragana. In fact, “kambun” (literature in Chinese) is reserved for erotic terms, imported from China. Licentious literature was only written in “kambun.”

The title refers to the pillow, though the first title was only *Shônagon no Ki* [*The Book of Shônagon*], as Sei used to write her intimate thoughts on a pile of white paper just as if the pillow became her confidant, each evening, in the secret of her room. This book, often associated with the *Genji Monogatari*, is considered as a masterpiece for its realistic quality and insight into universal feelings. At the beginning of the eleventh century, the aristocratic life seemed quite free, and related to the aesthetic rather than to morality, to the beautiful rather than to the good, and the search of voluptuous sensations was characteristic of that period.

Sei is particularly sensitive to visual, auditory and olfactory pleasure, and is successful in transmitting the precious sensations she received as if it were yesterday, and not a thousand years ago. Within these notes, many characters are brought to life, among which, numerous lovers. She doesn’t refer in any way to her own sentimental

life, and it appears that her notes were read and stolen. It is hardly possible to find any reference to sexuality or nudity in the modern sense, though the main problems of men and women of the court concerned love affairs.

The lover had to follow special codes of behavior: the very important moment was at dawn, at the moment of departure. He should not be concerned about tidying up his clothes or look for his belongings. On the contrary, he should forget his things for example, and express regret at leaving his mistress in despair.

He should be especially gallant at dawn, because it is the moment of departure that remains in the memory of the woman. Summer is considered as the best period for secret dates, and dawn is specially favored in this season.

Very often, the author spies on the lovers, and can therefore describe the quality of their clothes. She watches the comings and goings of men, looking carefully at their hair, or clothes dampened with fog. On the other hand, men often peep at women sleeping, because it is said that the face of an awakening woman is particularly beautiful. A beautiful woman awakening from her siesta and even a sick woman, are valuable sights. Sei alludes to her own situation when she writes that she lives in a place where it is hardly possible to be visited, and where everybody is trying to avoid being watched. Aristocrats used to live in semi-darkness, which adds to the mystery of women, and creates some misunderstanding about the identity of the partner, and the houses of Heian-kyô, the capital, were ideal for peeping through the hedges [*kaimimiru*]. Women used to live in the shadow of screens and curtains, and the aim of the lover was to pass on the other side of the screen, and reach the body of the woman with whom he chatted for a long time. Sei manages to listen to noise through the partition, and she can guess that it is a man who has come secretly to visit one of the ladies. She likes to watch and to listen to other people’s love affairs.

As for seductive physical aspects, the body is never described naked. Despite this, the color of the flesh of a young lord, slightly pink, is admired; young men and women, and children, should be plump to be beautiful. As for women, their teeth should be blackened in a perfect way, and very often, Sei describes the beauty of their hair. At that time, women's hair was the most important asset for seduction, and should be naturally black. It had to be straight, glittering, and as long as possible, reaching to the feet if possible. This is the only part of a woman's body that is described. The skin had to be white, a sign of aristocracy, the mouth small and painted like a rosebud, with white powder around it; the eyebrows were often shaved or plucked, and replaced by painted ones higher up on the forehead.

The beauty of costumes for aristocrats of high rank is an essential asset for seduction, and Sei notes many details about men's and women's beautiful clothes. Women used to wear several layers of clothes, and the matching of colors was considered especially elegant, especially for sleeves. Sei loved the chamberlain's brilliant silk clothes.

No court event was complete without poetry, and no lord or lady was considered as such without poetical skills. A woman would forget chastity and shyness in front of a beautiful poem; along with poetry, calligraphy was considered a skill of the highest rank, and venerated nearly like a religion, said Arthur Waley. Therefore, the way to use a brush was considered the best way to know one's sensibility and personality. Penmanship was as important as beautiful eyes. A woman or a man could easily fall in love while reading a poem or a letter. Sei considers a

letter a beautiful thing. She loves looking at the charming face of a lady who has just received a letter at twilight.

### Biography

Sei Shônagon is supposed to have been born in 965 (or 968), and her father was probably Kyohara no Motosuke, the grandson of prince Toneri, who mainly compiled the *Nihongi* (annals of Japan). She belonged to the Kyohara family, and was then introduced to the imperial palace around 993. She became the maid of princess Sadako, aged fifteen. After 1000, after the death of Sadako, the life of Sei remains unknown. She may have remained at court until 1013.

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## SELBY, HUBERT, JR.

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1928–

American novelist and short story writer

### *Last Exit to Brooklyn*

The 1964 publication of Hubert Selby's *Last Exit to Brooklyn* aroused considerable controversy because of its often profane language and its graphic descriptions of sexual violence. It occasioned a widely publicized obscenity trial in England and extensive debate in the British House of Commons. In Italy, the novel was banned. In fact, the pre-novel magazine publication of one section of *Last Exit* resulted in the editor of the *Provincetown Review* being arrested and charged with distributing pornography to a minor. In retrospect, this controversy involves no little irony since the prevailing tone of Selby's novel, which focuses upon the interrelationship of sexuality and power, is determinedly anti-erotic. *Last Exit* is a grim exploration of the wages of the sins of lust and human exploitation. The penalties that its central characters pay for their sins are so grotesquely excessive that the novel has been discussed as a modern experiment in Swiftian satire.

*Last Exit to Brooklyn* is episodic in structure, consisting of five sections each with its own artistic integrity and a coda that, at first glance, seems the least integrated part of the novel. In fact though, the coda entitled "Landsend" dramatically underscores the fate that awaits the inhabitants of Selby's fictional world and the harsh vision that underscores the five central sections of the text: "Another Day Another Dollar," "And Baby Makes Three," "The Queen Is Dead," "Tralala," and "Strike." Selby's cumulative characterization of a Brooklyn street gang that functions as a kind of avenging force and reappears throughout these five sections is an important unifying device in the novel. Therefore, the five sections stand out as especially memorable.

"The Queen Is Dead" recounts the psychological destruction of Georgette, a young and

sensitive drag queen. Georgette makes the mistake of falling in love with Vinnie, an especially brutal member of the street gang who proceeds to debase and humiliate Georgette in a number of ways. First, the street gang isolates her as the center of a grotesque game in which its individual members take turns throwing a knife at her feet forcing her to leap out of the way. Inevitably she is injured by the knife whereupon Vinnie procures some iodine and, along with the rest of the gang, laughs sadistically as he applies it to her wound. This assault on Georgette symbolically foreshadows Vinnie's forcing her to perform fellatio on him during an orgiastic party. Selby has said that Georgette, easily the most sympathetic character in the novel, was based upon a real-life counterpart who inspired his novel. The obvious narrative compassion for Georgette led to the mistaken impression that the novelist was himself gay.

"Tralala" describes the harrowing destruction of the title character, a cold and calculating prostitute. Initially, Tralala is content to work with the street gang in systematically assaulting and robbing her clients. Along with "Another Day Another Dollar," "Tralala" gives the clearest indication that the novel is set in war time, and Tralala especially targets young enlisted men who wander into her section of Brooklyn. She is baffled and enraged when an army officer, after having sex with her, offers her love instead of money before he is shipped overseas. Seemingly disoriented by this unexpected occurrence, Tralala initiates a prolonged self-abasement which culminates in her becoming the victim of a gang rape. The gang rape scene is described in graphic and extensive detail and constitutes the most horrific moment in Selby's grim naturalistic text.

"Strike," the longest section of the novel, is also a detailed account of self-destruction. It is especially important in the Selby canon for thematic reasons and because it focuses upon one incarnation of a recurring character type. "Strike" is an investigation of the deadly nature

of obsession, a major emphasis in Selby's subsequent fiction; and its main character is the first of several Selby protagonists named Harry. Selby has confirmed that he envisions the various Harrys as constituting one evolving character type, the obsessive and addictive male who hates women and can respond to them only by objectifying them. A lathe operator in a Brooklyn factory, the Harry of "Strike" is provocatively incompetent on the job. Married and the father of an infant son, he hates his wife and child, perceiving them as traps from which he can never escape. Two unrelated experiences offer Harry temporary release from his professional and personal entrapment. First, after the workers in his factory strike, Harry is given the job of running the strike headquarters because no one else wants it. In addition, Harry, who has always been militantly homophobic, begins to find himself attracted to drag queens. He starts frequenting a gay bar where he feels truly empowered for the first time, not realizing that his obsessive personality frightens the young homosexuals whom he tries to pick up in the bar. Eventually Harry becomes involved with a cynical drag queen who, after taking most of Harry's money, dumps him. The strike is ultimately settled, and the union consents to Harry's firing as a concession to management. In such profound despair that he is hardly aware of what he is doing, Harry sexually propositions a young boy and suffers a horrifying retribution for his sin. A street gang appears and beats him so severely that he is left barely conscious and hanging from a chain-length fence in a grotesque parody of Christ's crucifixion.

*Last Exit to Brooklyn* is a harrowing exploration of an urban subculture, a waste land in which all potentially redemptive emotions are distorted by a vengeful power that resides externally in the external slum landscape, but more importantly inside the psyches of its lost and desperate characters. The residents of Selby's

wasteland are specifically victimized by debased and dehumanizing forms of eroticism.

### Biography

Born in 1928 in Brooklyn, New York. *Last Exit to Brooklyn*, his first novel, was published by Grove Press in 1964. Selby has published four subsequent novels and one short story collection, as well as short fiction in *New Directions 17* and the journals *Enclitic*, *Evergreen Review*, *Black Mountain Review*, and *Provincetown Review*.

JAMES R. GILES

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 Volume 1, 1981 issue of *Review of Contemporary Fiction* was devoted to Selby's fiction.



## SELLON, EDWARD

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1818–1866

English writer, translator, and illustrator

### *Annotations on the Sacred Writings of the Hindüs*

Printed for private circulation, the *Sacred Writings* is an anthropological exploration of Indian sexual beliefs and practices. Among other rituals, Sellon describes that of the Kauchilüas, a branch of the Sactas sect. He describes their practice which throws into confusion all the ties of female relationships, and disregards natural restraints. "On the occasions of the performance of divine worship the women and girls deposit their Julies or bodices in a box in the charge of the Gurü or priest. At the close of the rites, the male worshippers take a Julie from the box, and the female to whom it belongs, even were she his sister, becomes his partner for the evening in these lascivious orgies."

### *The New Epicurean; or The Delights of Sex*

Five hundred copies were run off initially selling for £1.113.6d. According to *MS Arcana* most of the first edition stock was seized and destroyed by the Society for the Suppression of Vice after a raid on Dugdale's publishing house in Holywell Street in the summer of 1868 (see Mendes, p. 346). Under the character of Sir Charles, Sellon depicts a life entirely to his tastes, "I am a man who, having passed the Rubicon of youth, has arrived at that age when the passions require a more stimulating diet than is to be found in the arms of every painted courtesan." This was essentially a reworking of his sexual adventures.

*Phoebe Kissagen; or the Remarkable Adventures, Schemes, Wiles, and Devilries of Une Maquerelle, being a sequel to the "New Epicurean."* Sir Charles leaves £3000 to Phoebe and Chloe which allows them to buy a bagnio in Leicester fields. The book contains "the Bagnio

Correspondence", letters from prostitutes' clients describing their various sexual experiences.

### *The Ups and Downs of Life*

Sellon's life has best been told by himself in his "erotic autobiography" (as he called it), *The Ups and Downs of Life*. First published by Dugdale in 1867, it was later reprinted by Auguste Brancart in Brussels in 1892, as *The Amorous Prowess of a Jolly Good Fellow or His Adventures with Lovely Girls as Related by Himself*. The book is a first-hand account of his sexual experiences in both India and England and a demonstration of his uninhibited libertinism. *The Ups and Downs* is a lucid account, wittily describing his foolhardy adventures. Sellon refuses to use euphemisms to describe his sexual activities but leaps into explicit account of his escapades, including a comic transvestite episode. The manuscript was left unfinished mid-sentence just before his death.

### *Cytheral's Hymnal*

Sellon is attributed to having contributed to *Cytheral's Hymnal*, a collection of bawdy and sacrilegious verse, with the mock imprint "Oxford. Printed at the University Press, for the Society for the Promoting of Useful Knowledge," 1870. Containing fifty-one erotic limericks, it is believed to be a joint production between Sellon, George Augustus Sala, Swinburne and several other Oxford men.

### *Unpublished Tales*

Sellon also wrote a handful of tales which remained unpublished. "Scenes in the Life of a Young Man" was intended as an erotic tale as a prelude to *Phoebe Kissagen* but was never printed. He also wrote two other short erotic tales, "The Confessions of a Single Gentleman exemplified in the Erotic Adventures of a Gentleman," originally intended to be printed

at the end of *New Epicurean*, and “The Delights of Imagination.”

### Illustrations

Ashbee believes Sellon illustrated many of his own books including *The Ups and Downs of Life, the New Epicurean, Phoebe Kissagen*, and *Adventures of a Gentleman*. He did six obscene watercolors to illustrate *Memoirs of Rosa Belle-fille* published by Dugdale in 1865. He wrote *Adventures of a Gentleman* (c. 1865) which remained unpublished, plus four watercolor drawings to accompany the tale. He also produced a drawing intended for a new edition of *The Amorous Quaker* which was never published. He designed the illustrations to *The Adventures of a Schoolboy* and *The New Lady's Tickler*, London: Dugdale, 1866.

### Biography

As well as a writer and a translator of erotica, Sellon was, at various times in his life, a soldier, a stagecoach driver, and a fencing master. He was born in England in 1818 to a family of moderate fortune, his father dying when he was a child. He received a good education in languages and the classics. He joined the army as a cadet at the age of sixteen where he rose to captain by the time he was twenty-six. While serving in India, he engaged in foolhardy escapades and amorous intrigues with both European and native females. In his words, “I now commenced a regular course of fucking with native women. The usual charge for the general run of them is two rupees.” After remaining in India for 10 years, in 1844 he arrived back in England where his mother had arranged a marriage for him with a reputed heiress, “a young lady of considerable personal attractions.” On discovering she was not as rich as he had been led to believe, he left his wife and moved out for two years, keeping a mistress in “a little suburban villa.” He was temporarily reconciled with his wife but among his numerous affairs was a young servant girl of fourteen which dalliance his wife soon discovered. He continued with his sexual adventures, intermittently living with his wife, who along the way bore him a son whom he did not like. His mother lost her fortune, and he was obliged to become a stage driver to keep himself, driving the Cambridge mail for two

years, and then started teaching fencing in London. He finally shot himself in April 1866 at Webb's hotel, 219 and 220 Piccadilly at the age of forty-eight years.

JULIE PEAKMAN

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# SEWALL, ROBERT

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c. 1915–  
American novelist

## *The Devil's Advocate*

Often called the greatest of American underground erotic novels, *The Devil's Advocate* has a confusing history. Legman implies that Sewall originally wrote the novel for the Oklahoma millionaire Roy Johnson, to whom Sewall had sold several Henry Miller parodies (*Horn Book*, p. 36). The erotic book dealer C.J. Scheiner spoke to Sewall during the 1980s to confirm that the novelist had actually written the work in 1942 for the "RCA Collection," a group of manuscripts commissioned by yet another wealthy collector, this one from Albany, New York; Scheiner owns the original manuscript. Disturbed by the novel's graphic sadomasochism, Legman, working from the carbon copy, expurgated, expanded, and retyped the manuscript for a red-covered mimeographed edition bound by the bookman Herman Miller in New York. On the title page, Legman falsely ascribed authorship of the revised manuscript to "Wood C. Lamont" as a way of twitting the American poet Clement Wood, who had also written erotic stories for Roy Johnson (Legman, *Horn Book*, p. 36). Appalled at Legman's censorship, Sewall two years later retyped the manuscript from memory, having already delivered the original to "RCA." This 1944 retelling, *The Sign of the Scorpion*, shorter than Legman's version and stylistically inferior to Sewall's own original, bore the pseudonym "Bruce Abbott"; this edition was also run off in bound mimeographed form by Herman Miller. Most subsequent editions, variously called *The Devil's Advocate*, *The Sign of the Scorpion*, and *The Devil's Brand*, have reproduced this 1944 manuscript, but the original 1942 version was issued under the name "Robert Sewall" in 1998.

*The Devil's Advocate* eroticizes a tale that blends "hard-boiled detective" with "country youth corrupted by city" genres. Though told mostly in third person, the novel is framed by

the musings of Conrad S. Garnett, an attorney known as the "devil's advocate" after his practice of defending celebrated criminals. The frame makes clear that Garnett is ruthless and opportunistic as an attorney and as a sexual predator. When a woman offers sex in exchange for his defending her boyfriend, he takes advantage of her with no intention of accepting the case. As the novel opens, he has just cast off a pleading lover. His justification is "Garnett's Law: 'Never do anything for anybody unless you're sure that the profit derived from your generosity will far exceed the expenditure'". When Clara Reeves, a "hick" from upstate, talks her way into his office, her desirability and his own arrogance make Garnett forget that law. Clara claims that she has sought out Garnett because of his reputation. She is searching for her sister Rita, who has disappeared but left in her New York apartment whips, dildos, and other appliances, a diary detailing her seduction by an unnamed but clearly powerful man, and a ring in the shape of a scorpion. He will help her, Garnett says, if Clara will obey his instructions. Making use of a cherished erotic plot device, Garnett says that she must go undercover, which also means she must shed her inhibitions. To prepare her, he has her read aloud graphic passages from Rita's diary, strip naked, and learn to masturbate him. Garnett tells her to put an ad in the paper offering to return the curious scorpion ring to its owner. A woman responds, and introduces Clara to friends who gradually seduce her into sexual acts, all of which Clara reports to Garnett, who makes her perform the same acts on him; she reluctantly confesses to enjoying them. The Scorpion's trail leads to a secluded Long Island estate.

According to Scheiner, the novel fictionalizes real sex parties held at Bozenkill, Clement Wood's Long Island home; to make this connection clear, Legman dedicated his expurgated version to "Gloria," the name of Wood's wife. Roman-à-clef or not, the novel depicts decadent upper-class swingers. At the estate, Clara participates in orgies, even allowing herself to be

flogged, in order to find the Scorpion, convinced that she is on the right track when during lesbian encounters she discovers two women who carry scorpion brands above their vaginas. The force of fetishes on those she meets both bewilders and arouses Clara. Although she engages in oral and anal intercourse with various partners, Clara remains technically a virgin, a circumstance that becomes sinister when she hears that there is to be a Black Mass, a ceremony in which a virgin, functioning as an “altar,” is ritually deflowered. The Scorpion, Garnett claims to have learned, will personally sacrifice her maidenhead. After a mysterious masked woman prepares Clara for the Mass, Garnett reveals himself as the Scorpion and his masked assistant as Clara’s sister Rita, still in thrall to her seducer. As the ceremony begins, however, police disguised as apostate priests arrest Garnett on accusations by Clara, who has been secretly working for the authorities all along. The plausible plot foregrounds the power of sexuality even as it undercuts suspense: readers anticipate rather than fear what will happen to the seemingly compliant Clara. Sewall’s skilled use of language, his credible characters, and his psychologically-rendered sex scenes permit the reader to savor the “immoral” pleasures for which the unrepentant villain is brought to justice.

### Biography

The mysterious Robert Sewall was probably born in Scranton, Pennsylvania, around 1915. Patrick Kearney has surmised that “Sewall” was merely a pseudonym of Gershon Legman, the erotic bibliographer, but according to Legman’s widow, Sewall in fact attended elementary school with Legman, and possibly married a Scranton sweetheart. Certainly Legman and Sewall met again in New York, where they might have worked together for a Planned Parenthood organization there. Sewall was later a postmaster in Vermont, and still later yet, postmaster in a small town on Long Island. During the late 1930s and early 1940s, Sewall wrote erotic stories on commission from collectors. In addition to *The Devil’s Advocate*, these included imitations of Henry Miller, and, under the pseudonym “L. Erectus Mentulus” (see entries on Mentulus and Legman), *The Oxford Professor*.

JOSEPH SLADE III

### Selected Works

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# SEX MANUALS

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Over the centuries, sex manuals have offered a wide range of advice not just on sex, but on hygiene, the workings of the body, masturbation, and procreation. They have discussed the broader issues of childbirth, birth control, and afflictions such as impotency and venereal diseases. Content has ranged from serious polemics to sensational, titillating material promoting quackish sexual potions.

The earliest notions about sex and the body came from Hippocrates (c. 460–377 BE) and were incorporated into Galenic physiology during the second century CE with advice based around humoral medicine. By the seventeenth century, material incorporating their advice was being published in sex manuals which carried humoral notions about bodily fluids. For example, Joannes Benedictus Sinibaldus's *Geneanthropeiae* (1642) admits to being a collection of ancient Greek and Roman physicians' and philosophers' sexual texts. Parts of *Geneanthropeiae* were translated into English and incorporated into *Rare Verities, The Cabinet of Venus Unlocked and her Secrets Laid Open* (1657). In turn, *Rare Verities* was popularized by Nicolas Venette in *Tableau de L'Amour Conjugal* (1686) which first appeared in English as *Mysteries of Conjugal Love Revealed* (1703) and again in 1740 as *The Pleasures of Conjugal Love Explain'd*. It advised on the age at which to marry since "Every age is not capable of tasting the Sweets of Matrimony: the first and last Years have their obstacles; Children being too feeble and old Men too languishing. The Middle Part of our Life is the most proper Age for Venus who, like Mars, requires only Young People full of Fire, health and courageous." Furthermore when it comes to making love, it warns against certain times as unsuitable for kissing, "There is nothing ruins our Stomach, and weakens Digestion more than Love: it exhausts us to that degree, by dissipating our Natural Heat, and wasting out Spirits, that we feel great Inconveniences in the principal Parts. Physicians agree that one ought not to kiss fasting, but nor straight after eating."

Throughout the eighteenth century, sex manuals continued to be mixtures of earlier works; books frequently borrowed texts from each other or amalgamated parts of older printed material. The intention of the books was frequently ambiguous. Although allegedly written with the purpose of sexual instruction, publishers recognized a market for reprinting old medical texts for the purpose of titillation. Readers were intentionally alerted to the sexual nature of the book through disingenuous "warnings" about its content inserted in the prefaces.

Many of the eighteenth-century sex manuals were taken up with the problems of identifying a virgin, a task thought worth investigating at some length. In *Aristotle's Masterpiece* (1690), a whole chapter is devoted to all aspects of virginity—what it is, and how it is violated, suggesting that doctors were generally in agreement that the hymen is broken after intercourse; "most are of the opinion that the Virginity is altogether annihilated when this Duplication is fractured and dissipated by violence, and that when it is found perfect and intire, no penetration had been made. Also some learned Physicians are of opinion that there is no Hymen or Skin expanded containing blood in it, which divers imagine in the first Copulation, flows from the fractured expanse." *Aristotle's Masterpiece* was published in various formats and editions with slightly differing titles throughout the eighteenth century, and became a bestseller. The book was popular not only for its interest in medical facts but for its erotic appeal.

Sex manuals were keen to offer help to couples encountering problems. G. Archibald Douglas in his *The Nature and Causes of Impotence in Men, and Barrenness in Women, Explained* (1758) addressed those incapable of intercourse and those having difficulty bearing children. Some books were specifically aimed at women for instruction purposes such as *The Ladies Dispensary*, or *Every Woman her Own Physician* (1770), thus enabling women to detect and cure their own ailments. Others were aimed at married couples

as indicated by the titles such as one nineteenth-century book *Marriage Ring: A Gift-Book for the Newly Married, and those Contemplating Marriage* (undated, late-nineteenth century).

Few new hegemonic texts appeared in the nineteenth century, the bestseller still being *Aristotle's Masterpiece*, albeit in a more prudish style. Gone were the explicit references to sex included in the more frank eighteenth-century versions. The later publication removed any anatomy of genitalia, erased bawdy language and explicit references, threw out the advice on how to create the right atmosphere or lovemaking, and mentioned nothing about how to conceive a boy or a girl. In its place came new material in the form of moralizing tracts, "You find some men indulging their vicious inclination by following the 'strange woman,' the street harlot, to her den of guilt and shame, or by alluring some simple girl by promises false and heartless to sin in that transgression which society forgives in a man, but never forgives in a woman." It warns men to be on guard against weakness or recklessness but should regulate themselves through prudence and benevolence to be sure of a virtuous life.

Whether these books were written for doctors or the general public is often difficult to discern. Some writers pitched their books directly at the intended audience such as Sylvanus Stall (1847–1915) who targeted bachelors in *What a Young Man Ought to Know* (1847). Other, such as Robert J. Brodie's *The Secret Companion* (1845) was a medical work on onanism, yet he lets his readers know that he could be consulted in Queen Anne Street for all cases of nervous and physical debility, including 'premature decay.' Other books with formally sounding scientific title such as Dr. George Drysdale's *Elements of Social Science: or Physical, Sexual and Natural Religion* (1854) enjoyed a wide circulation and appears to be produced primarily for a lay audience. Drysdale advocated the use of contraceptive methods in marriage castigating the popular advocacy of sexual restraint. Havelock Ellis believed the book was read by many people who had never previously read anything before on sexual topics.

Isaac Baker Brown's *On the Curability of Certain Forms of Insanity, Epilepsy and Hysteria in Females* (1866) was criticized by his colleagues for attracting the attention of his readers, particularly women, to the subject of self-abuse. Some books which proposed contraception

were subjected to prosecution including Henry Arthur Allbutt's *Wife's Handbook* (1886), which went through at least 56 editions up to 1922; and Knowlton's *Fruits of Philosophy* (1845).

Discussion about sperm evacuation and its weakening effect on the male continued unabated in nineteenth-century sex manuals. The first female doctor, Elizabeth Blackwell, wrote *The Human Element in Sex* (1884). She warns "The amount of nervous energy expended by the male in the temporary act of sexual congress is very great; out of all apparent proportion to its physical results, and is an act not to be too often repeated." She believed instruction was necessary in order to elevate oneself from the "grossly unchaste" found in behavior of "savages." Samuel Hough Terry offered advice specifically on obtaining the required sex of a child. In *Controlling Sex in Generation; The Physical Law Influencing Sex in the Embryo of Man and Brute* (1885). He wrote, "When the husband possesses an ardour in the sexual embrace so much greater than the wife that female conceptions ordinarily ensue, it is, of course, not desirable that he should be shorn somewhat of this ardour by fasting or otherwise, as this would tend to the general weakening of the offspring, but rather measures should be taken to increase the general health and strength, and incidentally thereby her sexual vigour." He goes on to explain that "most of the wives whose sexual ardour is feeble, have some inherent taint of disease inherited of personal which, if cured, would greatly restore to them the vigour they lack."

Sexologists came on the scene towards the end of the nineteenth century. By this time, sexual science was tabulating a variety of sexual dispositions delineating the normal sexualities from those of the abnormal or deviant (see *Sexology*). Patrick Geddes and J. Arthur Thomson, *The Evolution of Sex* (1889) was the first book to be published in Havelock Ellis's Contemporary Science series and found favor with the intelligent reading public. These works advocated temperance and unlike the other sexologists, emphasized the biological norm. Havelock Ellis (1859–1939) wrote on human sexuality in *Man and Woman* (1894) but his seven volume studies in the *Studies in the Psychology of Sex* (1897–1928) was the one for which he is most famous. Ellis made sex into a science extending the terminology of psychosexual types into homosexuals, paedophiles,

## SEX MANUALS

nymphomaniacs, fetishists, transvestites, zoophiles and so forth, creating a labeling system rare before the twentieth century. Ellis made inroads into the taboo status held by sexuality and morality and was to make the discussion of sex more acceptable for scientific inquiry.

In 1894, Edward Carpenter (1844–1929) wrote a series of small pamphlets on sex reform: *Woman and her ...*, *Sex and its...*, *Marriage and its...*, *Homogenic Love and its /...Place in Society* culminating in a book *Love's Coming-of-Age* (1896), the topic on “The Intermediate Sex” being omitted by publishers following the Oscar Wilde scandal. Carpenter argued for sex as a proper union and that the sexes should not be “two groups hopelessly isolated in habit and feeling from each other.”

Dr. Lyman Beecher Sperry in his *Confidential Talks with Husband and Wife: A Book of Information and Advice for the Married and Marriageable* (1900) explored the difficulties of the introduction of sexual intercourse. Sperry offers his opinion on the unsuitability of some people for marriage declaring, “It is almost equally evident that persons who are decidedly scrofulous, consumptive or cancerous should not intermarry; and it is questionable whether persons of such morbid tendency ought ever to marry at all.” He advised that prior to taking a honeymoon, a newly married couple should first spend a few months at home so the husband could show himself to be a man, “instead of a selfish sensualist or a careless and ungovernable brute.”

The issue of retention of sperm was still being considered in the twentieth century. Sperry declared, “When the intense energies of men which seem to be exclusively of sexual origin—and which, to many, seem to be intensified for sexual expression—are then expended along those lines of activity directly intended for reproduction, they naturally find expression in deeds of gallantry, courage, heroism, philanthropy and other benevolent efforts contributive to the general good of humanity.” Dr. Emma Drake reiterates Blackwell’s views on over-evacuation of sperm in *What a Young Wife Ought to Know* (1901) attributing to it a man’s moral weakness. “Vast amount of vital force used in the production and expenditure of seminal fluid,” if wasted, could lead to feebleness and depravity; alternatively, if conserved, it could enhance a man’s “mental and moral force” lifting him to a higher plane. She warns that masturbation

causes dreadful side effects “some of the terrible results are epilepsy, idiocy, catalepsy and insanity.”

Marie Stopes (1880–1958) was one of the most popular sex advisers in the early twentieth century, most famous for her advocating of birth control. She claimed that its practice would allow families to space their children and ensure an optimal family size. Her book *Married Love* (1918) was “a new contribution to the solution of sex difficulties,” with *Wise Parenthood* (1918), a treatise on birth control for married people. Stopes cautioned her readers against thinking that regular ejaculations were good for a man and that it is a great mistake “to imagine that semen is something to be got rid of frequently.”

By 1930, in her *The Sex Factor in Marriage*, Helena Rosa Wright was proposing that “A woman’s body can be regarded as a musical instrument awaiting the hand of an artist.” Her book *Sex, an Outline for Young People* (1932) was republished in 1963, and was still on sale in the 1970s. Gladys Cox followed these up with *The Woman’s Book of Health: A Complete Guide to Physical Well-Being* (1933) also issued under the title *The Lady’s Companion*. Many advice books were directed at married people. In his book, *Love Without Fear: A Plain Guide to Sex Technique for Every Married Adult* (1940), Dr. Eustace Chesser went so far as to carry a disclaimer, declaring “The author has written this book for those who are married or about to be married, and in this connection the bookseller’s co-operation is requested.” From his study, he found that out of 925 women he interviewed, 237 felt repelled by their husband during their initial sexual transaction in marriage. He believed that any virgin would find the size of a man’s penis huge and it was therefore up to the man to take the initiative with his wife since “The normal women likes to feel herself conquered.”

William S. Sadler in *Courtship and Love* (1952) echoed views about the submissive female expressed in many sexual guides through the first half of the twentieth century. He reminds the husband “his wife had been bought up to resist the sexual advances of all men and to defend her chastity with her life.” Hence Isabel Emslie Hutton’s advice to wives in *The Hygiene of Marriage* (1953) that sexual intercourse is “something rather unpleasant which they will have to put up with.” Women should not

therefore expect orgasm at their first time of sex, but this was not something to worry about; as she reminds wives, they “have several decades of married life ahead....”

Dr. Gilbert Oakley in his *Sane and Sensual Sex* (1963) warned his reader that a new bride should be recognized “as a highly sensitised human being.” She would be modest and needed to be treated “with delicacy.” The bridegroom was given advice on how to proceed, “He should not seem to be too gloating, but should reduce her with his eyes, his touch and with the things he may say to her, to the imagined status of a small girl who is helpless and resigned at husbands.” Oakley expounding on the efficacy of masturbation for teenage boys, declares that it “helps him clear his face of adolescent spots and blemishes [and] purifies his blood stream. Yet continuation of this habit has dire effects on the adult male such as “shaking limbs...poisoning of the blood stream...impotence... priapism...,” the list goes on. Sex during menstruation was however “most unsafe for the husband, for he may well contract an unpleasant condition on his member through having contact with the menstrual flow which is, after all, poison leaving a woman’s body.”

During the 1960s and 1970s, various new contributions came from T. A. A. Hunter edition, *Newnes’ Manual of Sex and Marriage* (1964), Benjamin Spock’s *A Young Person’s Guide to Life and Love* (1971), Jane Mills’ *Make It Happy* (1978) and David Heyman’s *Help with Sex Problems* (1979). New suggestions could be found in *The Sensuous Woman* (1970) which detailed the latest techniques in lovemaking, the writer the anonymous “J” (Joan Terry Garrity) suggesting “you must train like an athlete for the act of love.” Allying fears about venereal disease, the author adds, “the risks aren’t adequate reasons for you to deprive yourself of a wonderful sex life.”

In her book *The Total Woman* (1973), Mabel Morgan warns women to keep an eye out for competition “... would your husband pick you for his mistress...” she inquires to the “girls” insisting that, “One of your husband’s most basic need is for you to be physically attractive to him....” Mabel Fonseca in her *All About Your Intimate Sex and Married Life* (1976) also blames women for not stirring themselves enough. “The working wife mixes with attractive men all day and comes back

home to tell her husband the passes he made at her. Whether these are teasing reports or false, they are meant to make the husband jealous and shake him out of the take-me-for-granted-attitude wives find so frustrating and infuriating.” She suggests men are driven to adultery by nagging frigid wives or women who are full of ridicule or let their appearance go. If an old love affair comes between marital happiness, it should be best overcome but she warns, “taking to alcohol can be hazardous.” In such a situation the best thing to do “is to take up some good hobbies, do social work, and generally keep busy.” Meanwhile, Tim LaHaye’s popular Christian guide, *The Act of Marriage* (1976) advises on having sex during the week that “twice will probably be sufficient at this stage of the marriage.”

By the 1980s, men were being offered the chance to learn about achieving multiple orgasm just like women. By now, it is woman’s assertiveness, not men’s, which is perceived as a barrier to good sex. *The Complete Book of Love* (1983) remarks on the women’s movement over the last twenty years having caused increasing anxiety for men about their sexual performance “the assertiveness of women outside the bedroom had also adversely affected many men, and this is reflected in their reduced practical interest in sex.” England’s Dr. Miriam Stoppard provided sexual instruction for all the family from *Talking Sex* (1982) “a book about growing up” to advice for women in *Everywoman’s Lifeguard* (1982). Her American counterpart, Dr. Ruth, proved a stalwart through the 1980s and 1990s with *Dr. Ruth’s Guide to Good Sex* (1983) and *Dr. Ruth’s Guide to Safer Sex* (1992). From the 1980s onwards, with the onslaught of AIDS, advice on safe sex became prevalent in many manuals from Michael Callen and Richard Berkowitz’s *How to have Sex in an Epidemic* (1983) through to Peter Tatchell’s *Safer Sexy; the Guide to Gay Sex Safely* (1994). Alex Comfort’s *Joy of Sex* (1972) has proven remarkably durable, a newly edited version reprinted in 2002.

JULIE PEAKMAN

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## SEXOLOGY

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# SEXOLOGY

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Sexology is the group of disciplines that concern themselves with the study of human sexual behavior: physiology, psychology, psychiatry, and sociology. It has always been a difficult disciplinary area to define since its emergence in the late-nineteenth century, for many of the practitioners see themselves as operating within their broader disciplines (such as psychiatry), rather than being 'sexologists' from the start.

In order to appreciate this multifarious area of writing, a few words about its history are necessary. Prior to the sexological studies of William Masters, Virginia Johnson, or Alfred Kinsey, it was doctors who were interested in sex. The main areas of medicine that addressed sex were venerology (which also addressed prostitution), the study of systemic diseases such as spermatorrhoea (the excessive leaking of semen which caused all manner of debilitating problems, usually deriving from the patient's over-indulgence in masturbation), forensic medicine (insofar as there were sexual crimes such as rape and sodomy that needed discussing), and those few doctors interested in birth control. There was no psychiatric theory of the sexual impulse for the bulk of the nineteenth century; rather, sex was considered to be either normal, or to be criminal or morally wrong, depending on whether it had been sanctioned by the Church, general public, or legal institution.

Sexology as a medical specialty emerged in order to understand the so-called perversions, the main ones being homosexuality, sadism and masochism, and fetishism, which were catalogued in detail, most notably by Richard von Krafft-Ebing in his *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1st

edition, 1886). Theories of the sexual impulse were formulated in order to deal with the complexities of these three main groupings, as it was deemed necessary by the early sexologists to understand why people persisted in crimes such as rape, sexual mutilation, and sodomy when there was sufficient judicial deterrence and social opprobrium when they were committed. Initially, the two main strands of thought were based on either a principle of congenital predisposition towards certain perversions (this owed a fair amount to degenerationalist theories, as being promulgated in Italy and elsewhere), and upon an acquired model for perversity. These differences reflected a significant political aspect as well, for many of those who argued that perversions such as homosexuality were congenital were likely to argue that it should be decriminalized as it was 'natural,' such as English sex psychologist, Havelock Ellis, whereas those who held that homosexuality was acquired usually had an agenda that included a cure, such as Munich-based hypnotherapist, Albert von Schreck-Notzing, and later psychoanalysts.

After the initial scuffles around whether sexual 'types' were congenital or acquired, with many sexologists arguing that there was a significant congenital predisposition that needed to be 'triggered' in some personal, psychological—and thus acquired—way (a position held by French psychologist, Charles Féré, in his later writings), more sophisticated mechanisms of the sexual impulse were formulated. These were aimed specifically at describing all sexual desires, and thus were relatively non-prescriptive. The most important of these was put forward by Berlin

psychiatrist, Albert Moll, who noted that there were two phases of the sexual act: the *detumescence-impulse*, from *detumescere*, to decrease in size, and the *contractation-impulse*, from *contractare*, to touch (Moll, *Libido Sexualis*, 1897). It could be used to describe almost any sexual activity as normal: for instance, a shoe fetishist is aroused by the sight and touch of a partner's shoes; they are able to consummate the relationship involving the specific use of the shoe, and the fetishist achieves orgasm. Only in cases where there is no arousal, or where there is no orgasm, could the sexual impulse be called physiologically abnormal. There were, of course, social barriers to the free expression of the impulse, such as not involving children or hurting people, and non-procreative forms of sexual expression were by and large disparaged. While sexological theories allowed for more sexual possibilities, the social responses were much more constraining.

Havelock Ellis expanded Moll's theory by emphasizing the psychological aspects of the arousal stage, which he called *tumescence*. Ellis also emphasized individual desires and gender sexual equality in his writing, and rather than merely producing a cornucopia of sexual perversions, was politically motivated to explain all sexual activities as outside the ambit of moral and legal control, unless they injured people or involved the under-aged. Not all sexologists were predominantly interested in the paraphilias, however. Indeed, even those like Ellis, who wrote about perversions in so much detail, were merely trying to understand the full scope of sexual behaviors.

After this initial excessive attention to the 'perversions,' there was an increased attention to heterosexuality. This came about firstly through the detailed attentions of gynecologists such as Robert Latou Dickinson, who kept meticulous case notes from fifty years of practice from which he could generalize on the sex lives of women. The same kind of trajectory informed Alfred Kinsey, whose 1948 *Sexual Behaviour of*

*the Human Male* and 1953 *Sexual Behaviour of the Human Female* employed large-scaled and detailed sexual surveys in order to locate exactly what people did in bed. This attention to 'normal' sexuality was taken further with Masters and Johnson, who paid specific attention to the physiology of sex as well as the psychological aspects, and found that the classical Freudian distinction between the vaginal and clitoral orgasm was false.

More recently, sexology has turned its attention much more towards the control of infectious diseases, most notably HIV, but also to other venereal infections. Important knowledge about sexual practices and their relations to risk activities has emerged which has been deployed in the fight against AIDS. Another topic with which sexology is currently concerned is sexual dysfunction, including gender dysmorphia and intersexuality. Certain contemporary sexologists have also taken a leading role in sexual and marriage counseling.

Sexological texts have been utilized for erotic purposes, as well as by students of medicine and law. Not only do many early sexological texts have detailed case histories from people who identified with the previously published cases, and wrote to doctors to tell them their own experiences and theories of perversion, thus using sexological texts as locations of erotic self-expression, but the erotic use of these texts should also be considered as important. In previous ages where there was a certain prohibition on sexually explicit material, sexology was one place to which those interested in sex, but not willing to pay vast sums for banned 'pornography,' could turn.

IVAN CROZIER

### Further Reading

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# SEXUAL ALCHEMY LITERATURE, CHINESE

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The three central problems of Chinese religious thinking are family solidarity, microcosm–macrocosm harmony, and immortality. The three paths to immortality are alchemy, inner alchemy, and sexual alchemy. Medicine’s mastery of acupuncture and herbs gave hope of defeating disease; alchemy’s mastery of chemical transformations gave hope of defeating death. Inner alchemy absorbed the theory and terminology of medicine and alchemy and combined it with meditation; sexual alchemy absorbed the theory and terminology of medicine and alchemy and combined it with the techniques of meditation and the bedroom arts. Medicine highlighted the importance of sexual essence in the body’s energy economy, the bedroom arts sought control of it, and inner alchemy and sexual alchemy undertook to transmute it into elixir.

Although the received sexual alchemy literature dates from the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), the origins and theoretical foundations of the sexual school can be traced back to at least the fourth century, when its existence is attested in alchemy apologist Ge Hong’s (283–363) *The Master Who Embraces Purity* (Bao Pu zi): “There are more than ten masters of the sexual arts....The essential teaching is to ‘return the sexual essence to nourish the brain....’ One branch of Daoists seek solely by means of the art of intercourse to achieve immortality without preparing the medicine of the golden elixir. This is sheer folly.”

Although the householder sex craft literature is chiefly concerned with health, harmony, pleasure, and eugenics, the note of more ambitious possibilities is sounded in the Sui dynasty (581–618) *Classic of Su Nü* [*Su Nü jing*], when the legendary immortal Peng Zu declares: “Because heaven and earth have attained the dao of union, they are eternal.... If we could but avoid those things that gradually injure our bodies and learn the art of yin and yang, this would truly be the dao of immortality.” Tang dynasty

(618–907) physician Sun Simiao’s “Health Benefits of the Bedchamber” (Fangzhong buyi) is the first medical sexology text to combine *coitus reservatus* with specific meditation technique: “When both man and woman are aroused, he should grasp [the penis] in his left hand and imagine that there is red qi in the dantian, which is yellow within and white without. This then becomes transformed into the sun and moon, which move about in the dantian in the lower abdomen and enter the niyuan point in the center of the brain, where the two halves reunite as one.”

Transitional texts from the Ming that retain the health and gender harmony emphasis of the early householder tradition, while prefiguring the marriage of essence absorption and the immortality project, include the *Wondrous Discourse of Su Nü* [*Su Nü miaohun*], the *True Classic of Perfect Union* [*Jiji Zhenjing*], and the *Exposition of Cultivating the True Essence* [*Xiuzhen yanyi*], which reveals:

The secret transmissions state that by using one human being to supplement another, one naturally obtains the true essence....When this art is thoroughly mastered, and when the true essence released by the partner is obtained and one’s own unshed essence ‘returned,’ then this is of little harm to the woman and of great benefit to oneself....Refine and receive it, circulating it upward from the weilü (coccyx), ascending the two ‘white channels,’ passing through the jiaji (midback), penetrating the kunlun (head), entering the niwan (midbrain), and flowing into the mouth. Here it is transformed into ‘jade juice,’ (saliva) which should be swallowed down the ‘storied pavilion’ (throat) until it reaches all the way to the dantian (lower abdomen). This is called “the reverse flow of the Yellow River,” and has the ability to augment the sexual essence and supplement the marrow, increase longevity and lengthen the years.

The first distinguishing characteristic of the sexual alchemy literature proper is the assertion of its superiority over other techniques of

immortality. Sun Ruzhong's *Introduction to Cultivating the True Essence* [*Xiuzhen rumen*] lays out the argument for sexual practices:

When it comes to strengthening the qi, there are two theories: some advocate strengthening it through "pure practices" and others by yin and yang (sexual cultivation)....

However, for those who have already experienced seminal leakage, rapid strengthening is difficult, and it is not easy to rein in the scattered mind. This is not as effective as the mutual strengthening of yin and yang, for here there is something concrete to work with.

The Preface to *Seeking Instruction on the Golden Elixir* [*Jindan jiuzheng pian*] states: "I have perused countless works on the elixir of immortality, and all insist that the great medicine of longevity requires the primordial undifferentiated true qi. If one asks from whence comes this qi, the answer is that it can be found in the 'other.'" The "other," of course, refers to young women, and the theoretical defense continues, "At the onset of puberty, yin and yang begin to interact, and the prenatal qi flees to the middle of Kun (trigram representing earth). As a result, the three unbroken lines of the pure Qian (heaven) are ruptured, and it becomes Li (fire)...Therefore, the elixir method borrows from Kan (water) to repair the broken Qian, supplement its empty line, and restore its pure yang body. This is the theory of the returning elixir of immortality." The next level of theory explains the necessity for reversing nature, as the *True Transmission of the Golden Elixir* [*Jindan zhenzhuan*] states: "If I fail to obtain the true lead from a partner, absorbing it upstream to join the mercury, how can I form the holy fetus and become a Buddha or an immortal? The opposite sex is by nature yin on the outside and yang on the inside, represented by the trigram Kan, or lead. If she fails to obtain my true mercury, and going downstream combine it with lead, how could she form the worldly fetus and give birth to sons and daughters? Therefore, following what is natural results in a human being, while going contrary to it results in the elixir." *The Rootless Tree* expresses the need for dual cultivation in a homely metaphor: "An unfertilized egg produces no chicks, for this violates the creative process of yin and yang....Practicing only solitary meditation, the qi dries up."

Each of the sexual alchemy texts is structured as a kind of syllabus for the stages of cultivation. Although not identical in content and sequence, they share a stock of common elements. The *Summary of the Golden Elixir* [*Jindan jieyao*] explains the first stage of practice, often called "establishing the foundation," which consists of locking the gate against ejaculation, "Immortals and Daoist priests do not have the aid of the gods. They achieve the True by saving jing and accumulating qi."

The next stage involves "refining the self," as the *True Transmission of the Golden Elixir* [*Jindan zhenzhuan*] says, "When the mind is without random thoughts and foolish notions have been banished, only then does one receive the proper results from 'crucible' (cultivator's body) and 'stove' (woman's body)."

In the third stage of practice, it is necessary to secure a supply of essence donors, as the *Summary of the Golden Elixir* says, "There are three grades of 'crucibles.' The first is metal, the second fire, and the third is water. What is meant by the 'metal crucible?' It refers to the metal of a fourteen-year-old girl, represented by Dui (trigram representing the youngest daughter)...At this time, her menses is about to commence, and her 'yellow path' regularly opens. A woman's first menses is the 'true metal' and is a priceless treasure."

In the next phase of practice, it is essential to excite the donor without becoming carried away oneself, as the *Secret Principles of Gathering the True Essence* [*Caizhen jiyao*] says in verse: "When dragon occupies the tiger's lair, intrinsic nature and emotion are one. At this moment one must play dead....Although my partner's passion has become intense, I am oblivious. With trusting sincerity, she reveals her secret, as I wait for the right moment."

In the fifth stage, the adept, with the help of the "yellow dame" (female coach) and "companions" (male assistants), must calculate the precise moment to harvest the partner's ripe essence. The bedroom arts manuals focused on female orgasm as the object of absorption, but sexual alchemy seeks a more rarified prenatal prize. Although there is no concept of ovulation, as such, in Chinese medicine, the *Secret Principles* speaks of gathering a kind of premenstrual essence described as the "golden flower before the petals have fallen" and the "jade bud newly opened." *Seeking Instruction* advises the adept

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to approach his partner at the very beginning of her period, “before it becomes visible,” a stage which the *Summary* calls, “the approaching tide.” The *True Transmission*, using the terrestrial branches system, distinguishes between the ren (premenstrual) stage of the cycle and the gui (menstrual), but also tries to synchronize the individual biological cycle with the cosmic cycle of moon and sun, recommending the fifteenth day (full moon), of the eighth month (late summer), during the zi hour (midnight) to maximize the potency of the cosmic yang energy.

The sixth stage involves allowing the “enemy” to seize the high ground and the initiative, as the *Summary of the Golden Elixir* says, “Have your partner sit on the ‘three-legged crescent moon chair’ and assume the position ‘earth over heaven’ as in the hexagram Tai (peace).”

In the seventh stage, the adept harvests the woman’s “lead” and combines it with his own “mercury,” as the *Secret Principles* says, “The ‘true lead’ (female sexual essence) is the prenatal monadal true qi....It is especially important that one mobilize a bit of ‘true mercury’ (male sexual essence) in the region of one’s own anus to welcome it.” This enables the volatile mercury to revert to the stable state of cinnabar.

The elixir formed from the marriage of yin and yang essences must now undergo a process variously called “refining,” “watering and cultivating,” or “incubation.” In the words of the *True Transmission*, “The elixir forms, and in ten months the holy fetus is complete. Now naturally the immortal appears.”

After gestation, and in keeping with the principle of reversing nature, the holy fetus is

born at the fontanel, as the *True Transmission* says, “When the ‘gate of the crown’ bursts open, this then is the time of the dragon’s offspring emerging from the womb. The yang spirit now appears, and one has earned the title of Immortal.”

In the final stage, the dematerialized immortal, formed of pure prenatal yang energy and unbounded by space and time, is presented with the “mysterious pearl” of enlightenment and welcomed at the “Jade Pool of the Immortals” in paradise. The last verse in *The Rootless Tree* [*Wugen shu*] puts the capstone on the process, “Strive for the true emptiness and return to the great void. Received in the paradise of the immortals, accept the heavenly tally.”

Chinese sexual alchemy harnesses the scientific spirit of medicine, alchemy, meditation, and the bedroom arts in the service of salvation through self-deification. The richly allusive language and exalted vision give it a unique place in the history of sexology and religious literature.

DOUGLAS WILE

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## SHAKESPEARE, WILLIAM

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1564–1616

English Playwright and Poet

Although generally acknowledged as the celebrator of romantic marriage, in his many plays and

poems, Shakespeare employs his remarkable insight to probe the enigma of human sexuality in all of its multiple manifestations. Moreover, while many of his plays dramatize such socially sanctioned rituals as courtship and marriage, his

works also explore illicit sexual relations such as extra-marital sex, adultery, prostitution, rape, incest, and homosexuality.

### Heterosexual Courtship

Most people in Western society accept without question the linking of love and marriage; however, this conception is actually a relatively recent innovation, emerging approximately 400 years ago in Western Europe and Britain and much later in Eastern societies. The genesis in England of the ideal of the consensual, companionate marriage—a union whose primary goal is not economic, dynastic, or procreative, but rather affectionate companionship—remains one of the most vigorously debated topics in early modern scholarship. However, whether scholars credit the Renaissance with transforming the romance of adultery into the romance of marriage, or locate amorous matrimony within the Puritan art of love, or praise consensual conjugality as the signal achievement of the high Middle Ages, most agree that this conjugal pattern, which unites respect and desire in amorous mutuality, had become the dominant social ideal, if not always the reality, by the late-sixteenth century when Shakespeare began writing his plays and poems.

However, although Shakespeare has traditionally been praised as the great poet of married love, close scrutiny indicates that his plays celebrate not so much the romance of marriage as the romance of courtship. Following the traditions of Latin New Comedy, introduced and popularized by Plautus (254–184 BCE) and Terence (195–159 BCE), one of Shakespeare's tragedies (*Romeo and Juliet*) and numerous comedies and romances dramatize the erotically-charged courtships of young men and young women, usually concluding in multiple marriages (often three, but sometimes as many as four). During these passionate courtships, the lovers surmount numerous obstacles—disapproving parents, romantic rivals, scandalous rumors, misunderstandings, even their own homosocial or homosexual bondings—to couple with the mates of their choice; and in the rare dramas, such as *Pericles* and *The Tempest*, in which the course of true love does run smoothly, the wise fathers, Simonides and Prospero, invent impediments to matrimony. Despite the libidinal urges motivating these courtships, in all but one of these wooings, *Measure for Measure* (in which

the transgressive couple is betrothed but not yet married), the chastity of the beloved lady is preserved until the wedding day and the fetishizing of virginity in these plays mirrors the high estimation awarded chastity in the society of the time. Although sexuality is zestfully extolled in all of these dramas of courtship, this sexuality must await the conjugal bed.

### Married Love

Yet despite the many plays in which multiple couples march joyfully to the altar, presumably to live happily ever after, Shakespeare's canon offers few positive portraits of the erotically, emotionally, and intellectually fulfilling union envisioned as the consensual, companionate marriage. Indeed, there are few merry wives and devoted, trusting husbands in Shakespeare's plays. Many of the plays present no mature married couples at all, and scholars have commented on the absence of mature wives and mothers in Shakespeare's dramas. Moreover, even initially blissful unions—such as those of Desdemona and Othello in *Othello*, Hermione and Leontes in *The Winter's Tale*, and Imogen and Posthumus in *Cymbeline*—are soon clouded by the paranoid fear of female unfaithfulness that casts dark shadows over so many of Shakespeare's dramas. Shakespeare's plays do frequently portray devoted wives—Kate in *Henry IV, Part I*, Portia in *Julius Caesar*, Richard II's adoring Queen in *Richard II*—but these wives are marginalized by their spouses, relegated to the private sphere, almost always with unfortunate consequences. Kate in *Henry IV, I* offers a particularly apt exemplum of this marginalization. Although the spirited Kate seems a perfect mate for the fiery Hotspur, at a time of crucial decision-making, her husband unwisely banishes her from his bed and from his confidence primarily because she is a woman. Paradoxically, the happiest, most fulfilling marriages in Shakespeare are often the most destructive. *Hamlet's* Claudius undoubtedly loves Gertrude; he insists that “She is so conjunctive to my life and soul / That, as a star moves not but in his sphere, / I could not but by her,” and the play verifies this devotion. Nevertheless, at the play's dénouement, Claudius allows his beloved wife of only a few months to die from poison rather than reveal his own treachery. Moreover, the marriage, constructed on murder and perhaps

adultery, acts as catalyst to tragedy. Similarly, at the beginning of a later tragedy, the eponymous hero Macbeth and his Lady—his “dearest partner of greatness”—appear to exemplify the reciprocity and companionship idealized in the Puritan dream of romantic marriage. However, this dream soon becomes a nightmare as this very reciprocity—what some commentators cite as Macbeth’s uxorious love for his wife—leads to his destruction and that of his beloved partner. Of course, contented conjugal partners are hardly the stuff of effervescent comedy or rousing drama, but even this does not explain the almost total absence of mutually fulfilling marriages in Shakespeare. Indeed, many commentators would agree that, paradoxically, Shakespeare’s most incandescent study of mature love—a marriage of both true minds and physical bodies—is the adulterous romance of Antony and Cleopatra.

### Illicit Heterosexuality

Many of Shakespeare’s male characters are obsessed with dark fears of dangerous female sexuality and paranoid fantasies of female unfaithfulness. In four of his plays—one comedy (*Much Ado About Nothing*), one tragedy (*Othello*), and two late romances (*Cymbeline* and *The Winter’s Tale*)—Shakespeare replays the familiar topos of the chaste woman slandered, and cuckold jokes run like a refrain throughout Shakespeare’s comedies. Yet despite this male fixation with female betrayal, actual adultery (at least by wives) occurs relatively rarely in the plays. There is, of course, the problematic adultery of Gertrude with Claudius in *Hamlet*, implied but never explicitly verified in the text, and Goneril’s attempted but never consummated adultery with Edmund in *King Lear*. Moreover, illicit sexual relationships, of various kinds—some historical, some fictitious—crop up occasionally in the history plays: these include Joan la Pucelle’s carnal encounters with both men and demons in *Henry VI, Part I*; Hastings’s fatal affair with Jane Shore in *Richard III*; Lady Faulconbridge’s adultery in *King John*; Falstaff’s trysts with Doll Tearsheet in *Henry IV, Part II*; and Henry VIII’s infidelities in the play by that name. However, only in the Greek and Roman plays do extra-marital relationships assume center stage.

Shakespeare’s first tragedy, *Titus Andronicus*, depicts the adultery of Tamora, Queen of the Goths and Empress of Rome, with the vice-like Moor Aaron, an instance of miscegenation that culminates in revenge, rape, and many grisly deaths. Moreover, multiple illicit sexualities fill the dramatic canvass of *Troilus and Cressida*, Shakespeare’s cynical satire on chivalric honor and courtly love: Helen’s famous adulterous affair with Paris launches a thousand ships and burns the topless towers of Ilium; Cressida’s courtly love romance with Troilus (by definition an erotic union outside of marriage) dwindles into unfaithfulness and disillusionment when the Trojans unceremoniously barter Cressida to the Greeks and the deserted lady switches her affections from Troilus to Diomedes; finally, Achilles’s liaison with Patroclus (perhaps homosexual but more probably homosexual) motivates the fabled hero’s craven ambush of Hector and complete loss of honor. The dramatic action thus deflates the glorious rhetoric of chivalric honor and courtly love into brutal war and sexual betrayal.

Although the majority of interpreters would agree that *Antony and Cleopatra* presents Shakespeare’s most complex and sympathetic treatment of illicit passion, nevertheless, this quintessential exploration of adultery has also aroused fervent and antithetical responses from commentators. These range from moralistic critics, who view the tragedy as a condemnation of irresponsible lust, to romantic critics, who laud the play as a celebration of a magnificent passion transcending conventional morality. However, most contemporary interpreters, avoiding these polarities, adopt an ambivalent reading of the play, arguing that the tragedy dramatizes an oxymoronic passion, at once sensually intoxicating and intellectually stimulating, yet, at the same time, vitiated by the jealousy and suspicion that plague so many of Shakespeare’s amorous partners, an instability perhaps accentuated, in this case, by the absence of marital commitment. Cleopatra frequently harps on marriage and when she discovers that Antony has married Octavia after the death of his wife Fulvia, she flies into a tempestuous rage. Thus, insecure in Antony’s love, Cleopatra plays elaborate games to hold his interest and seeks to dominate him lest she lose him. Similarly, unsure of Cleopatra’s commitment, Antony invariably

mistrusts his lover and in every problematic circumstance believes the worst of her. Only in death do the mercurial lovers become “marble constant” and totally accepting of each other, and, in her triumphant suicide, with the asp at her breast, Cleopatra finally claims the title so long denied her, proclaiming, “Husband, I come! / Now to that name my courage prove my title!” In her mystic deathbed union with Antony, Cleopatra may fleetingly experience the felicitous merging of desire and esteem associated with the consensual, companionate marriage.

### Prostitution

Since, according to Hamlet, drama should hold a mirror up to nature, prostitutes and bawds people Shakespeare’s dramatic universe even as they did the society that these dramas reflect. Shakespeare sometimes depicts these transgressive figures with good-natured, jovial wit, sometimes with scorn, often with pity. However, in only two of his plays—*Measure for Measure* and *Pericles*—does prostitution assume central importance, and in both of these dramas the bawdy house functions as a symbol for the dissolute societies that must be redeemed, the former by a *deus ex machina* Duke, the latter by a chaste virgin.

### Rape

Although characters from Proteus in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* (an early romantic comedy) to Caliban in *The Tempest* (probably Shakespeare’s last play) either attempt or fantasize about rape, in only two of his works does Shakespeare treat this brutal sexual crime as a *fait accompli*: In his first tragedy, *Titus Andronicus*, and in a long poem, *The Rape of Lucrece*, both written in the early 1590s and both set in a Roman milieu.

At the beginning of the tragedy that bears his name, Titus Andronicus, the victor over the Gauls, makes several tragic errors in judgment, among them the ritual sacrifice of Alarbus, son of Tamora, captured Queen of the Goths. In retaliation for the slaying of her son, Tamora, guided by her paramour Aaron, incites her other two sons to rape and mutilate Titus’s daughter Lavinia, whose tongue is torn out and hands

hacked off to prevent the identification of her assailants. The rape of Lavinia is motivated both by the sons’ lechery and by Tamora’s thirst for revenge. Ironically, because Tamora’s voice was silenced at the beginning of the play when she pleaded for her son’s life, Lavinia will be stripped of both her chastity and her voice. Lavinia, sexually violated, mutilated, and muted, has often been interpreted as a symbol not only for the sexual vulnerability but also for the legal and educational silencing of women at this period. Ultimately, although Lavinia, with the help of Ovid’s *Metamorphosis*, does succeed in disclosing both the nature of her violation and the names of her attackers, she lacks agency. Significantly, she does not kill herself, but is executed by her father to remove the stigma of rape polluting her honor and that of his house.

*The Rape of Lucrece* opens with a boasting match in which a group of military men vaunt the chastity of their wives (adumbrating a similar bragging contest and wager in one of Shakespeare’s late romances, *Cymbeline*, a dramatic descendent of *Lucrece*). Significantly, the warrior Collatine extols his wife Lucrece only for her chastity, but when another of the warriors, Sextus Tarquinius, curious to meet this paragon of virtue, views the lady, her beauty inflames him with lust. The rape of Lucrece by Tarquin is thus motivated partially by male competition and desire for dominance, and partially by the reduction of women to objects of sexual desire, all salient aspects of a patriarchal society. The first half of the poem focuses on Tarquin, narrating the circumstances leading up to the rape. Tarquin stays as a guest in Lucrece’s home while his military ally Collatine remains at camp. During the night, the licentious Tarquin penetrates Lucrece’s bedchamber to view the sleeping lady, torn between guilt and desire even as he ravishes her with his gaze (much as the leering Iachimo will visually violate the slumbering Imogen in *Cymbeline*). Visual violation progresses into actual rape, and the latter half of the poem recounts Lucrece’s anguish following her ravishment. Unlike the muted, victimized Lavinia, Lucrece is granted both voice and subjectivity; however, as Coppélia Kahn observes in “*Lucrece: The Sexual Politics of Subjectivity*,” the loquacious Lucrece speaks with the tongue of the patriarchy.



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Moreover, although Lucrece achieves agency as well as subjectivity—unlike Lavinia, she plans her own suicide, affirming that she is “mistress of her Fate”—her decision to kill herself to remove the stain besmirching her honor and that of her husband operates within a patriarchal paradigm. Thus, both *Titus Andronicus* and *The Rape of Lucrece* pose vexing problems for scholars of Shakespeare. Both clearly examine the role of the violated woman in the patriarchal family, which accepts the female as the property of the father or the husband, but whether these works interrogate this structure or merely reinscribe it has been much debated.

### Incest

Only once in his entire canon does Shakespeare explicitly dramatize society’s most taboo sexual transgression, incest. *Pericles*, one of Shakespeare’s late romances, exposes the liaison between Antiochus, King of Antioch, and a character designated only as Daughter of Antiochus. Surprisingly, although most people today place exclusive blame for father–daughter incest on the violating parent, Gower, the Chorus of *Pericles*, judges the nameless daughter complicit, branding both the victim and the victimizer as “Bad child, worse father.” Moreover, the play sentences both offenders to incineration by “a fire from heaven,” which Gower proclaims the just reward of sin. Although the blatant sexual violation of Antiochus and his daughter offers the only explicit example of incest in the play, father–daughter relationships dominate *Pericles*, and commentators have interpreted Simonides—the king who readily bestows his daughter Thaisa on the man of her choice—and Pericles—who leaves his infant daughter Marina with a king and queen unrelated to him, only returning to reclaim her many years later—as inverted mirrors reflecting the father’s flight from incest.

Critics focusing on father–daughter relationships in Shakespeare, such as Lynda E. Boose, Betty Flowers, and Lagretta Tallent Lenker, posit this “flight from incest” as a dominating motif of all of Shakespeare’s late romances, including *Cymbeline*, *The Winter’s Tale*, and *The Tempest*. Moreover, plumbing the sub-text of Shakespeare’s plays, interpreters have discovered other innuendoes of incest—in the outrageous “love contest” in *King Lear*, and in the

fathers’ possessive love for their daughters in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona* and *Othello*.

However, the most famous “incest” interpretation in all of Shakespeare is the Oedipal reading of *Hamlet*. Applying a Freudian paradigm to decipher the many ambiguities of Shakespeare’s most debated play, Ernest Jones in *Hamlet and Oedipus* theorizes that Hamlet’s hesitancy in fulfilling his dead father’s command to slay Claudius results from his unresolved Oedipus complex, the infantile desire to kill his father and marry his mother. This Oedipus fixation paralyzes Hamlet, who cannot avenge his father’s murder because he unconsciously identifies with the murderer Claudius. Although advocates of this reading can adduce no explicit testimony from the text, they often cite as support for this interpretation Hamlet’s obsession with his mother’s sexuality, particularly as revealed in the “closet scene” between mother and son. Moreover, even through this once popular theory lacks currency with contemporary critics, it has influenced a number of popular films, particularly those by Laurence Olivier and Franco Zeffirelli.

With the exception of Antiochus and his daughter in *Pericles*, all of the suggested instances of incest discussed above must rely for their validation on sub-textual innuendoes and subjective interpretations. However, this does not mean that they have no credibility. Indeed, Shakespeare’s characteristically “open-ended” texts invite subjective interpretations, and his famed ambiguity may be a strategy for treating tabooed subjects without fear of censorship or reprisal.

### Homosexuality

In his influential book, *The History of Sexuality*, Michel Foucault reminds the reader that the modern concept of an exclusively homosexual orientation, a construct of medical discourses of the nineteenth century, was unknown in the early modern period. Foucault does not deny the occurrence of homosexual acts during Shakespeare’s time—indeed, he would probably agree with most contemporary scholars that this activity was widespread, even institutionalized, in early modern England. Rather, Foucault insists that during this period orthodox morality regarded this particular infraction—like other violations of official sexual edicts—as a

temporary aberration, not a congenital abnormality or a distinctive mode of identity. Moreover, scholars have marshalled a plethora of evidence to show that at this period, the widely accepted, “orderly” homosexual relationships between masters and servants, princes and their minions, or consenting adults of the same class were generally tolerated or ignored unless perceived as disruptive of the social order, particularly the culturally sanctioned institution of marriage. Furthermore, these acts were rarely associated with the monstrous capital crime of “sodomy,” which at this time became a synecdoche for a number of heinous actions; these might include anal penetration, along with sexual violations such as rape and incest, but only when these transgressions were associated with more socially threatening offenses such as treason, sorcery, and witchcraft.

According to many contemporary critics, just as homosexual practices flourished in early modern England, homoerotic nuances also saturate Shakespeare’s plays, particularly his comedies. The theatrical convention of the period, whereby boys played all the female roles, further complicates the issue and scholars have actively speculated on the probable response of early modern audiences to the spectacle of cross-dressed boys being wooed and embraced by adult male actors. The transvestite heroines of Shakespeare’s comedies and romances (Julia in *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, Portia and Jessica in *The Merchant of Venice*, Rosalind in *As You Like It*, Viola in *Twelfth Night*, and Imogen in *Cymbeline*), in which the boy actor plays a girl disguised as a boy (and, in *As You Like It*, the boy actor plays a girl disguised as a boy pretending to be a girl), have excited particular debate. Reactions to these sexually ambiguous figures include the following: The affirmation of these doubly cross-dressed characters as exemplars of androgynous wholeness dissolving rigid gender categories; the insistence that the so-called “androgyny” of these cross-dressed actors serves to stress their maleness rather than their femaleness and thus to titillate homoerotic fantasies in the audience; the argument that these transvestite disguises accentuate the characters’ femaleness rather than their androgyny. These diverse reactions to Shakespeare’s clever gender bending demonstrate the difficulty of decoding erotic responses in an historical period far removed from our own.

Accentuating these erotic valences is the conflict between male/female friendships and heterosexual love dominating many of Shakespeare’s comedies. Numerous comedies dramatize close, loving friendships between men and women. In *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, the self-sacrificing Valentine incredibly offers his beloved Silvia to his inconstant friend Proteus, thus elevating male friendship above heterosexual passion. However, in all of Shakespeare’s other comedies, the devoted friends—the melancholy Antonio and the enterprising Bassanio (*The Merchant of Venice*), the mournful Helena and the feisty Hermia (*A Midsummer Night’s Dream*), the jesting Benedict and the caddish Claudio (*Much Ado About Nothing*), and the charismatic Rosalind and the loyal Celia (*As You Like It*)—must all ultimately subordinate their affectionate homosocial bondings to heterosexual love. Most commentators would agree with David Bevington in *Shakespeare* that these plays (with the exception of *The Merchant of Venice*, which treats more mature relationships) dramatize the normal process of maturation in which the young boy or girl must eventually relinquish his or her original, semi-narcissistic, same-sex love object and graduate into mature heterosexual attachments leading to marriage.

However, some contemporary critics demur that often the relationships traditionally identified as friendship include homoerotic desire as well as homosocial affection. Focusing particularly on *As You Like It*, both Valerie Traub in *Desire and Anxiety* and Mario DiGangi in *The Homoerotics of Early Modern Drama* comment on what they interpret as the multiple sexualities dramatized in the play, not only the heterosexual attachments—the romantic love of Rosalind and Orlando, the courtly love vagaries of Phoebe and Silvius, and the earthy lust of Touchstone for Audrey—but also the homoerotic attractions—Celia’s passionate devotion to Rosalind, Orlando’s marked interest in Ganymede, and Phoebe’s infatuation with Rosalind disguised as the boy Ganymede. According to Traub, Rosalind enjoys evoking both homosexual and heterosexual desires, and Shakespeare punctuates the homoerotic nuances of Rosalind’s performance through her adoption of the name of Ganymede, an allusion to the young Trojan youth loved by Zeus and a slang term at this time for the passive member of a male homosexual liaison. For Traub, Phoebe’s crush on

Ganymede also suggests sexual ambiguity. Consciously, of course, Phoebe believes Ganymede to be a man and when she discovers otherwise, she loses interest. Unconsciously, however, Phoebe is clearly enamored of Ganymede's femininity, and her blazon to the girl disguised as a boy, in which she praises his/her shapely leg, ripe red lips, and damask cheek, parodies the traditional blazon of the courtly lover to his lady.

Both Traub and DiGangi also discover multiple sexualities in the Illyria of *Twelfth Night*, which include Olivia's infatuation for Viola, disguised as the effeminate page Cesario (paralleling Phoebe's crush on Ganymede); Orsino's sexual attraction to the same Cesario, whom he believes to be a youth (recalling the youth Ganymede's similar appeal to Orlando); and, most significantly, Antonio's homoerotic love for Viola's twin brother Sebastian. However, with typically ambiguity, Shakespeare never clarifies the exact nature of these attachments. Of all of these relationships, the strongest case can be made for Antonio's single-minded dedication to Sebastian, expressed throughout the play in the soaring language of courtly love, as transcending the early modern code of passionate male/female friendship.

Nevertheless, even if we grant that in the Saturnalian worlds of Arden and Illyria homoerotic fantasies may be briefly indulged, these fancies must ultimately surrender to the demands of heterosexual marriage and procreation. Olivia must wed Sebastian, not Viola, even as Phoebe must accept Silvius, not Ganymede, and Celia must live with Olivier, not Rosalind. Moreover, Rosalind and Viola will win Orlando and Orsino, and the wedded pairs will be rounded out with Touchstone and Audrey in *As You Like It* and Sir Toby and Maria in *Twelfth Night*. Only Antonio, the putative homosexual lover of Sebastian, remains alone.

Another Antonio—the Merchant of Venice, in the play by that name—also remains odd-man-out at the dénouement, this time amid three jubilant sets of newly-weds. A popular reading of this play asserts that the plucky heroine Portia must overcome two challenges in order to possess the man she loves, Bassanio. First, she must circumvent the restrictions of her father's will; secondly, she must win Bassanio from his friend or lover (depending on one's interpretation). The shrewd and determined lady

accomplishes both of these feats, and, at the end of the play, as with almost all of Shakespeare's comedies, homosocial (or homosexual) bonding must surrender to heterosexual love.

However, all of the relationships cited above, and even the most overt example of homoerotic pairing—the attachment in *Troilus and Cressida* of Achilles and Patroclus, legendary homosexual lovers dating back to Homer—are shrouded in characteristic Shakespearean ambiguity. Thersites slurs Patroclus as Achilles's "male varlet" or "masculine whore," epithets that Patroclus does not deny, but then this scurrilous malcontent reduces everything to lechery. Moreover, the affiliation between the two warriors provides no impediment to Achilles's love for Priam's daughter Polyxena, at least not until the death of Patroclus in battle drives Achilles to madness and dishonor.

Other posited homosexual attachments are even more problematic. Interpreters frequently adduce repressed homosexuality as an explanation for the hidden motivations of both Shakespeare's villains and heroes, such as the motiveless malignity of Don John (*Much Ado About Nothing*) and Iago (*Othello*), and Leontes's irrational jealousy of Hermione (*The Winter's Tale*). Still other commentators discover homoerotic innuendoes in the friendships of Bertram and Parolles (*All's Well That Ends Well*) and Richard II and his minions (*Richard II*), as well as in the intense masculine rivalry of Coriolanus and Aufidius (*Coriolanus*). However, as Stanley Wells remarks in his reasonable and open-minded appraisal (*Looking for Sex in Shakespeare*), all of these interpretations must rely on the possible psychological sub-texts of the plays rather than on explicit statement.

The same conflict between male friendship and heterosexual desire and the same ambiguity between passionate same-sex friendship and homosexual love animates Shakespeare's great sonnet cycle. The sonnet cycle, initiated by Dante and Petrarch, popularized in England by Wyatt and Surrey, and perfected in the sixteenth century by Sidney, Spenser, and Shakespeare, traditionally recounts the emotional tribulations of a lover enamored of an unattainable, idealized lady, who must remain on an unreachable pedestal, either because she is pledged to chastity or because she is someone else's wife and too virtuous to break her marriage vows. In either case, these sonnet cycles typically depict an

oxymoronic love, simultaneously a source of pleasure and pain, elevation and degradation.

Always the innovator, Shakespeare adapts the sonnet cycle in numerous ways, rejecting the unobtainable Petrarchan mistress and substituting instead two highly unconventional objects of poetic desire—the Fair Young Man and the Dark Lady. Most critics concur that the first 126 verses of the Sonnets are dedicated to the Fair Young Man (although a few dissenters argue for two or more addressees) and agree that these poems contain some of the most rapturous love lines that Shakespeare ever wrote. Yet Sonnet 20 strongly implies that the poet's homoerotic passion for the Fair Young Man must remain unconsummated, at least if we accept Helen Vendler's highly influential reading in *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*. In this sonnet, the poet examines the remarkable confluence in the beloved youth of a beautiful woman's face and a man's anatomy, explaining that Nature originally created the beloved as the ideal woman, but soon "fell a-doting" on her own creation and, being female herself, "pricked out" this paragon for women's pleasure, adding genital equipment that renders the Fair Young Man unavailable to the poet, at least for heterosexual intercourse. According to Vendler, the poet never considers homosexual intercourse with his love object, and thus the passion of the poet for the Fair Young Man, although both erotic and romantic, must remain a "marriage of true minds" only (Sonnet 116), not a union of physical bodies. However, other interpreters argue against such a literal exegesis of this sonnet, while still others insist that this two-line statement provides insufficient evidence on which to reject a homosexual union between the poet and the beloved youth. As so often in Shakespeare, the explicit nature of the relationship between the poet and the "Master/Mistress" of his passion remains obscured, although few commentators today would deny the eroticism permeating the sonnets to the Fair Young Man.

Sonnets 127–154, dedicated to the Dark Lady, narrate a very different kind of ardor. Even though, unlike the traditional unattainable Petrarchan mistress, the sexually available Dark Lady treads on the ground rather than balancing on a pedestal (Sonnet 130), she is both promiscuous and probably married to another (Sonnet 152 accuses her of breaking her "bed [marriage] vow") and thus cannot be permanently possessed

by the poet. The Dark Lady sonnets recount a tumultuous, love/hate liaison, which moves from joyous sexual fulfillment through the torments of betrayal, jealousy, humiliation, rage, and disillusionment, finally concluding with the disenchanted poet still in thrall to his sexual obsession for his unfaithful mistress. Thus, Shakespeare's much-praised Sonnets, containing the most passionate love poems the poet ever wrote, both celebrate and deplore two ultimately unfulfilling relationships, juxtaposing the poet's elevated yet erotic love for the Fair Young Man (his good angel), whom the poet idealizes but cannot possess sexually, with his obsessive lust for the Dark Lady (his bad angel), whom he can possess sexually but cannot idealize.

Harold Bloom, in *Shakespeare: The Invention of the Human*, identifies Shakespeare as the inventor of the modern concept of "the self." Whether or not we accept this rather grandiose claim, Shakespeare certainly ranks as one of literature's most intrepid explorers of the human psyche, navigating a path into the tangled human id that would later be followed by Freud and other psychologists. Since sexuality is inextricable from human psychology, Shakespeare investigated the various manifestations of sexual relations as boldly as was allowed within a culture that practiced censorship and punished violators of socially acceptable behavior. Thus, Shakespeare left the literary world a rich legacy of insights into the sexual attitudes of his era, granting us glimpses of the early modern fascination with love, lust, and the unruly libido.

### Biography

William Shakespeare was born in Stratford-upon-Avon, April 23, 1564. Although little is known of his education, he presumably attended the King's New School at Stratford. At the age of eighteen he married Anne Hathaway, with whom he had three children, his eldest daughter Susanna, and a pair of twins, Hamnet and Judith. Nothing is known of Shakespeare's activities during the seven years from 1585, when the twins were baptized, until 1592, when Shakespeare first appeared as an actor and playwright of significance for the Lord Chamberlain's men. Shakespeare later became chief playwright of this company and a shareholder in the Globe Theatre. During an extraordinarily productive career, spanning nearly twenty years,

Shakespeare wrote thirty-seven plays (although he may have collaborated on others), four poems, and a celebrated sonnet sequence. Sometime in 1611 or 1612, he retired to Stratford, where he died on his birthday in 1616 at the age of fifty-three.

SARA MUNSON DEATS

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# SHANQING HUANGSHU GUUDUYI [YELLOW BOOK SALVATION RITUAL OF HIGHEST PURITY]

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The *Yellow Book Salvation Ritual*, a *Shanqing Scripture* is a complete liturgy for conducting the rite of salvation through sexual intercourse in the Daoist religion. The text is absolutely unique in Chinese literature for its fusion of Daoist ritual with sexual yoga, meditation, medicine, and shamanism. Hidden in plain view for centuries in the *Daoist Canon*, the text was

rediscovered by Kristofer Schipper in the 1970s. Although, the date and provenance of the work has yet to be determined from internal evidence, it is clearly a direct descendent of the rite of "harmonizing the qi" from the late Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) and cannot be later than 1445, the date of its publication in the *Ming Daoist Canon*.

The earliest antecedents of sexual rituals in China may be seen in Neolithic cave paintings depicting naked dancers engaged in what appears to be fertility rites. There is also folkloric evidence of the survival of sexual rituals among the peasants and non-Han peoples in China up until the modern period. The *Yellow Book*, however, represents the absorption and refinement of sexual ritual within the Daoist religious movement of the second century CE, a movement which arose to fill the political and spiritual vacuum left by the disintegration of the Han dynasty by ministering directly to the people and maintaining the cosmic covenant until a legitimate new dynasty could be founded with the mandate of Heaven.

In 142 CE, Zhang Daoling claimed to have received revelations from the deified Laozi to bring about the restoration of the Era of Great Peace and took for himself the title Celestial Master. Popular movements seeking to actualize this ideal, the Yellow Turban rebellion and the Five Pecks of Rice community, ended with the defeat of the Yellow Turbans and the capitulation of Daoling's grandson to General Cao Cao in 215 on the condition that Celestial Master Daoism become the state cult of Cao's Wei dynasty (220–265). Since neither the *Scripture of Great Peace* [*Taiping jing*] nor the *Xiang'er Commentary to the Laozi* [*Laozi xiang'er zhu*], the two texts most closely associated with early Celestial Master Daoism, contain direct references to sexual rituals, our only contemporaneous accounts of the marriage and initiation rite of "harmonizing the qi" is from its Buddhist, Daoist, and Confucian rivals.

Buddhist monks Dao An, Xuan Guang, and Fa Lin attack the "harmonizing the qi" ceremony as "demonic methods" and "false doctrines." Chen Luan, in his 570 CE *Ridiculing the Daoists* [*Xiao dao lun*], recounts his early participation in such rites before being converted to Buddhism: "We were first instructed in the practice of 'harmonizing the qi' after the teachings of the *Yellow Book* and the three-five-seven-nine method of sexual intercourse." Daoist alchemist Ge Hong's (283–343) biography of Zhang Daoling mentions his use of sexual practices, and Tao Hongjing's (456–536) *True Decrees* (*Zhen gao*) also refers to revelations warning Highest Purity Sect medium Yang Xi against Zhang Daoling's sexual rites. The *History of the Wei Dynasty's* (Weishu) "Account of Buddhists and Daoists"

[*Shi lao zhi*] speaks of "The three Masters Zhang's teachings on the harmonization of qi between men and women" and the efforts of Kou Qianzhi (d. 448) to adapt Daoism to the taste of literati elites and deflect Buddhist criticism by abolishing the old Celestial Master's sexual ceremonies.

As described in the *Yellow Book* text, the rite is limited to couples twenty or younger, and by way of prologue, the celebrants bathe, observe abstentions, perfume themselves with incense, and pay respects to the altar of the priestly lineage. The twenty stages of the ritual engage every aspect of the participant's psyche and sensorium. In spatial terms, the ceremony is choreographed on an imaginary grid laid out according to the cardinal and ordinal compass points and their corresponding sexegenary cycle binomials, *Book of Changes*' trigrams, five phases, and yin and yang. Left–right directionality defines the orientation of the partners to each other, to hand selection in gesture and touching, foot placement, clockwise and counter-clockwise massage, and qi circulation. Time is evoked in summoning the qi of the four seasons and the five gods of the year, month, one's birth year, one's age, and the present day. Color is represented in the chromatic correspondences of qi visualized in meditation, in the divinities conjured, and their vestments. The celebrants occupy space in prescribed postures—standing, sitting, kneeling, reclining—and move through space—bowing, saluting, perambulating—on their own power, and also manipulating each other's limbs.

Verbally, the couple engages in call and response prayers with the officiating priest and with each other, often invoking long lists of deities of the civil and martial god/officials of the three realms of the Daoist universe (heaven, earth, and water), the gods of the four directions, gods of the sexegenary cycle, and gods of the body—organs and psychic centers. In their prayers, they identify themselves by name and residence and appeal for health, immortality, unity with the dao, to be inscribed in the book of life and expunged from the register of death, and to become the "seed people" for the regeneration of the world; they plead to be delivered from sickness, demons, and calamity and to avoid transgressing taboos and escape the disapproval and plots of their fellow men. Parallel prayers for male and female use their respective

gender associations: heaven for male, earth for female; yang for male, yin for female; odd numbers for male, even for female, and so forth. Often prayers are punctuated with breathing exercises involving inhalation of the qi of life and exhalation of the qi of death, and movement, too, is synchronized with breath work. Numerology permeates every aspect of the ritual, from numbers of fingers joined, to repetitions of breathing, prostrations, and massage, from rounds of perambulations to the dimensions in inches of visualized qi. Qigong practices include teeth gnashing, cranial finger tapping, massage, and auto-massage.

On the purely interior level, there are visualizations and meditation. The devotees visualize spheres of colored qi, which circulate throughout and suffuse the body, and protective deities standing guard around them. The supplicants practice many rounds of microcosmic orbit meditation, moving qi up the posterior midline of the body and down the anterior to gather in the dantian (elixir field) below the navel, or laterally, up the left side of the body and down the right, with variations of each.

Physical contact between the partners includes hand clasping and hand covering, cradling of each other's heads, and massage, particularly of the heart, dantian, and pubic area. In section fourteen, the priest assists the couple in removing their clothes and unbinding their hair, and finally, in section sixteen, the ritual coitus is described in this passage:

With his right hand he massages her lower dantian three times. Approaching the "gate of birth," he opens the "golden gate" with his right hand, while lifting the "jade key" with his left hand and casting it upon the "gate of birth." Now supporting her head with his left hand, he massages the "gate of life" up and down and from side to side, while reciting the following three times: "Water flows to the east and clouds drift to the west. Yin nourishes yang with a qi so subtle. The mysterious essence and nourishing liquid rise to the 'tutorial gate.'" The first partner (man) recites: "The 'divine gentleman' holds the gate, and the 'jade lady' opens the door. As our qi is united, may yin bestow her qi upon me." The second partner (woman) recites: "Yin and yang bestow and transform, and the ten thousand creatures are nourished and born. Heaven covers and earth supports. May qi be bestowed upon the bodies of these humble supplicants...." Raising his head and inhaling living qi through his nose, he swallows yang according to the numbers three, five, seven, and nine and recites:

"May the dao of Heaven be set in motion." The second partner now recites: "May the dao of earth be set in motion." Following this, he enters the "gate of birth" to a depth of half the head, while reciting: "Oh, celestial deities and immortals, I would shake Heaven and move earth that the 'five lords' might hear my plea." Now the second partner recites: "Oh, celestial deities and 'dantian palace,' I would move earth and shake heaven that the five gods of the body might each be strong." He then penetrates to the greatest depth, closes his mouth, and inhales living qi through the nose and exhales through the mouth three times. Gnashing his teeth, he recites: "May nine and one be born in the midst." Now he withdraws and returns to a depth of half the head.

The literary value of the *Yellow Book* cannot be judged by the standards of poetry or fiction, for as ritual, performer, and audience are one and the same. The practice differs from the bedroom arts or sexual alchemy, however, in that it is ritualized, communal, monogamous, egalitarian, and devoid of arousal, orgasm, and sexual vampirism. From the point of view of religious literature, the *Yellow Book* stands for transformation through somatic performance and the sacralization of sex. The sexual element here is not ecstatic but aestheticized and embedded in a dense structure of cosmological and polytheistic symbolism deployed for its power of renewal in a religious movement that hoped to heal the individual, restore the community, and knit back together the broken pieces of civilization.

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## SHIBUSAWA, TATSUHIKO

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1928–1987

Japanese scholar of French literature, critic, and novelist

On the basis of eroticism as a new thought, he was a pioneer like Gaius Plinius Secundus. He was the first researcher about Sade in Japan, as many as three times published “The selection of Marquis de Sade” (3 vol, 1956–1967; 5 vol, 1962–1964; 8 vol, 1965–1966). In addition, he has translated Huysmans, Bataille, Pieyre de Mandiargues, Cocteau, and Desnos. He quickly estimated the value of Sade in Japan, though his translation of *Akutoku No Sakae: Zoku* [*L'Histoire de Juliette; ou, Les Prosperites du vice*] was censored in 1960. Shusaku Endo, Kenzaburo Ôe, etc., defended him. Finally, he was fined 70,000 yen. He always arrived to the tribunal too late, and escaped the final judgement. According to him, he was not escaping, but he considered the debates were of no interest. He said there was no obscenity, and that obscenity existed only in the reader's mind. Finally, according to him, there was no obscenity in the world.

Mishima said that, “if Shibusawa didn't exist, Japan would die from boredom.” He was a very close friend, but they had opposite views on Sade. Mishima liked Sade “Raw” and “Bloody,” while Shibusawa liked the literature of Sade as a dramatic tale with his historical implications pronounced by a taler. Mishima always waited for the translations. The only biography of Sade in Japan was *Sado Kôshaku No Shôgai* [*Life of Marquis de Sade*] (1964) was the basis for *Sado Kôshaku Fujin* [*Madame de Sade*] (1965), of Mishima.

From 1968 to 1969, Shibusawa was chief editor of *Chi To Bara*. The subtitle of the review

was “Synthetical review for researches on eroticism and cruelty.” In this journal, he translated Morion's “L'anglais Decrit Dans Le Chateau Ferme.” These researches led to a publication of great value. Many photographs were included, and Shibusawa was the model for “La Mort de Sardanapale,” and Mishima for “Le Martyre de Saint Sebastien.” They presented several paintings and objects, such as Paul Delvaux, Pierre Molinier and Clovis Trouille. This review was of real value, also because such writers as Nosaka and Yoshiyuki participated in it.

After his travel in Europe, he extracted the quintessence of all literatures of any times and places, like a narrator. His style is luxuriant, as if you were invited to labyrinth or museum:

His father was third of the Shibusawa family who became wealthy during Edo period. Shibusawa wrote about this childhood in the essay *Kitsune No Danbukuro* [*The Trousers of Fox*]. When he was a pupil, he read a lot of adventure novels and his health was poor. He was a brilliant student. During World War II, he had to work as a laborer. He then passed the high school entrance exam, but was delayed admission due to the war until July. He attended a boarding school. At that time, he admired Akutagawa and Dazai. At first, he was a scientist, but changed to study literature. He studied French at the “Athénée Français.” After he discovered Cocteau and Gide, his great passion became surrealism, and the works of Sade. He studied these two fields while attending university courses and then wrote his thesis: “The Presence of Sade.”

He considered eros to be a sensual experience which is peculiar to sex, and at the same time, he was like a “spotless child,” driven by intellectual



## SHORT STORY, FRENCH

curiosity. He always considered objects as seen from an upper point of view, like a bird. As if children were collecting their treasure in a coffer, Shibusawa named his inner world “Draconia,” and he built his “Micro Cosmos” with a pen. It is not an exaggeration to say that eroticism for him was always like an object hidden in a coffer.

### Biography

Born in Tokyo, 8 May 1928, he studied French literature at Tokyo University, especially surrealism and its surroundings between 1950 and 1953. He moved from Tokyo to Komachi, in Kamakura in 1946. He translated from Jean Cocteau, “le Grand Ecart,” 1954. About the Marquis de Sade, he published an anthology in three volumes (1956), and translated *L'Histoire de Juliette; ou, Les Prosperites du vice*. This book was submitted to censorship, and the publisher and translator were prosecuted for obscenity. He married Sumiko Yagawa (writer, poet, translator), in 1959 (then divorced in 1968). With the *Yume No Uchû-Shi* in 1964, he dignified the essay genre to an original way of thinking, and introduced in Japan the heretical art and literature, magic art, occultism, and the western utopian and epicurean ideal. He fled to Yamaguchi, Kamakura, in 1966. In 1968–1968, he was redactor in chief for the review *Chi To Bara*, together with Mishima and others. The final judgement in the Sade trial condemned him to a fine of 70,000 yen (the average monthly wage was then 50,000–60,000 yen). He married Tatsuko Maekawa (editor of an art review) in

1969. He began to publish the “Compilation Shibusawa Tatsuhiko,” and made his first trip to Europe in 1970. Since the essay *Kurumi No Naka No Sekai* [*World in a Walnut*] unto 1974, and the essay *Shikou No Monshô-Gaku* [*Heraldry of Thought*] in 1977, he wrote on various kinds of subjects. He received the Izumi Kyouka award in 1981 for the tale *Karakusa Monogatari* wrote the tale *Utsuro Bune* in 1986, received the Yomiuri award for “Takaoka shin’nou Koukai-Ki” in 1987. His style is beautiful and erotic and is linked to oriental mythology. He lost his voice because of cancer of the hypopharynx since September 1986. He died in 5 August 1987.

SACHIE SHIOYA

### Selected Works

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*Karakusa monogatari* (Karakusa story), a collection of short stories, Kawade shobô shinsha, 1981.  
*Utsuro bune* (Hollow ship), a collection of short stories, Fukutake shoten, 1986.  
*Takaoka shin’nou koukai-ki* [Prince Takaoka’s sailing records]. Nobel: Bungei shunjû, 1987.

### Critique and Essay

- Eros no kaibou* (Anatomy of eros). Essay, Tougen sha, 1965.  
*Homo eroticus*. critique, Gendai shichou sha, 1967.  
*Tougen sha*. 1967.  
*Kikaijikake no eros* [*A clockwork eros*]. critique, Seido sha, 1978.  
*Eros teki ningen*, (Erotic human), critique, library, Chûou kouron sha, 1984.

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From the history of the French short story with its origins in the fifteenth century, there are many examples of short texts, in which sex has a significant role. Some examples of French writers include Guy de Maupassant, Jean Lorrain, Daniel Walther, and Vincent Ravalec at the end

of the twentieth century. It is rather exceptional to find a text, erotic from beginning to end, with everything this involves in the choice of subjects, situations, descriptions, and vocabulary. Since the nineteenth century, there has been a tradition of the fantastic short story,

since the twentieth century, science fiction and crime have developed; but there is no trace of the erotic short story. This essay will try to provide an explanation for this.

The short stories of the fifteenth and sixteenth century, which are in a similar vein to Boccaccio's *Decameron* and the Italian licentious story-writers, are gathered in *The One Hundred New Short Stories – Les Cent nouvelles Nouvelles* the first French collection of short stories. It uncovers with delightful coarseness the sexual adventures of libertine monks, the dalliances of discontented married women who are henceforth satisfied: “So he led her into a very beautifully apparelled wardrobe, locked the door and lay on the bed. Master Monk took her sheets away, and instead of his finger, he drove his hard and stiff stake into her.”

After these, eroticism disappears from the short story is shelved for three centuries. We come across *Nouvelles galantes* in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, where the adjective merely calls up sentimentalism (the precious character of classicism is expressed in the *One Hundred Short Stories—Les Cent Nouvelles*, (1732–1739) by Mme de Gomez). Moralizing short stories appear in the wake of Marmontel at the end of the eighteenth century and dramatic short stories become available thereafter in the first half of the nineteenth century. These are characterized by bloodshed and violence. In *One Hundred and Short Stories of the One Hundred and One—Les Cent-et-Une Nouvelles des Cent-et-Un* (1833) like Madame de Gomez's collection is not a patch on the spirit of the fifteenth century's eponymous collection. Realistic short stories at the end of the nineteenth century are centered on social drama and some other novellas are dominated by conservative middle-class conformism with a *New Decameron—Le Nouveau Décaméron*, (1884–1887) which is a poor imitation of Boccaccio's work). At the very least, we can list a few of these examples:

- *Tales and Short Stories—Contes et Nouvelles* (1665–1668—forbidden by the police!) by Jean de la Fontaine, yet these are only successful adaptations in verse of earlier texts.
- *The Love Short stories or The Abused Fair Sex—Nouvelles amoureuses ou le beau sexe abusé* (1760—“à l'isle de Cythère”), including ‘Swindled Virginity’—‘Le Pucelage

excroqué’ and ‘Well-Hung Brother Abelard’—‘Frère Abelard bien monté.’

- *The Monastic Adventures or the Scandalous Life of Brother Maurice Among Nuns - Les Aventures monacales ou la vie scandaleuse du frère Maurice parmi les religieuses* (1763–1777) including ‘Mornings of the Nuns’—‘Les Matins des nonnes’—and ‘The Mule in the Dormitory’—‘Le Mulet dans le dortoir.’

If *The Crimes of Love. Heroic and Tragic Short Stories [Les Crimes de l'amour, nouvelles héroïques et tragiques]* (1799) by Sade and the collections by Restif de la Bretonne (*Contemporary Women* series—la série des *Contemporaines*, 1780–1783) are not named in this list, because these works have only few similarities with the other novels by these authors. Editors may claim that they are sexually explicit, but they are not.

One still has to recall the nineteenth century's fiery works of Balzac and his *A Passion in the Desert [Une passion dans le désert]* (1830) and *The Girl with (the) Golden Eyes [La Fille aux yeux d'or]* (1834), Theophile Gautier's *The Loving Death [La Morte amoureuse]* *Nouvelles* (1845) and lastly Barbey d'Aurevilly with his *The Demonic [Les Diaboliques]* in 1874. The appearance of coarse novellas is noted with Maupassant and Montifaud, for example *The Innocent Suzanne, Comical Short Stories [La Chaste Suzanne, nouvelles drôlatiques]* in 1895. The licentious tale by Catulle Mendès appears in 1884 entitled *To Read in the Bath [Pour lire au bain]*. The list is endless. The analysis of these works is outside the realm of this article in much the same way as the history of the erotic short story in the nineteenth century, which remains untouched.

In the twentieth century, the situation does not change much at first. Here are a couple of works written before 1940 (to which we could add *The Story of the Eye* by Georges Bataille):

- *The Secret Week of Venus—La Semaine secrète de Vénus* (1926, 1985 - a first edition of only 275 copies) by Pierre Mac Orlan.
- *The Singapore's Dancer—La Danseuse de Singapour* (1936) and *Beauties for Rent—Belles à louer* (1939) by Louis-Charles Royer, a specialist of the time in soft eroticism (with curious fetish for breasts), who wrote five other collections of short stories.

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The further we move into the twentieth century, the more interest we find in erotic short stories, so much so that it almost became a fashionable genre in the 1990s. From 1940 to 2000, I counted 136 works (collections, special issues of magazines or newspapers, independently published texts). Yet this is just an estimate. Frenchmen wrote 103 of these, Quebecians wrote 22, Belgians 10, and Swiss 2. This is puzzling because the voice of the novelist is not absent: *Ten Swiss Erotic Short Stories* [*Dix nouvelles érotiques helvétiques*] (1989) by Salio de Vries, *Eleven Unpublished Erotic Tales* [*Onze contes érotiques inédits choisis*] (1995).

From the beginning, some titles set the tone insofar as they do not allow for any ambiguity: *Torrid Geometry* [*La Géométrie dans les spasmes*] (1959), “... *Help Us Against Evil Men*” [“...*Et délivrez-nous du mâle*”] (1960) by Belen (Nelly Kaplan), *Emmanuelle III*, [*Short Stories From Erosphere—Emmanuelle III, nouvelles de l'érosphère*] (1969) by Emmanuelle Arsan (Maryat et Louis Rollet Andrienne). Some others include *Eros Exists, I Met Him* [*Eros existe, je l'ai rencontré*] (1970) by Philippe de Jonas, *The Traveller From Antibes and Other Improper Stories* [*Le Voyageur d'Antibes et autres récits inconvenants*] (1978) by Jude du Lacques, *Oedipus at the Brothel and Other Immoral Tales* [*Oedipe au bordel suivi d'autres contes inconvenants*] (1993) by André Thirion, *Tales That Make Little Riding Hoods Blush* [*Contes à faire rougir les petits chaperons*] (1987) by Jean-Pierre Enard, *Perverse Tales* [*Contes pervers*] (1980) by Régine Deforges (1980), *Laura Colombe, Tales for Perverse Little Girls* [*Laura Colombe, contes pour petites filles perverses*] (1981) and *Tales for Perverse Little Girls* [*Contes pour petites filles perverses*] (1995) by the Belgian Nadine Monfils, *Perverse Chronicles* [*Chroniques perverses*] (1986) by Olivier Dazat, and *Mechanical Eros* [*Eros mécanique*] (1995) by Pierre Bourgeade. If the words “eroticism,” “Eros” and “erotic” are not rare in the titles (‘Erotic Bullfights’—‘Corridas érotiques’ in *Tales and Legends of the One-Eyed W...* 1970, by Eric Gordès; *Eros in a Chinese Train, Short Stories* [*Eros dans un train chinois, nouvelles*], 1990, by Haitian René Depestre), the term “erotic tale” is to be found only in five titles and quite late: *The Lips' Edge* [*Le Tranchant des lèvres*] (1990) by Geneviève Hélène, *Tales to Make You Blush. Erotic Short Stories* [*Histoires à faire rougir, nouvelles érotiques*] (1994) by the Quebecian

Marie Gray, *Three Erotic-Fantastic, Short Stories* [*Trois nouvelles érotico-fantastiques*] (1998) by Mauricette Lecomte, *Erotic Short Stories* [*Nouvelles érotiques*] (1999, a collection), *Torrid Embraces, Erotic Short Stories* [*Etreintes torrides, nouvelles érotiques*] (2000) by Sam Titus, *As Black As Eros, 33 Erotic Black Short Stories* [*Noir comme Eros, 33 nouvelles noires érotiques*] (2000).

Pervading all kinds of short stories—whether serious or amusing, using the conventions of Science fiction, fantasy or crime, eroticism has many aspects:

- **Soft Eroticism:** more allusive than daring as shown in the following examples, considered now as curiosities of the middle-class ideology between the early 1930s to the late 1950s: Louis-Charles Royer, Clarmide (*Simulacras of Love, Novels and Short Stories* [*Les Simulacres de l'amour, romans et nouvelles*], 1949). The impact of other texts depends on an insidious way of representing or suggesting the unusual perversity of the subject. For example in a park, a man is observing a woman being raped by two strangers, which turns out to be a set-up, but the woman was not compliant. (Raymond Jean, ‘Mira’ in *A Bella B's Fantasy and Other Stories* [*Un fantasme de Bella B. et autres récits*], 1983). This type of eroticism does not exclude violence: a man stabs his lover's sex—“I lock you up inside of me. I seal you there and tomorrow you will have a special place among those I have honoured.” (Jude du Lacques, *The Traveller From Antibes and Other Improper Stories* [*Le Voyageur d'Antibes et autres récits inconvenants*], 1978). This eroticism is the prerogative of authors who are more willing to write about eroticism rather than be frank about it. Here are some other examples: Gilles Plazy (*The Bitches Academy* [*L'Académie des chiennes*], 1993), Claude Louis-Combet (*Augias and Other Infamies* [*Augias et autres infamies*], 1993), Richard Millet (*White Heart, Short Stories* [*Coeur blanc, nouvelles*], 1994).
- **Open Eroticism:** Here the eroticism is explicit: “At the fourth drink, David plunged his fist softly but without hesitation between Sylvia's thighs and he got an electric shock right in the spinal cord when he

- reached the humid mass of her bushy tuft, which proved that she wore no knickers.” (Belgian writer Jacques Sternberg, *Cuckold and Bull Stories* [*Histoires à dormir sans vous*], 1990). Those short stories are comprised of erotomaniacs, nymphomaniacs, masturbation scenes, straightforward or extravagant copulations. This kind of eroticism, which rests on complete shamelessness, has unfortunately given birth to an impressive number of insipid works, which under the pretence of provocation, are but an accumulation of clichés, as is the case with Régine Deforges and Françoise Rey (*Black Nights* [*Nuits d'encre*], 1994).
- **Neurotic Eroticism:** a man achieves satisfaction with a dog (by Quebec writer Marie-José Thériault, ‘Cyclops in the Park’—‘Les Cyclopes du jardin public’ in *The Ceremony, tales*, 1978), a little girl spends her time caressing old men (by Quebec writer Jean-Yves Soucy, ‘The Buzzard’—‘La Buse’ in *The Buzzard and The Spider, Stories* [*La Buse et l'araignée, récits*], 1988). These are some strong, almost unbearable examples of an eroticism, which is dominated by perversion, neurosis, cruelty, and morbidity. Here are some examples: a man is making love to a woman, who had the inside of a body tattooed on the outside of her body (Philippe Djian, ‘Life Size’—‘Grandeur nature’ in *50 To 1, Stories* [*50 contre 1, histoires*], 1981), a man makes love to a dead woman (Claude Louis-Combet, ‘Yeside’ - in *Augias and Other Infamies* [*Augias et autres infamies*], 1993). This type of eroticism is not geared towards the general audience and is becoming altogether unwholesome and sordid. The reader is also confronted with shady ceremonies or other secret societies characterized by perversion, and to sadomasochistic scenes: a masked woman is submitting to the fancies of a man (Robert Margerit, *Ambiguous* [*Ambigu*], 1946, 1956, Janine Aeply, ‘Love Shutters’, ‘Les Volets d’amour’ in *Eros zéro*, 1972, 1997). This intellectual eroticism becomes quite sulphurous with Pierre Bourgeade (a nun longs to make love to God: ‘Mystics’ in *Immortals* 1968), and especially in these two collections, bordering on obscenity, full of a distressing sexual madness: “The matron, always more perplex, looked like an ecstatic beast. A thousand cocks, flags at half-mast, charged to order. The bearded man, boosted by drugs, was masturbating with a syringe. Mr. Cooper orchestrated the orgasms of the patients, carefully watching out for the matron to prevent her from having an orgasm.” (Joyce Mansour, *Noxious Stories* [*Histoires nocives*], 1973): “Mark’s penis, constantly stiff, and Rosa’s cunt, always wet and open, were the sacred instruments of an eternal mass.” (Nicolas Meilcour, *Rose and Carma*, 1969—or the love life of a man and a young mental defective).
  - **Homosexual Eroticism:** Men are normally attracted to women and vice versa hence the presence of homosexual writers is rather rare. However, in France we have Olivier Delau (*Clear as Night* [*Clair comme la nuit*, 1986]), Hugo Marsan (“He must be so beautiful stark naked,” *Your Lordship’s desires* [*Monsieur desire*], 1992). The female writers from Quebec are the only ones to assert their differences and they do so in a much more forthright way than their masculine counterparts. This is to be found in their collections and in a review called *La Vie en rose* (in the 1980’s).
  - **Surrealist Eroticism:** mainly represented by one author. A prime example is André Pieyre de Mandiargues. From his fifties collection *Sun of the wolves* [*Soleil des loups*] (1951) a man is reduced to the size of a greenfly, living in a loaf of bread that is covered with bees, he experiences extreme delight (“The Red loaf of Bread”—Le Pain rouge) This illustrates a personal universe, insofar as it remains unique, fantastic, bizarre, and obsessional: the naked or stripped body of a woman (“Is she, under her dress, as naked as her feet, as he felt her tits were?” *Under the Wave, Stories*), sex drives (“...a tremendous desire for black skin seized all the women,” *Black Museum* [*Le Musée noir*], 1946), its favorite places (brothels), its key scenes (rapes, sexual murders), in which the boundary between dream and reality is hardly perceptible. The following is a list of some of the authors associated with Surrealist Eroticism: Quebecians Daniel Gagnon (*Love Peril, Short Stories* [*Le Péril amoureux, nouvelles*] 1986), Marie José Thériault, *The*

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*Ceremony, Tales [La Cérémonie, contes]* (1978), the twins Claire Dé et Anne Dandurand (*The She-Werewolf [La Louvegarou]*, 1982) and Belgian Nadine Monfils (*Tales for Perverse Little Girls [Contes pour petites filles perverses]*, 1995).

- **Humorous Eroticism:** Some authors follow a deliberately different path from these stories, probably considered as too subtle, too clumsy, or ... too obvious, and write surprising and humorous stories, characterized by weirdness and by a delightful humor: “Your weddings to fifteen do not seem to be getting better” (Philippe de Jonas, *Eros exists, I Met Him [Eros existe, je l’ai rencontré]*, 1970), *Small Horizontal Stories [Petites histoires horizontales]* (1985) by Cécile Philippe, “I have been finding myself in an uncomfortable situation for some time; every morning, in the bus—between Glacière and Opera—a homosexual wearing an undershirt scrutinizes me crudely and scot free. Most unpleasant” (Olivier Dazat, *Perverse Chronicles [Chroniques perverses]*, 1986), the Quebecian Yves Thériault (*Work of Flesh—Oeuvre de chair*, 1976, an association between the pleasures of the clash and good meals. The Haitian René Depestre championed this “happy” eroticism: a doctor, a sex maniac, spreads scandal with “his gyratory syringe with intravaginal injection” (*Alleluia For a Woman-Garden, Stories [Alléluia pour une femme-jardin, récits]*, 1973, 1981) not forgetting the “Glossary of Terms That Design the Masculine and Feminine Sexual Organs in Fictions” and the “Catalogue of Some Generally Accepted Ideas About the Extraordinary Adventures of Sexual Organs” that conclude *Eros in a Chinese Train, Short Stories [Eros dans un train chinois, nouvelles]* (1990). Humorous eroticism is also represented by Belen and her fantastic tales characterized by a devastating sense of humor that is most delightful: ‘Solidarity Pleasure’ [‘Le Plaisir solidaire,’] ‘The function creates the Orgasm’ [‘La Fonction crée l’orgasme’] (*Torrid Geometry [La Géométrie dans les spasmes]*, 1959), ‘Circe’s Glottis’ [‘La Glotte de Circé,’] ‘The Erection of Mister Universe’—L’Erection de M. Univerge,’ ‘The Extreme Function’—L’Extrême ponction,’ ‘Love each upon the other’—La Reine de

Sabbat’—*La Reine de Sabbat*, 1960—the collections have been published together in one book: *The Reservoir of the Senses—Le Réservoir des sens*, 1966, 1988). Sex can be funny, as in the works of Jean-Pierre Enard, who reinterprets childhood tales: “Snow White could not satisfy anymore the seven dwarves as they wished.” (*Tales That Make Little Riding Hoods Blush—Contes pour faire rougir les petits chaperons*, 1987, p. 31) and with Frank Spengler: “Did fairies make love?” (preface to *The Love Life of the Fairies—La Vie amoureuse des fées*, 1997, 2000).

Two other curiosities are to be mentioned: *The Sexameron* (1990) by Jean Ikaris (in which a few people gathered in a tavern tell about their erotic exploits on holidays) and *It Looks Like Some Pushkin, Short Stories—Tiens, on dirait du Pouchkine, nouvelles* (1999) by Pierre Rival (in which the heroes of erotic adventures are called Marguerite Duras, André Gide, Françoise Sagan, and Patrick Modiano with two pastiches of Sade and Georges Bataille).

It may first appear that erotic tales are for men alone. The fact is only 41 works were written by women (20 of these stories the same five writers: were written by Belen (4), Régine Deforges (2), Nadine Monfils (5), Claire Dé (4), Anne Dandurand (5)). However, except for Louis-Charles Royer, who was completely forgotten, André Pieyre de Mandiargues and Pierre Bourgeade, the writers who devote themselves to the erotic tale today are women. In comparison to the situation one or two decades earlier, when the domination was clearly masculine in collections (for example, 3 women out of 15 in the science fiction collection *Venus’ Boobies [Les Lolos de Vénus]*, 1978), the tendency has reversed, the masculine presence having completely disappeared: 14 out of 14 (*Women’s Disorders [Troubles de femmes]*, 1994).

The erotic tale is part of a provocative literature: “The purpose of these adventures or tales is to shock the spectator or listener. In his convictions, in his most honourable feelings, in his beloved culture, in his modesty...” as is written on the back cover of *The Extravagant Door, Stories [Porte dévergondée, récits]* (1965) by André Pieyre de Mandiargues.

Even though eroticism has become fashionable, it remains scandalous. Just like this

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collection by Claire Dé, *Desire as Natural Catastrophe* [*Le Désir comme catastrophe naturelle*] (1989), which has raised a controversy after having won the Prix Stendhal of the short story. This recalls the sharp response of some subscribers of *L'Encrier Renversé* when the First Prize of the Short Story Competition organized by the review was awarded to an erotic tale.

RENÉ GODENNE

### Further Reading

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# SHORT STORY, SPANISH-AMERICAN

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### Colonial Times

Being a fundamental part of life, sexuality and eroticism have been present in Spanish-American society and literature since its beginnings. The clash between pre-Hispanic cosmogonies and the medieval-renaissance minds of European conquerors and priests results in a steady flow of short anecdotes transmitted both orally and through the written word. Often, those with an erotic element speak about unfulfilled loves and transgressions, going against social institutions and Catholic dogma. *El Carnero* (1636–1638), by a Creole son of a conquistador, Juan Rodríguez Freyle (1566–1640), illustrates the presence of the erotic during these times. Several pieces in the book, extracted from a wastebasket found at Bogotá's court of appeals, relate marriage infidelities and offer a critique of the corruption in colonial society. This work has been

called a “kind of Spanish colonial *Decameron*” (see González Echevarría 1997, p. 50). It must be noted, however, that what critics describe as the literary short story had not been born yet. Both the royal decree in 1577 forbidding the publication of fictional works in Spanish America, and the pre-eminence of other genres (epic and lyric poetry), account for the lack of a literary vehicle for tales during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries.

### The Nineteenth Century

The independence of Spanish America from colonial rule brings forth the process of nation building. The novel and the essay are the preferred genres for literary expression. During these times, as Enrique Pupo-Walker explains, the short story is not yet fully defined and moves

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“slowly amid the many hybrid forms employed by nineteenth-century writers of fiction” (1996, p. 514). Between 1830 and 1880, stories bare the imprint of the romantic aesthetic, based on a sentimental sensibility, idealized characters, and local customs and traditions. Erotic content is sprinkled minimally in the *Tradiciones*, by Peruvian Ricardo Palma (1833–1919), the most important short story writer of this period. “Secret Love,” by Mexican Manuel Payno (1810–1894), however, is a good example of the representation of eroticism in the short story in this time frame. The protagonist describes his passion for Carolina as “ardent, pure, and holy” (Menton 1991, p. 38), in a tale about undeclared love, implicit promiscuity, and love to the grave (literally).

Between 1880 and 1910, Realism, Naturalism, and *Modernismo*—the first literary movement to have arisen from Spanish America—coexist with different agendas: the observation of both urban and rural reality (realism), with a clinical eye on the predicament of marginalized populations (naturalism) versus the aesthetics of “art for art’s sake” of *Modernismo* that renovated literary language and form. Given the social criticism of most realist and naturalist fiction, the erotic is frequently found in short stories dealing with violent emotions. In *The Well*, by Chilean Baldomero Lillo (1867–1923), a romantic triangle infused with sexual desire advances to the sheer physicality of fighting among the characters. This is not romantic passion; Lillo’s reformist prose chastises both the animal instincts in human beings and the degrading condition of the society they live in. On the other hand, the *Modernistas* seem detached from the Spanish-American social milieu. A closer look at their literary output, though, unveils a reaction against the values upheld by a *bourgeoisie* class that embraced the positivist thinking linked to Realism and Naturalism. In this context, sexual desire was to be regulated and made to conform to society’s needs. Nicaraguan Rubén Darío (1867–1916) wrote poetic short stories that often projected a literary aesthetic. In “The Death of the Empress of China,” under the guise of a flourishing style, a Parisian setting and Oriental allusions, lays an erotic tale of a wife’s jealousy that ends with the destruction of the Chinese statue that had alienated her from her husband. The positioning of desire within the realm of artistic creation—the

sculptor’s obsession with the object—is meant, according to Naomi Lindstrom, “to serve as a counterforce to the repressive influence of conservative Catholic-Hispanic culture” (1985, p. 62).

### Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries

It could be argued that in the twentieth century Spanish-American literature shines the brightest in the short story. Nevertheless, it is difficult to identify an erotic short story writer, because the erotic short story is a thematic modulation on a genre. Not a history, but an erotics of the short story is best suited to examine the representations and functions of sexualities during this period. This erotics can, in turn, be divided into the laconic, the symbolic, and the explicit.

“Cristián threw down the cigar he had just lit and said evenly, ‘Let’s get busy, brother. In a while the buzzards will take over. This afternoon I killed her. Let her stay here with all her trinkets, she won’t cause us any more harm’” (Borges 1970, p. 166). The end of “The Intruder,” by Argentine writer Jorge Luis Borges (1899–1986), offers the reader a point of departure for the laconic erotic. In these types of stories, explicit sexual imagery is mainly absent; what is found instead are allusions, repressed desires, violence, and death.

The tale of two brothers, the Niensens, and Juliana Burgos, the woman that Cristián brings to live with them in the Argentine *pampas*, is a love story: Juliana is for Cristián, but Eduardo, the younger brother, falls for her. Once they start sharing her sexually, they start arguing. They sell her to a whorehouse and soon thereafter they are both paying visits to the place; they bring her back home. Because “a man never admits to anyone—not even to himself—that a woman matters beyond lust and possession,” the killing seems unavoidable. One man’s love for a woman, two men’s love for a woman, a woman’s love (or desire) for two men? Critics have even suggested homoerotic desire between Cristián and Eduardo, a reading that Borges, always prudish about these matters, vehemently denied. All of this happens without a single overt sexual scene. Nonetheless, desire is undeniably the protagonist in “The Intruder,” and the attempt to eliminate it only strengthens its hold on the narrative.

Before and after Borges parted the waters of the Spanish-American short story, two masters

of the genre also infused some of their stories with an erotic element that was never totally disclosed. The father of the modern Spanish-American short story, Uruguayan Horacio Quiroga (1878–1937), was interested in the role sexuality plays in relationships. In “The Feather Pillow,” the reason given for the death of the young bride—a spider-like animal that, hidden in her pillow, sucked her blood, leaves the reader wandering about the vampire-like qualities of her strange husband. And even if Argentine Julio Cortázar (1914–1984) was more sexually explicit in his novels, “Blow Up,” widely viewed as an experiment with metafiction, is also an erotic story: the central scene of seduction ends up with the protagonist, a translator–photographer, trying to “save” a boy from homosexual initiation. Although this category cuts across the twentieth century, most examples fall between 1910 and 1960, a period wherein the sexual revolution and the rise of feminist consciousness had not yet taken place. The laconic erotic does not, however, shy away from issues of sexual objectifying, dysfunction, or homosexuality.

The translation to Spanish of Georges Bataille’s seminal work on eroticism in 1960 was key for the gradual freeing of literary language from social constraints in Spanish America. During the 1960s there is also an interest in the dialogue between psychoanalysis and sexuality, and the women’s liberation movement begins to have an impact on cultural production. The effect is felt on many fronts: the emphasis on *jouissance* (enjoyment, bliss) and the fragmentation of identity opposes the notion of sexuality linked to procreation, social stability, or instinctual urges; the body is increasingly seen as a political space; “alternative” sexualities surface to the forefront of the social fabric and there is a corresponding rise of homosexual and transsexual issues; and women start their transition from desired objects to desiring subjects.

For the symbolic erotic, stories can be more or less explicit in their depiction of sexuality; however, their erotic content is representative of something beyond. “Lyrics for Salsa and Three Made-to-Order Soneos,” by Puerto Rican Ana Lydia Vega (1946–) is a case in point. In a story rich with the language of the streets, the stereotypical chase between man and woman gets turned upside down. She takes charge, drives to the motel, pays, and gets undressed first. The result: The man excuses his impotence by saying,

“I have a stomach-ache” (Menton 1991, p. 700). Vega experiments with three *soneos* (in salsa music, a *soneo* is the improvisational part where the singer goes off the lyrics and sings whatever comes to mind) which function as alternative endings: In the first and the second, the sexual act is consummated; its description mimics both Marxist and feminist discourse. The third one closes with frustration for both lovers and a circular return to the neverending flirting language from the street man. Sexuality is mixed with humor, but the symbolic erotic in this story speaks about the pitfalls of women’s liberation, about Puerto Rico’s status as a colony of the United States, and about the power of language to demystify issues of economics, politics, and gender.

For Argentine Luisa Valenzuela (1938–) private sexuality is inextricably linked to the political. In “At Night I Am Your Horse,” there is only one sexual scene; the woman narrator says: “I fell asleep with him still on top of me” (Giardinelli 153). The individuals that are looking for the fugitive torture her, and finally she is thrown into jail. Here, the erotic symbolic links sexuality with power and refers to the repressive military regimes prevalent in South America in the 1970s. In a story like “The Orgasmographon,” Mexican Enrique Serna (1959–) presents a delirious take on science fiction through a case of inverted morality: a totalitarian society where sexual pleasure is the norm and the people must fulfil a quota of orgasms. Accordingly, the Spiritualist Front members will take up the resistance. In these stories, eroticism provides a matrix for social commentary.

The favorite space for the explicit erotic is interpersonal relationships. In “The Cat,” Mexican Juan García Ponce (1932–2003), strongly influenced by Bataille, presents many obsessions within the context of intimacy that constitutes his trademark: the role of desire in daily life, the gaze at the feminine body, the voyeuristic discourse, and a mysterious sexual connection (in this case, between the woman and the cat). García Ponce tries to establish a path of communion outside established social conventions and closely linked to the language of the body. Two women, Argentine Tununa Mercado (1939–) and Uruguayan Cristina Peri Rossi (1941–) are among the most representative erotic short story writers, largely due to Mercado’s *Canon de alcoba* (1988) and Peri-Rossi’s *Desastres íntimos*



## SHORT STORY, SPANISH-AMERICAN

(1997). In Mercado's "To See," the *motif* of the voyeur in the window gets an objectivist treatment. The ending is surprising: while the woman and the man both reach sexual climax (her by listening on the phone and him by watching her on the phone), the reader realizes the observed was listening precisely to the observer, which begs the question of who is watching whom. In Peri Rossi's "To Love or To Ingest," sexual acts such as the narrator introducing a cigarette in his lover's vagina and then smoking it are intertwined with reflections on the relationship between sex and eating and on his future destiny: "We all become the orphans of pregnant women" (Hughes 2004, p. 6).

The explicit erotic in the Spanish-American short story renews old themes and brings forth new ones, but the depiction of sexual content is what changes: more matter-of-fact and more daring, pushing the limits of what is considered acceptable. This is one of the directions eroticism follows in the Spanish-American short story; other writers choose to be laconic or symbolic. Although many taboos still remain well within the twenty-first century, a historic look at the erotic content of many Spanish-American short stories reveal that pushing the limits has been, is, and perhaps will be, what defines them.

PABLO BRESCIA

**See also Bataille, Georges; Caribbean; Cortázar, Julio; Cyber sexualities; Darío, Rubén; Exhibitionism and Voyeurism; Latin America; Mercado, Tununa; Modernismo; Peri Rossi, Cristina; Psychoanalysis; Science Fiction; Short stories; Valenzuela, Luisa; Vega, Ana Lydia; Women's Writing; Spanish Language Twentieth Century**

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### Criticism

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# SHULMAN, ALIX KATES

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1932–

United States novelist and memoirist

Alix Kates Shulman, whose career as a writer has spanned more than thirty years, has produced an impressive range of texts from novels to memoirs to nonfiction studies of Emma Goldman to children's books. In all of these, she has kept at the center an attention to one of the central messages of the women's movement of the sixties and seventies, in which she was an early and active participant: the dictum that the personal is the political, that no writing ever emerges without a connection between the writer's lived experiences and her imagination. In so doing, Shulman gives literary life to themes of critical importance to young women maturing in the fifties, sixties, and seventies, especially sexuality, dating, marriage, divorce, motherhood, sexual harassment, abortion, parenting, and the political struggle for women's liberation.

Shulman writes with an airy wit and an eye for details of daily life that exposes the subtle conventions and ridicules the blatant practices by which gender has been constructed and deconstructed in post-World War II United States. In particular, her humorous take on growing up as a teenager in the fifties and breaking free as a young woman in the sixties allowed her to confront some of the most tabooed of topics in middle-class American culture, including the loss of virginity, the female body and its emerging sexuality, and the female desire to experience and to give pleasure. Her treatment of female sexuality is both forthright and evocative, clinical and sensual, and in all cases presented as both a natural mystery about which one must be daring enough to seek the truth and a literary trope to critique American Puritanism.

*Memoirs of an Ex-Prom Queen*, which Shulman began in 1969 and published in 1972, is a female *bildungsroman* and semi-autobiographical. It is the story of Sasha, a young midwestern, middle class girl struggling to escape identity as a girlfriend, wife, and mother and to

find own her identity as beautiful, intelligent, and sexual. The book, frequently referred to as the first novel to have emerged from the women's movement, developed an underground reputation when it was still in galley form, circulating amongst the secretaries in the reprint houses. Written as a conventional first-person narrative, the novel describes young Sasha's sexual explorations, which range from petting with her high school boyfriend, to "going all the way" with him the night she's crowned prom queen, to having an affair with her college philosophy professor, to engaging in quasi-nymphomaniacal behavior with a Spanish boyfriend. Shulman presents Sasha's sexuality as initially a paradoxical mark of teenage popularity and embarrassment that is then characterized as an invasion of the female body and eventually develops into intense pleasure functioning as an act of political liberation.

Shulman's descriptions of sex emphasize the act as lyrical expression undercut with metaphorical humor. Fellatio, for example, is presented as the art of kissing her "very center," which brings "little shock waves" and a "whimper of joy." The tenderness of the moment culminates in penetration, the transcendental interpretation of which Shulman negates by having Sasha describe actual coitus as the undulation of "a quarter's worth of nightcrawlers." The effect is to highlight both the beauty of sex when allowed full expression and the ordinariness of sex when understood as a natural act.

*Burning Questions*, published in 1978, is also autobiographical fiction, telling a story similar to that of *Memoirs*, although *Burning Questions* recounts more specifically the heroine's coming of age in the women's movement. Zane IndiAnna, fueled by stories of revolutionary women from the turn of the century, leaves her comfortable midwestern home for life as a beatnik in Greenwich Village, where she finds free-love, opts out for a conventional marriage, and becomes radicalized by the heady polemics of grassroots feminism. *Questions* critiques many middle-class practices that constrain the

development of female consciousness, but in contrast to *Memoirs* its attention to sex is subordinated to the narrative of the feminist movement. Zane does share Sasha's whimsical perceptions of sex, describing her first night of love with a beatnik poet as "a pair of koalas—I am the little one clinging to him with my legs, he feeding my mouth with wet kisses like eucalyptus leaves." But subsequent evocations of heterosexual and lesbian sex avoid literary or clinical language, more often taking a more distanced, reportorial stance, avoiding the erotic altogether.

Such is not the case in Shulman's short story "A Story of a Girl and Her Dog," written in 1975. This daring narrative presents in a tone of playful innocence a snapshot of a teenage girl named Lucky, who discovers the pleasure of orgasm by allowing her pet dog to sniff and lick her clitoris. Shulman manages in this short fiction to not only explore the most hidden of sexual secrets but also to portray it as natural, harmless, and sensual. Lucky's private moment with her dog is compared to that of Adam and Eve—only their tasting of the fruit of the tree of knowledge brings not sin but rather the expanse of the world in all its virginal glory.

In her most recent works, Shulman has turned to memoir and the exploration of what it means to be a daughter and to care for aging parents, but her earlier fictional studies of female sexuality continue to find an audience with which they resonate, one seeking liberation through realism and the erotic.

### Biography

Born in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland, on August 17, 1932; graduated at the age of twenty in 1953 from Case Western Reserve University with a bachelor's degree in English and history; moved to New York City, where she briefly studied philosophy at Columbia University and mathematics at New York University; earned on MA in humanities from NYU; married and divorced twice; has two children, a son Teddy, born in 1961, and a daughter, Polly, born in 1963; has taught at the University of Arizona, The Ohio State University, New York University, and the New School for Social Research; received a National Endowment for the Arts fiction grant in 1983; has been a visiting writer at the MacDowell Colony for the Arts Fellow (1975–1977, 1970, 1981); was a final

selection for a National Book Award in 1972; lives in New York City and Maine.

NANCY M. GRACE

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# SLASH FICTION

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Slash is homoerotic writing featuring characters borrowed from popular media. It is written almost exclusively by women, cannot be commercially published due to copyright restrictions, and has flourished as an amateur art form since the 1970s. Most slash depicts two male media characters, though a small percentage is written about female couples.

Fans assert that as early as 1966 or 1967 private stories paired Napoleon Solo and Illya Kuryakin of the popular TV series “The Man from U.N.C.L.E.,” but the first documented slash stories were privately circulated in Great Britain based on “Star Trek’s Captain Kirk and his Vulcan First Officer, Spock. An example is “The Ring of Shoshern,” written in 1968 but not published until 1987.

Heterosexual “adult” fan fiction based on “Star Trek” was already available to science fiction fans in a few fanzines, a format used primarily for nonfiction since the 1930s. The first published same-sex story was the two-page “A Fragment Out of Time” by Diane Marchant, in *Grup*, Number III, September 1974. The first line of the story is, “Shut up... we’re by no means setting a precedent.” But they were. 1976 saw the publication of Gerry Downes’s all-Kirk/Spock zine *Alternative: Epilog to Orion* and the historically recognized first fully-developed published Kirk/Spock story, “Shelter,” by Leslie Fish. Multi-issue zines devoted solely to Kirk/Spock stories then appeared thick and fast, including, by 1978, *Obsc’zine*, *K/S Relay*, *Thrust*, *Companion*, *Naked Times*, and *The Sensuous Vulcan*, followed by a flood of hundreds of zines and the birth of a genre.

These Kirk/Spock stories came to be known as “K/S.” At the advent of other early couples, like Starsky and Hutch (S/H) and Bodie/Doyle (B/D) (from the British show “The Professionals”), an inclusive term for this type of story was needed. The slash mark used to join the two characters’ names or initials, the emblem of the union at the heart of the genre, was adopted as its name.

The number of stories published is staggering to the uninitiated: there were thousands upon thousands of them, documented in bibliographies and lists of zines available for sale—at cost: all slash publishing is and must be not-for-profit. They were nevertheless expensive, often spiral bound with glossy color covers and explicit black and white interior artwork. Zines might contain a single long novel, or an anthology of many authors’ short stories. They were reproduced by traditional science fiction fanzine mimeography (often this material was too controversial for commercial printers of the day), and later by photocopying. Slash was considered by many to be a secret art, best kept hidden due to its homoerotic content and issues of copyright. In the early days, and even into the 1990s, some copyright owners reacted with legal threats when startled into awareness of the frolickings of their hero-characters in bed with one another. Over the years, as both homophobia and fear of loss of revenue dissipated, and as the courts consistently recognized a sort of usufruct in nonharmful and nonprofit use of copyrighted material, studios and other copyright holders have tended to pursue a “don’t ask/don’t tell” policy toward slash, recognizing also the folly of attacking their own fan base. In the 1970s and 1980s, however, mutual fears were rampant, and much slash fiction (as well as some heterosexual erotic fan fiction) was circulated only clandestinely, mailed on private “circuits,” each recipient making her own copies before mailing on the original. Thus, much slash was never published, and is now lost; however, at least one such circuit, for “The Professionals” slash, was still in existence in 2002, and had its own central library. Some Web sites are attempting to locate and archive old fanzine stories.

By the mid-1990s, slash started aggressively moving onto the Web. In 2005, a Google search using the search terms “slash” and “fiction” returned 1,180,000 results; the phrase “fan fiction,” 1,260,000. Thousands of archives and

## SLASH FICTION

individual Web sites feature slash fiction and art based on every conceivable television show, many movies, and even some book series.

Sex in slash is rarely described euphemistically, but is shown with at least Tab-A-in-Slot-B detail, and in the most sophisticated works with original, telling, and highly literate extravagance. With some authors, a single sex act may run to many pages. Praise from readers often centers around how “hot” they found the story.

Though some slash writing only implies or refers to a sexual relationship, traditionally at least one explicit sex scene is expected in each story. Canon—the “facts” established by the original TV show, movie, comic book, etc.—must be adhered to, unless the story is an “AU” (alternate universe) tale, and clever twisting of canon to achieve one’s erotic purpose is much admired.

Slash has recognized subgenres, often defined by the way eroticism is used. “First time” stories are the most popular, as they lay out ingenious rationales for two canonically heterosexual males to discover mutual attraction and act on it. PWP (Plot? What Plot?) focus on the sex act itself, with setting or rationale barely sketched in. “Established relationship” stories depict a more intimate couple, with the sex scene, again, requiring little ‘set-up.’ “Hurt/comfort” stories are traditionally defined as nonsexual, using injury, torture, rape, or illness of one partner to elicit comfort (often of a cuddling nature) from the other, but hurt/comfort-type scenarios are also freely used in stories that do lead to open passion. Subgenre names also serve as “warnings” in the header material of stories, so that readers likely to be upset by them can avoid them; for example, rapefic, BDSM, death of a major character. “Angst,” meaning trauma, conflict, sturm und drang, is another love-it-or-hate-it category, the drama frequently rooted in the nature of the eroticism itself, as in prostitution, homophobic rejection, or abuse, creating much highly eroticized tension (usually resolved in sex and confessions of love). A few categories are almost universally looked down upon, yet continue to be written: “curtain fic” (frilly domesticity), “mpreg” (male pregnancy), and Mary Sue stories (a wildly idealized OFC—original female character—inserted into the normal cast).

Intriguingly, an entirely independent homoerotic phenomenon called ‘yaoi’ arose in Japan based on Japanese comic books and anime, and

also created entirely by women. No early connection between the two genres has ever been shown, though with the advent of the Web, the two traditions became peripherally aware of one another by the turn of the millennium.

CAMILLA DECARNIN

*See also* **Fan fiction; Manga; Yaoi**

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### *A few slash and fan fiction archives*

- Fanfiction.net <http://www.fanfiction.net/>  
 The Gossamer Project <http://fluky.gossamer.org/>  
 Slash Fan Fiction on the Net <http://members.aol.com/KSNicholas/fanfic/slash.html>

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## SODOMY

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During the classical era, sodomy was first and foremost linked with male homosexuality and pederasty. Religious writings, philosophical essays, historical dissertations, libertine novels, and satirical poems show how much in favor the "masculine wedding" was in Ancient Greece, in Rome, and with the Oriental princes.

Voltaire used the word "sodomy" to evoke the Jesuits, helping to spread their bad reputation. However, as early as Nicolas Chorier's *L'Académie des dames [The Ladies' Academy] - Aloisiae Sigae Toletanae Satyra sotadica de Arcanis Amoris et Venris. Aloysia Hispanice scripsit Latinitate donavit Johannes Meursius*

## SODOMY

(1659 or 1960), translated into French for the first time in 1680, heterosexual sodomy was being debated (using the same argument between the two Aphrodites that was already found in antiquity as a topic for discussion in the philosophical *banquets* inspired by Plato).

The homage rendered to the Aphrodite with “beautiful buttocks” was violently condemned by Tullie and Octavie, the two characters from *L'Académie des dames*. They exposed this “dirty sensual pleasure,” this “ridiculous and vile” posture, this “extravagant rage” that “violates the laws of nature.” Against all logic, since the girls were only seeking pleasure, the aim was to preserve the generation principle. The discourse on pleasure showed a limitation by suddenly becoming moralizing: the truth of nature, the demands of the natural order, the need for procreation acted as censorship within the praise of pleasure.

Commonly attributed to the Italians and the Spaniards (it was the “Florentine vice,” a “Roman pleasure”), sodomy was only tolerated as a preliminary, provided one returned to the “ordinary place” when reaching the moment of pleasure. That was what *Les Quarante manières de foutre* [*Forty ways to fuck*] (1790) also suggested with the “Milanese attraction.” The fortieth posture to be itemized, sodomy added spice; it was an additional “stew,” but it could not be a substitute for the customary way.

It was found in Indian and Oriental literature. It was also found in the famous Arab treatise written during the first half of the sixteenth century, *Le Retour du cheikh à sa jeunesse pour la vigueur et le coït* [*The Return of the Sheik to his Youth for Vigor and Coitus*], by Ahmed Ibn Souleimân, in which the author offered up to sixteen positions for the sodomy of women. Still, Sinistrati, in his *De Sodomia tractatus* (part of the book *De delectis et voenis*, Rome 1754), reminded that sodomy was a vice against nature, that it was the silent sin par excellence (*peccatum mutum*) because it scandalized the ears and was related to heresy. Thus it was condemned by all, be it from the Church or from those who eulogized pleasure. Often painful, humiliating for women (since it negated the difference between the sexes), sodomy was sign of heresy, a unnatu-

ral position, an “odd” or “disgusting” form. The same discourse ridiculing or protesting sodomy could be found in *Thérèse philosophe* (1748) or in the *Catéchisme libertin à l'usage des filles de joie* [*Libertine Catechism for Ladies of the Night*] (1791).

Such was the paradox of sodomy: although present in all the libertine or erotic texts, it was always the subject of a debate, the opportunity for an objection. Enlightened minds saw in its denunciation a prejudice to be rid of: “proof of love,” said one; “proof of madness,” answered the other. The “anti-physical” pleasure presented a problem. As if sodomy was to the erotic narrative what the scene of sexuality was to the novel, a subject of resistance, the place of suggestion or silence, a realm of worry, scandal, and secret. Until it became common through the diffusion of pornographic movies, it would retain this sulfurous dimension—last interdict, eliciting an ultimate transgression—throughout the erotic literature of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, imposing itself as the position reached by those who got liberated at the end of their journey.

The violence of Sade’s text, which turned sodomy into the libertine gesture par excellence, is then easier to grasp. Such was the defiance of the *Cent Vingt Journées de Sodome* [*One Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom*]. Sade thus went to the ultimate consequences of the liberating discourse on pleasure. There was no divine law, no natural law to uphold. In Sade’s work, sodomy was an insult to the Church, a parody and reversal of sexuality, which remained subjected to the “natural order.” There were no limits to the transgression. And sodomy asserted itself not as the ultimate conquest, but as the starting point from which Sade led his libertines on the path of crime, in the reversal of values, discourses, and representations.

PATRICK WALD LASOWSKI

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## SOLLERS, PHILIPPE

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1936–

French writer, critic, and theorist

*Portrait du Joueur* has a self-conscious, playfully autobiographical dimension: the first-person narrator (a Philippe Diamant who chose the pseudonym of Philippe Sollers) shares numerous biographical elements with Philippe Sollers the writer (whose real name is *Joyaux*, that is, Jewels), both being Bordeaux-born successful writers of controversial books and married to foreign academics. The *Player* whose *Portrait* is skillfully painted as a sophisticated combination of Sollers-Diamant and Sollers-Joyaux keeps playing this game of hide-and-seek, with constant allusions to genuine events, people, and places, a trap for the reader which Sollers himself has acknowledged in terms of narrative reflexivity: ‘My novels are a mythobiography, meant to confuse by giving too many tracks. A writer is someone who makes a biography impossible’ (‘Une biographie officielle,’ *Le Figaro Littéraire*, 19 mars 1990, p. 8).

*Portrait du Joueur* has a rather loose narrative: its major thread is provided by the narrator’s reminiscences, reflections, and digressions on a variety of themes including catholic theology, world literature, languages, surveillance, Bordeaux, French history, libertinism, non-monogamous relationships, sex, artificial insemination, metaphysics, and so forth. Those streams of consciousness (occasionally peppered with dialogues between the narrator and a hypothetical reader) take place against various backgrounds and settings, from Bordeaux to Venice. At the beginning of the book, Dowland (the family château near Bordeaux) represents nostalgia, half-forgotten bourgeois traditions, consumerism, capitalism, and betrayal as the old vineyard property has been sold, demolished, and replaced by a typical modern superstore. At the end of the book, after sojourns in Paris and New York, the narrator settles down in Venice, the heavily connoted city of Casanova, love and eroticism, games of masks and carnivals,

where he seemingly plans to die and be buried, having already written his epitaph mentioned in capital letters at the end of the book: ‘DIAMANT DIT SOLLERS, VENITIEN DE BORDEAUX.’

Those rich albeit disorganized reflections (reminiscent of Montaigne’s *Essays*, another Bordeaux-born writer and a recurrent reference in the book) could rapidly become vain if it were not for the humanizing presence of numerous women. His mother Lena, his sister Laure, his nieces Lise and Blandine, his masseuse Sumiko, his daughter Julie, his half-estranged American wife Norma, and his three mistresses Sophie, Ingrid, and Joan surround the narrator and ceaselessly bring him back to reality, to the world of bodies and feelings. Men only appear as disruptions or ludicrous figures (such as the Spanish chambermaid’s overjealous boyfriend and the ignorant supermarket assistant): *Portrait du Joueur* is a novel about women, about the narrator’s women, which creates a direct link to Sollers’ previous novel precisely entitled *Femmes* (and in fact *Femmes*, *Portrait du Joueur* and Sollers’ following novel *Le Coeur Absolu* form a trilogy of some sort). That exclusive heterosexuality stance, repeated several times, is barely balanced by the mention of two gay secondary characters and the extract from a wan gay novel the narrator starts to read then rapidly discards. At an erotic level, the four key women for the narrator are Ingrid, Norma, Joan, and Sophie, giving him ‘four rather interesting lives where most people have only one, one and a half, or one and three quarters.’ Ingrid is a Dutchwoman sixteen years older than him, a living connection to the past and to their love story when he was faking schizophrenia to be released from military service. Norma, despite being the narrator’s wife, is very absent from the book: we only learn that she gets a regular alimony and raises their daughter. Joan is a much more erotic character: a *femme fatale* journalist, she becomes a good friend of the narrator after having sex with him. She often tells him



about all her sexual partners, explaining that she has sex with them out of charity, to be nice to them: her best orgasms are always when she masturbates on her own, lying on the carpet, listening to Bach or Handel and telephoning the narrator whose fake insults ('you little bitch!') help her come. Yet the erotic interest and originality of *Portrait du Joueur* really resides in the character of Sophie and her complex relationship to the narrator, who qualifies this relationship both as 'physical communication' and 'religious experience.' Sophie is a 28-year-old, sexy, timid-looking bourgeois brunette, married to a catholic German diplomat. She lives in Geneva where she works as a doctor, yet she comes to Paris on a weekly basis for business, seizing those opportunities to meet Philip for sex, always following specific scenes she describes in short letters she sends him beforehand. This rather unexpected intrusion of the epistolary genre in the very center of the novel is more than a direct allusion to *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, to which several references are made elsewhere in the book; those 15 letters, brief and straightforward (half a page on average), constitute the erotic nexus of the book by presenting and combining two types of eroticism: eroticism of situation and eroticism of language.

Firstly, the narrator's regular meetings with Sophie all comply to precise and prearranged scenarios of her own making: she is the one who decides every single time what will happen sexually between them. With minimal spontaneity and leeway, they follow strict role-plays where she is always in control. At times she is a doctor who slowly examines a patient's genitalia and scrupulously extracts his sperm for research purposes; at times she is a provincial butcheress perverting her young and shy apprentice; other times she is a modern Lady Chatterley contemptuously using her valet, footman, or gardener. The narrator equally refers to those scenes as 'contracts,' 'rituals,' 'games' and 'erotic sessions,' which stresses the complex nature of their sexual relationship, both ludic and solemn, both serious and frivolous. Sophie's punctual arrivals, her business-like attitude, his obedience to follow her instructions as well as her coldness and apparent detachment could lead one to believe that their relationship is only physical, yet it gradually transpires that she is deeply in love with him, which gives an emotional layer to

their complex erotic relationship on the verge of sadomasochism.

Secondly, Sophie's sexual language also contributes to the eroticism of the book. Whereas she is presented as socially most respectable and conventional, if not a prude, her sexual language with the narrator is a subtle mix of obscene words and poetic phrases: 'How I felt your cock fucking me yesterday! My voice is still colored by your sperm: smooth and deliciously languorous,' 'I feel a constant happiness: I want to suck you, always. I long for you. I love you getting hard for me. Just like I love getting wet for you, always.' This dual tonality is reflected in the way she keeps shifting between an intimate *tu* and a formal *vous* both in her letters and in the few words she utters when having sex with him. Her choice of intentionally blunt and crude words (such as 'fuck me and come, bastard!') feels so much out of context and out of character that those very phrases get an erotic connotation, that language being the marker of their sexuality — then after sex, she turns back into a most respectable bourgeoisie, creating a clear and rigid distinction between her sexual interactions with the narrator (when she uses words such as 'cunt, fuck, and cock') and social interactions with him (when after sex she lights a cigarette and politely asks him about his work, his travels, his life).

Those two dimensions (eroticism of situation and eroticism of language) are eventually subsumed in what Sollers named 'the unrelated sentence: the message from the woman that must trigger ejaculation.' A key aspect of their sexual relationship (integrating both her control in their role-plays and the power of her language) is the fact that a specific and also pre-decided sentence, unrelated to the context, must trigger his orgasm at once whenever she decides, whenever she utters the sentence, which can be 'Remind me to buy roses on the way back,' 'It's been really hot today' or 'You shall accompany me to mass tomorrow.' Several pages intellectually analyze this technique which totally negates the natural aspect and timing of male ejaculation and male pleasure, and is supposed to enter the annals of human sexuality, presumably because of the underpinning erotic creativity. This form of orgasm control, unexpected in the book as a whole where the narrator is always the one who plays, the *joueur*, and not someone being played with, gives a certain erotic edge both to the

central character Philippe and to *Portrait du Joueur*.

The character of Sophie only appears in one tenth of the book, yet its importance in the history of erotic literature cannot be underrated. Not only does Sophie enable Sollers to show his erotic creativity in terms of scenarios, language, and relationships, not to mention the original 'unrelated sentence,' but she also provides him with the opportunity to illustrate the ideas on erotic literature outlined elsewhere in the book. The narrator, working on a complex novel whose key themes and dynamics are that of *Portrait du Joueur*, explains and justifies his own principles on erotic writing throughout the book. His premise is that the first thing (if not the only one) readers are interested in is the sexual aspect of any book, which they then endeavour to relate to, with reference to their own sexual experience, and possibly to integrate into their own erotic repertoire. No matter what some conservative, hypocritical critiques may say, such is the critical importance of sex in a book. Pornographic language is one aspect thereof, yet a limited one: the narrator, reflecting on the choice of explicit words which some readers may (or ideally will) find shocking, analyzes how most readers never go beyond the signifier/signified association: 'Cock, fuck, suck, cum... You tell them words, they see things.' The objective is less to arouse the reader than to develop an aesthetics of eroticism, yet few people seem to understand that, or so explains the narrator with regret when his niece asks him why he writes porn. Besides the fact that all comments on eroticism are irregularly scattered throughout the book, the main difficulty to make sense of the interesting aesthetics of eroticism presented in *Portrait du Joueur* is the fact that it relies heavily on aphorisms: 'eroticism is a cardinal virtue,' 'to write, to sleep, to shag: that's the same wheel,' 'eroticism has its own algebra' are powerful ideas and good quotations, yet their possible meanings are not necessarily convincing.

In *Portrait du Joueur*, Sollers explores a bourgeois fear of language, as sexual language is understood as taboo and undisclosed except in very particular sexual circumstances. As a

postmodern novel *Portrait du Joueur* is a landmark in the history of erotic literature because it is both a theory of erotic writing and an applied example thereof — which is actually typical of Sollers, as it is often said that it is difficult, if not impossible, to separate his critical/theoretical texts from his fictional ones.

### Biography

Born in 1936 in Bordeaux, a city often mentioned in his books. A media-savvy novelist and editor, critic and theorist, he got his first Literary Award (*Prix Médicis*) at the age of 25 for his second book *Le Parc*. In 1960, he founded the leftist *avant-garde* literary review *Tel Quel* and the intellectual group of the same name, which had a huge impact on the political and cultural debates of France in the 1960s and 1970s (most of the major French post-structuralist thinkers have indeed been associated with *Tel Quel*, notably Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Marcelin Pleynet as well as Julia Kristeva to whom Sollers has been married since 1967). *Tel Quel* was dissolved in 1983 when Sollers left the publishing company *Le Seuil* to found a new journal called *L'Infini* with competitor *Gallimard*.

LOYKIE LOÏC LOMINÉ

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## SOLOGUB, FEDOR

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1863–1927

Russian prose writer, poet, and dramatist

Fedor Sologub was the author of a large number of poems, five novels, over a dozen plays, and numerous theoretical articles. His early works were influenced by authors such as Charles Baudelaire, Auguste Villiers de L'Isle-Adam, and Joris-Karl Huysmans. Shocked Russian critics labeled Sologub and others “decadent” because they continued the erotic, demonic, pessimistic, and solipsistic themes of their French counterparts. In his later works Sologub turned away from portrayals of the depravity of Russian provincial life toward using the author’s powers to produce a “legend in creation,” an artistic recreation of this world. The use of erotic themes and images remained a constant throughout his works.

### *Bad Dreams*

Considered by many to be Russia’s first modernist novel, *Bad Dreams* (1895) describes the efforts of the schoolteacher Vasilii Login to rise above the stifling philistinism of his provincial surroundings. Sologub vividly compares the base sensuality of the masses to Login’s denial of the erotic impulses within him in an attempt to overcome ordinary mores. For example, Login sees the beautiful Nyuta Ermolina (his eventual savior) nude, but rejoices at her beauty (i.e., truth) and feels no ordinary sexual desire. Similarly, he has suggestive daydreams about a young boy but only contemplates his innocent beauty. *Bad Dreams* was the first of several Sologub works to feature young boys as potential objects of sexual desire. In a minor plot line, Login’s erotic experimentation is paralleled by Paltusov’s incestual relationship with his stepdaughter Klavdiia; they escape from the repressive atmosphere of the novel by fleeing abroad, where they can love each other openly. Critics decried Sologub’s “sick fantasy” and “base sensual perversion” and equated the author with

Login. Out of fear of censorship, Sologub omitted several erotic scenes that were published only in the third edition (1909), which he considered the true text.

### *The Petty Demon*

As in *Bad Dreams*, in *The Petty Demon* depraved eroticism is the defining characteristic of Sologub’s provincial hell, whereas erotic experimentation is practiced by those looking to escape from mundane reality. The gloomy, increasingly-insane school teacher Ardalion Peredonov is the personification of the former; several scenes in the novel portray the animalistic intercourse between him and his partner Varvara. Peredonov’s imagination is aroused by rumors that a new student, Sasha (the name in Russian can be applied to males or females), is in fact a girl in disguise. He dreams of whipping and humiliating Sasha the same way he does other boys in the school. Liudmila Rutilova hears the same rumors and befriends Sasha. Locked away in her room, she draws him into innocent sexual games, which include cross-dressing, dousing him with perfume, and exploring the sweet side of pain through light flagellation. Liudmila enjoys the beauty of young boys’ bodies, whereas Peredonov takes great delight in seeing this beauty perverted. Unfortunately Liudmila’s vision of beauty is fleeting; as Sasha reaches puberty, he increasingly exhibits the same feelings of lust and animal instincts seen in the other inhabitants of Sologub’s provincial world.

### *The Created Legend*

Sologub’s reputation as an “incomparable Russian pornographer” was confirmed in 1909 when, based on the first volume of *The Created Legend*, a mock student trial at St. Petersburg University convicted him of describing “unnatural tendencies known as sadism” (the notorious writers Mikhail Kuzmin and Mikhail

Artsybashev were found innocent by the same group!) (see Baran). In this novel Sologub presents one controversial scene after another: after making love with the hero Grigorii Trirodov, his mistress Alkina discusses sadomasochism and describes her desire to be humiliated; in the local police station arrested girls are stripped and beaten; Elizaveta Rameeva is raped and seems to enjoy the experience. Far from provincial Russia on the United Islands lives Queen Ortruda, for whom “free feelings are never depraved, only constrained ones are.” She fights against constraint by engaging in a series of affairs with lovers of both genders and indulging in sexual games in the underground passages of her castle. With Elizaveta Trirodov represses average sexuality and strives for a platonic relationship free of erotic or degrading impulses. Like Login he is connected with young boys, especially the “quiet boys” who live on his estate and who are the subject of many rumors. After Ortruda dies in a volcano eruption, Trirodov is elected king of the United Islands and flies there to start putting his utopian plans into action.

### Other Works

Sologub’s reputation as an erotic writer is due mostly to his novels, but similar themes echo throughout all of his works, for example in his short stories. In “The Queen of Kisses” the young wife of an impotent old merchant wishes to become “the queen of kisses,” and her dream is realized; the next day she undresses and rushes out to the street and calls upon all of the youths of the town to enjoy her caresses. This orgy lasts all day, until she is killed by a soldier, who visits her that evening and has intercourse with her cold body. In “The Red-Lipped Guest” Lydia Rothstein, who prefers to be called Lilith, promises Nikolai Vargolsky that kisses from her vampire lips, which result in death, are sweeter than this life. Initially he yields to her, but before her last visit (on Christmas Eve), he resists and is saved by a radiant Youth. Other important erotic stories include “The Beloved Page” and “Lady in Bonds.”

The erotic plays a similarly important role in Sologub’s drama. The two-act *Loves* is Sologub’s most intensive exploration of a Nietzschean morality in which everything is allowed. Apollon

Reatov returns from years of traveling to discover that his daughter has grown into a beautiful young woman. He declares his love for her; she replies that she loves him as well, and the play ends with them affirming their support for a new morality in which desire alone determines behavior. They thus fit in with Sologub’s other positive characters, all of whom distinguish themselves by daring to approach the erotic differently from the masses.

### Biography

Born Fedor Kuz’mich Teternikov in St Petersburg, March 1 1863. In 1882, he graduated from the Petersburg Teachers’ Institute and spent the next eleven years teaching mathematics in provincial cities. While still in the provinces, he began publishing poetry in the journal *Severnyi vestnik* [*Northern Herald*], where his novel *Tiazhelye sny* [*Bad Dreams*] also appeared after his return to Petersburg in 1893. In 1894, his mother, Tat’iana Semenovna Teternikova, passed away; Sologub recalled that she frequently whipped him right up to her death. The publication of *Melkii bes* [*The Petty Demon*] in 1907 brought Sologub national fame and allowed him to retire from teaching. This same year his beloved sister Ol’ga died. In 1908, he married Anastasiia Chebotarevskaia; they had no children. For the next ten years he was a major figure in the Russian Symbolist movement and one of Russia’s bestselling authors. After the revolution Sologub and Chebotarevskaia unsuccessfully attempted to emigrate to Europe; she committed suicide in 1921. In the 1920s he published little, mostly translations from French (Rimbaud, Verlaine). From 1923 on he occupied important posts in the Leningrad Writers’ Union. He died in Leningrad, 5 December 1927 from myocarditis.

JASON MERRILL

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## SOMATOPIA

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# SOMATOPIA

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By the Renaissance, metaphor was so common a strategy for dealing with sexual subjects that Pietro Aretino demanded that authors “speak plainly” and eschew “thy rope in the ring, thy obelisk in the Coliseum, thy leek in the garden, thy key in the lock, thy pestle in the mortar, thy nightingale in the nest, thy dibble in the drill, thy syringe in the valve,” and “thy stock in the scabbard,” for “otherwise thou wilt be understood by nobody.”

British authors, however, largely ignored Aretino's advice, and took sexual innuendo to new heights, developing a very specific type of extended metaphor that would persist well into the nineteenth century. They created an entire erotic genre that presents women's bodies (or more accurately, a generalized female body) as a pseudo-geographic site of male pleasure: a utopian sexual landscape. These carefully constructed and, for the most part, fairly well developed conceits are

somatopias, derived from the Greek soma (body) and topos (place). The term is innately ambiguous: a “body-place” could be either a place composed of a body, or designed for a body (as in providing bodily pleasure). Yet the term works both ways, since the places are simultaneously composed of female bodies and designed for male bodily satisfaction.

Examples of the genre include Thomas Stretser's 1741 *A New Description of Merryland*, in which “Captain Roger Pheuquewell” expounds at length on the relatively uncomplicated geography of Merryland, consisting of “a pleasant Mount called MNSVNRS” which “overlooks the whole country; and... round the Borders of Merryland is a spacious Forest which... seems to have been preserved for the Pleasure of Variety, and Diversion of Hunting.” The only other features worth noting are two mountains, known as BBY, “which tho' at some Distance from

Merryland, have great Affinity with that Country, and are properly reckoned as at an appendage to it." Charles Cotton's 1648 *Erotopolis: The Present State of Bettyland* presents women as agricultural landscapes, demanding constant plowing and seeding; as game preserves ripe for hunting (although the animals here are a devious sort, and frequently ensnare the hunters); and as fortresses yearning to be conquered.

When males appear in somatopias, they usually take the form of a wandering penis in search of a warm refuge. In "The Geranium" (1789) for example, woman is the earth in which the "Tree of Life" must be planted. The poet shows young Susan his "Tree" and explains that it is like a geranium: blooming, falling, only to bloom again at a later date. Susan is of course enthusiastic, noting her own "tumultuous throbs of bliss?" and remarking that "Sure 'tis this tree that tempted Eve! / The crimson apples hang so fair, / Alas! what woman could forbear?" Similarly, *Mimosa: or, The Sensitive Plant* (1779) notes that although the penis/Mimosa has been planted in "many different soils....England, if not peculiarly, is at least happily adapted to the culture and use of it." Perhaps the most unusual (and mobile) phallus is that found in "The High-Mettled Peho": depicted as a thoroughbred horse, which runs "Full stretched, crossing, juggling" over the female racetrack. Three times around is about all he can manage, however; then "weary'd, worn out, we behold Peho tame/ As he crawls of the course lifeless, jaded and lame."

The earliest British somatopias are relatively egalitarian and agricultural, employing the simplest of nature metaphors: women as fields to be plowed. Males, on the other hand, function as emblems of western culture, whose project is to tame nature. As men assumed more and more technological control, women were denatured, transformed into artifacts celebrating the glory of such cultural forces as domesticity, technology, law, and commerce: from metaphors for wild Nature, women become houses, factories, dungeons and banks. In "Banking," for example,

(1798) "Pudenda" is a "receiver, cashier," who "Always acts upon credit and honor," who, "When her customer's credits run low... takes their affairs in her hand." The poet marvels that the bank has not been crushed, given "the numberless drafts it doth take in," but "Mother Bank" has "bullion enough for them all." And in Robert Burns' 1793 "A Scots Ballad," the vagina becomes a dungeon. In Edinburgh, a new law has supposedly been enacted: "standing pr-cks are fauteurs [offenders] a," and must be imprisoned in the "dungeons deep" which "Ilk [every] lass has ane in her possession." The felonious phalluses must remain there until they "wail and weep... for their transgression."

DERBY LEWES

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## SONG OF SONGS, THE

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*The Song of Songs* (also known as the *Song of Solomon* or *Canticles*) is a sequence of ancient Hebrew erotic poems that have been preserved in the canons of Jewish and Christian scripture. It is impossible to date the poetry with any precision, owing to its lack of specific historical references. Although the superscription to the book, “The Song of Songs which is Solomon’s,” associates it with King Solomon (who lived in the tenth century BCE), it is clear that the language of the poetry represents a much later form of Hebrew and that Solomon is not the author. A rough consensus among biblical scholars dates the book to the fourth or third centuries BCE. Its author or authors are anonymous.

Like nearly all ancient Hebrew poetry, the *Song of Songs* makes primary use of short parallel lines, which mostly occur in a sort of couplet form with the second line heightening, concretizing, or otherwise modifying the first; occasionally a third line is added to complement or extend the image or metaphor. Thus, to the two classically parallel lines in 6:4, “You are beautiful as Tirzah, my love, / comely as Jerusalem,” is added a third line, “terrible as an army with banners” (citations are from the New Revised Standard Version, cited here and below by chapter and verse). Elsewhere the poetry of the *Song of Songs* exhibits a greater freedom than most ancient Hebrew poetry in relating the parallel lines. In 2:2 for example, as a male voice describes his female lover, the poet pairs a simile in the first line with its referent in the second: “As a lily among brambles, / so is my love among maidens.”

The book alternates between a male and a female voice, with occasional interruptions by a female group voice (e.g., 5:9; 6:1) and a male group voice (e.g., 8:8–9). The main male and female voices represent two young, obviously unmarried lovers, who spend most of the poem expressing their erotic yearnings and describing each other’s physical attractions in lush, sometimes hyperbolic imagery. Thus, a quote from the male voice: “Your breasts are like two

fawns, / twins of a gazelle, / that feed among the lilies. // Until the day breathes / and the shadows flee, // I will hasten to the mountain of myrrh / and the hill of frankincense” (4:5–6). And from the female voice in 2:3: “As an apple tree among the trees of the wood, / so is my beloved among young men. // With great delight I sit in his shadow, / and his fruit was sweet to my taste.” Despite the alternating voices of the lovers the poetry is not fundamentally dramatic—there is no overarching plot, and little narrative development—but rather remains squarely within the realm of lyric. As in the quotes above, much of the imagery is drawn from the natural world, and it often contains double entendres (e.g., “his fruit was sweet to my taste”; or “Let my beloved come to his garden, / and eat its choicest fruits” [4:16]).

One striking consequence of the alternation of female and male voices in the *Song of Songs* is an underscoring of the egalitarian nature of erotic love with regard to gender roles (see Tribble, 144–165). The intermingling of voices disallows the gender stereotypes that would assign the active role of “lover” to the man and the passive role of “beloved” to the woman. The two voices are given roughly equal amounts of space in the book, each describes the body of the other, and each expresses the desire they feel for the other. This mutuality is exhibited also in the range of imagery with which the lovers are imagined: both lovers (not just the woman) are associated with the beauty and grace of doves, lilies, and fawns or gazelles; and both lovers (not just the man) are described in terms of power and strength, the man being associated with marble columns and cedar trees (5:15) and the woman with ramparts and towers (8:10).

The poetry of the *Song of Songs* is, for the most part, a wholly positive celebration of the pleasures of erotic love. Yet it does acknowledge, if only briefly, the dangers of Eros—dangers that arise from outside the erotic relationship and threaten the young lovers, as well as dangers inherent to the nature of eros itself.

With regard to the former, see especially 5:2–8, where the young woman imagines herself wandering the streets at night searching for her lover, only to be met and beaten by the “sentinels of the walls.” With regard to the latter, see 8:6: “Set me as a seal upon your heart, / as a seal upon your arm; // for love is strong as death, / passion fierce as the grave. // Its flashes are flashes of fire, / a raging flame.” Though thoroughly rooted in the body, Eros here takes on near-cosmic dimensions. The language of the body, elsewhere in the *Song of Songs* so positive, teeters in this instance on the brink of obsession. The passage represents a sort of crescendo to the book, offering for the first time a second order reflection on the nature of erotic love, even the metaphysics of Eros, rather than the first person declarations and descriptions that one encounters to this point.

Given that the Song of Songs is preserved as a part of Jewish and Christian scripture, the question is often asked, where is God in all this? In fact, God is never mentioned in the book. Nevertheless, for centuries complex allegorical interpretations, by both Jewish and Christian religious authorities, have prevailed in interpretations of the book. The alleged allegory takes the two young lovers as ciphers for God and humanity. In traditional Jewish interpretation, Israel is cast as the female lover and God as the male lover. For Christian interpreters the lovers of the biblical book are taken to refer variously to God and the church, or Christ and the individual soul, or even to Jesus and the Virgin Mary. Modern scholars have tended to dismiss these allegorical interpretations, since they so obviously do violence to the text’s metaphorical meanings. But while it is true that such a mode of interpretation *spiritualizes* the *Song of Songs*, and thus tames its potentially subversive role in a Bible that has so often been taken as shoring

up borders and fencing in sexuality, it is no less true, as Howard Eilberg-Schwartz has pointed out, that such interpretation *eroticizes* theological discourse, with potentially very radical results for doing theology.

A critical edition of the Hebrew text of the Song of Songs may be found in *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*. Standard biblical translations into English include the King James Version, the New Revised Standard Version, the Jewish Publication Society Version, and the New American Bible. Other notable translations that are freestanding—that is, not included in an edition of the Bible—include those of Marcia Falk (1993; *The Song of Songs: A New Translation*) and Ariel Bloch and Chana Bloch (1998; *The Song of Songs: A New Translation with an Introduction and Commentary*).

TOD LINA FELT

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## SOREL, CHARLES

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1602–1674

French eclectic writer

### *Histoire comique de Francion*

Frank Sutcliffe argues that on one level *Francion* is an expression of the problems of the old provincial nobility as it confronts the new nobility of the court. Sorel's Francion is a young, sometimes poor provincial nobleman, a little like D'Artagnan. Francion goes to Paris for his education, but suffers at the hands of the foppish court nobles. Significantly, though, he is still honored by the king.

Francion also suffers from the antiquated teachings of his Sorbonne professors, and this expresses the sentiments of the seventeenth-century libertines (the likes of Theophile de Viau and Saint-Amant), who favored the new science of Galileo and the like against the old, Aristotelian knowledge of the schools.

Francion would not be at home in this volume, however, if his libertinage were purely scientific or philosophical. In the opening section he seeks to seduce the beautiful Laurette, a castle steward's wife, while for her part she is content to take instead the robber who happens to be the first man up the ladder.

In his noble quality, Francion judges an *épreuve du congrès*, in which a peasant proves his ability to have intercourse with his wife, and does so before a large crowd.

Later in a country inn, Francion hears the stories of the Elderly Agathe, an enlightened libertine prostitute and procuress in early Paris. Unlike some fictional prostitutes, she enjoys her work. Her companions urge her to play hard to get with the customers. However when she meets a young Englishman, he is so "handsome and blond" that "I would have had to be prouder than a tigress to withhold anything."

Francion, in turn, recounts a really remarkable dream, full of pre-Freudian sexual symbolism. Unlike the typical dream of early modern literature, coherently foretelling events to come

in the rest of the story, Francion's dream is "without reason and without order." Sorel adds that "you know that all dreams are thus, just made up of "this and that."

Francion's dream places him in a boat with a leak that he stuffs with his penis—not without a feeling of superiority toward other men whose penises are too small to stop the leaks in *their* boats. He visits the sky, where he finds the gods dragging stars across the heavens with ropes and pulleys. He visits a kind of temple of lost hymens, including Laurette's, and he sees and tries to touch Laurette, who turns out to be encased in a form-fitting glass sheath. And much more like that.

Francion is befriended by Raymond, a nobleman he has known in the past but does not recognize. Raymond frightens Francion: Francion did something bad in the past and will be judged severely. But then Raymond leads him to meet four noblemen and five charming girls. They decide he shall be judged by Laurette, who enters from another room. Raymond explains: "I sent for your Laurette, so that if you still love her, her presence will bring you joy, and not only that, I brought these five girls, one of whom is my own Helene, so that you can choose; these four noblemen are among the finest of the country, and the most worthy of your company...."

There follows a sort of good-natured orgy. In the midst of the celebrations, Francion proposes to invent new and more genteel language to talk about sexual intercourse. When Raymond objects that noble people make love just like peasants and might as well use the same language they do, Francion replies that "we do it in a different way; we use many more caresses than they do... they do it just with the body, and we do it (Descartes?) with body and soul together...."

Everyone begs Francion to invent this new language. Sorel adds that "women principally approved of his reasoning, since they would be happy to have new words to express the things they liked the best...."

Francion—whose approach to sex is original—promises to oblige, and “Moreover, he swore that as soon as he had time, he would compose a book of the practice of the most exquisite games of love”—a project at that time without precedent in the Occident, but which was to be realized in France in succeeding decades by Michel Millot (*L’Ecole des filles*, 1655; q.v.) and Nicolas Chorier (*L’Académie des dames*, 1660?; q.v.)

### Biography

Born in Paris, perhaps towards 1600, Charles Sorel published his masterpiece, the *Histoire comique de Francion.*, in 1623. Before and after he wrote in many genres—poems, other novels (notably *Le Berger extravagant*, which seeks to do for the pastoral novel what *Don Quixote* did for the novels of chivalry, essays on *La Science universelle*, speaking machines, surveys of the books available in his time (*Bibliothèque française*, *De la connaissance des bons livres*),

games—and seemingly every other imaginable subject.

HERBERT DE LEY

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## SOUTHERN, TERRY AND MASON HOFFENBERG

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### Southern, Terry

1924–1995

American novelist and screenwriter

### Mason Hoffenberg

1922–1986

American writer and editor

### *Candy* (Terry Southern and Mason Hoffenberg, writing as Maxwell Kenton)

After the Paris publisher Maurice Girodias approved an outline of the adventures of “a sensitive, progressive” girl from Racine, Wisconsin,

Southern asked the help of Hoffenberg, but seems to have written most of *Candy* himself. Though published in 1958, *Candy* anticipates and mocks the American aesthetic and social idealism that would flower in the 1960s. Targets include sexual freedom, academia, psychoanalysis, medicine, television, bohemianism, spiritualism, and Zen Buddhism, all of which are subjected to raucous but rarely mean-spirited humor. Modeled on Voltaire’s *Candide*, the naive protagonist, Candy Christian, misconstrues the lecherous overtures of a succession of comic characters in her search for meaning. Persuaded that her widowed father does not “need” her, and yearning to help humanity, Candy writes a paper extolling “selflessness” as a precept. Her professor, Mephesto,

promptly urges his “needs” on the girl, who recoils. When she discovers Mephesto cavorting nude with a male student, she blames her own reluctance to “share her beauty,” and resolves to make amends by giving herself to her father’s poor Mexican gardener, who “needs” her more. Discovered in bed with the naked Candy, Emmanuel the gardener in panic cleaves with his shovel the skull of Candy’s father, effectively lobotomizing the hapless Mr. Christian. Candy is comforted by her father’s twin brother, Jack Christian, and his randy wife Livia, whose fascination with Candy’s voluptuousness vies with the narrator’s own fixation on “the darling girl’s” genitals. Livia reads aloud a television script about an encounter between a battle-shocked soldier and a repressed female patient that prefigures events in *Candy*, but the scene is almost swamped by the madcap pacing that animates the narrative. Chaos erupts when Jack attempts to seduce his niece in her father’s hospital room: Candy’s catatonic father disappears, while a nurse mistakenly puts an unconscious Jack in his brother’s bed. Candy’s nubile innocence destabilizes a hospital teetering on the verge of sexual lunacy. Dr. Krankheit, who prescribes masturbation as therapy, treats another doctor in a rocket-countdown sequence climaxed by ejaculation, then masturbates himself while inserting acupuncture needles into the naked Livia. The distraught Candy herself flees Racine for New York.

The novel’s language veers between Candy’s predictable liberal homilies on the downtrodden and the epithets she screams during intercourse (“Fuck! Shit! Piss! Cunt! Cock! Crap! Prick! Kike! Nigger! Wop!”); the latter scandalized liberal and conservative audiences alike. When a retarded hunchback from the Greenwich Village streets attracts the girl, her sympathy leads inevitably to intercourse. Her orgiastic cries—“Give Me Your Hump!”—passed for a time into American idiom. Searching for the wandering hunchback, Candy allows Dr. Howard Johns, a demented gynecologist, to give her a pelvic examination in the bathroom of a Greenwich Village bar to test her “clitoral reflexes.” Their exertions destroy a toilet, whose overflow creates pandemonium in the bar. Police arrest Johns and Candy, but when one of the officers attempts to molest the naked girl, their car crashes into a gay bar, whose patrons riot. Candy is rescued from this melee by Pete Uspy,

from the Cracker Foundation, a spiritualist cult. Uspy sends her to a Foundation commune in Mohawk, Minnesota; on the way, she dreams that her father needs her. Candy succumbs to the commune’s leader, Grindle, who takes charge of her “spiritual advancement,” a series of naked, comically-rendered erotic exercises that leave Candy convinced she is pregnant. Grindle hastily sends her off to Tibet. At a stop-over in Calcutta, Candy receives a letter from Aunt Livia telling her that her father is still missing. Feeling superior to materialistic American tourists, Candy is moved by the sight of a nearly naked “holy man” encrusted with filth. Days later, in Lhasa, relieved by the onset of her period, she resumes her own spiritual quest. As she seeks shelter from rain in a Buddhist temple, she finds there the same holy man she saw in India. Lightning strikes the temple. A statue of Buddha, falling against her, its giant nose pressing into her anus, leaves her vagina impaled on the holy man’s penis. Motifs—incest, religion, delusion, obsession—rush together. As rain pouring through the ruined temple washes the dung from the holy man’s face, Candy, wide-eyed as always, cries, “Good Grief—It’s Daddy!”

More parable than parody, *Candy* is both an erotic novel and a send-up of the genre. More whimsical than satirical, it is as much about the resilience of innocence as it is about the persistence of sexual hypocrisy. Candy, though constantly beset, is never victimized; she enjoys her own sexual reactions, though she mistrusts them. The novel’s disdain for realism permits narrator and reader alike to be amused by Candy’s rationalizations of the pleasure she takes in being ravished.

### Biographies

Southern was born May 1, 1924 in Alvarado, Texas. He left Southern Methodist University (1942–1943) to enlist in the Army. Discharged, he attended the University of Chicago and Northwestern University, graduating from the latter in 1948. The GI bill enabled him to study at the Sorbonne in Paris, where he met expatriates who wrote erotica for Maurice Girodias’s Olympia Press. Later celebrated for novels such as *The Magic Christian* and *Blue Movie*, Southern achieved greater fame for screenwriting *Dr. Strangelove*, *The Loved One*, *Barbarella*, and *Easy Rider*. Southern married Pud Gadiot

(1953–1954) and Carol Kauffman (1956–1972) before living with Gail Gerber (1964–1995). He had one son, Nile (b. 1960). He died October 29, 1995 of cancer in New York. Mason Hoffenberg was born in 1922 in New York. He also used the GI Bill to live in Paris, where excellent French earned him a job as an editor for Agence France-Presse. Hoffenberg wrote two other “dirty books” for Olympia Press, *Sin for Breakfast* (as Hamilton Drake) and *Until She Screams* (as Faustino Perez). He was married to Couquitte Faure, with whom he had two children, adopting her first by another marriage. He died June 1, 1986 of lung cancer in New York.

JOSEPH SLADE III

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## SPENSER, EDMUND

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c. 1552–1599  
 English poet

Edmund Spenser was the greatest non-dramatic poet of the Elizabethan age. His style is richly

descriptive and intensely allusive, with images often carrying multivalent meanings. Of special relevance here are certain key passages of his epic *The Faerie Queene*. Some of these relate also to parts of *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe* and *The*

*Fowre Hymnes*, and to his personal celebration of love and desire in the *Amoretti* and *Epithalamion*, written for his second marriage.

### *The Faerie Queene*

Spenser's epic is a formal allegory of great complexity, set in a Faerie Land which partly mirrors and is adjacent to his and our own historical continuum. Only six of the twelve books originally planned were completed. Each presents the knightly quest of a specific virtue. These cross with the journey of the future King Arthur, who has come into Faerie Land to find his love, the Faerie Queene herself, Gloriana, Elizabeth's royal analogue. In his introductory *Letter to Sir Walter Raleigh*, Spenser states that, 'The general end therefore of all the booke is to fashion a gentle man or noble person in virtuous and gentle discipline': his subject is the whole fallen human condition and the delighted fulfillment of each aspect of its moral and spiritual potential. The energies of love and lust are polarized as vital elements of this schema, appropriately to the register of each Book. In Book I, *Of Holinesse*, they center especially on the juxtaposition of Duessa, spiritual corruption expressed in sexual terms, with Una, truth, the 'blisful ioy' (I xii 41) of whose eventual marriage to her champion Redcrosse, Saint George, the English Church, Everyman reveals its divine opposite. A number of patterns are established in Book I that will recur throughout the poem, and these apply to the handling of erotic imagery and reference among other foci. First, that the negative should appear before the positive and so arouse the reader's desire for the latter; the disturbing and chaotic sensuality of the House of Pride (I iv) is counteracted by the House of Holiness and its gracious inhabitants (I x). Again vice, here specifically the negative aspects of eroticism, may appear either deceptively attractive, like the evil Duessa, or immediately repulsive, like Lust in the procession of the Sins (I iv). Virtue is never disguised, though like Una's loveliness, veiled in mourning black, its full revelation may be gradual.

In I. i.-ii the crucial separation of Redcrosse and Una, traveling to deliver her parents' kingdom from the Dragon, is effected by sexual deceit: the sleights of the wicked magician Archimago. The reader sees the whole action, and so cannot be deceived, unlike Redcrosse,

who is first tempted with erotic dreams of sickly sweetness:

And made him dream of loues and lustfull play. That  
nigh his manly hart did melt away, Bathed in wanton  
blis and wicked ioy. (I i 47)

There follow graphic visions of Una as seductress and harlot. Leaving her in a jealous fury, Redcrosse meets Duessa, whose over-rich adornments of scarlet and gold at once suggest her archetypal identity of the Whore of Babylon (Rev 17), and are characteristic of the false glamour of evil elsewhere in the poem. He becomes her sexual prey, in the House of Pride and later, until she betrays him to her lover the Giant Orgoglio. Una meanwhile is saved from the lust of the Saracen Sansloy by the 'wyld wood-gods' (I vi 9 ff), whose innocent worship of her establishes an important and recurring motif of the whole poem: the progression from instinctive to fully rational virtue. Later Una meets Prince Arthur, Redcrosse is rescued, and at Una's bidding Duessa is revealed in her true monstrous shape, to which sexual revulsion gives special force:

That her misshaped parts did them appall, A loathly  
wrinckled hag, ill-fauoured, old, Whose secret filth  
good manners biddeth not be told (I viii 46).

This horror, like Redcrosse's faults and weaknesses, is corrected in the House of Holiness. Here Charissa, Charity with her many children, appears as love gloriously and physically fulfilled:

Full of great loue, but *Cupids* wanton snare As hell  
she hated, chaste in worke and will; Her necke and  
breasts were euer open bare, That ay thereof her  
babes might sucke their fill. (I x 30)

Book II is *Of Temperaunce*, and the schemata introduced in Book I are redeployed accordingly to express degrees and nuances of excess and deficiency on the one hand and on the other the poise of the titular virtue itself, the golden mean. Erotic imagery and association play an important, often very subtle part. Early in his quest to destroy the wicked enchantress Acrasia Sir Guyon encounters two of her victims. Mor-dant was one of her lovers, rescued by his wife Amavia from 'drugs of foule intemperance' only to die when Acrasia's parting spell cast on him takes effect. Amavia stabs herself before Guyon can prevent her. The erotically romantic

description is ironic—tragedy is displaced by self-indulgence:

In whose white alabaster brest did sticke A cruel knife, that made a grisly wound. From which forth gusht a streame of gorebloud thicke...(11 i 39)

Guyon has no Lady, his companion and counselor is an aged Palmer, but in the course of his journey he encounters two feminine representatives of his own virtue, and the reader a third. In Canto ii Medina's 'gracious womanhood' is thrown into relief by the undisciplined lewdness of her sisters, and in Canto ix the beauty of Alma, the chaste soul governing her castle, the temperate body, is expressed in terms of sexual desirability; 'woo'd of many a gentle knight.' In Canto iii the reader first encounters Belpheobe: a virgin huntress whose exquisitely detailed beauty startles the reader into perceptive admiration, and the base Bragadoccio into attempted rape, decisively foiled: contrasting reactions that are perfectly calculated.

These passages are set against specific negatives. In Canto vi Guyon is distracted from his quest by the 'light behavior and loose dalliance' of Phaedria, whose pretty silliness will later be recognized as offering a dangerous stage on the way to Acrasia's Bower of Blisse itself. In Canto vii Guyon is offered the hand of Philotime (ambition), whose 'glistening glory,' like that of Duessa, is merely 'counterfitted shew.' The central theme is developed through recurrent glimpses of Acrasia's Bower: Amavia's agonized account in Canto i of her husband 'In chaines of lust and lewd desires ybound' is expanded in Canto v, when Atin goes to fetch Acrasia's latest lover, Cymocles, to the help of his brother, who has been wounded by Guyon. Here we learn that Acrasia, like Circe before her, transforms her discarded lovers 'to monstrous hewes,' appropriate to their loss of human rationality.

As the loveliness of the Bower is described it becomes clear that lust is merely one, almost metaphorical, aspect of its destructive power. Cymocles in a flowery arbour whose art, significantly is 'striving to compare' with nature, is surrounded by 'loose Ladies and lascivious boyes,' with naked and half-naked 'Danzels fresh and gay' striving in every way for his attention. It is his 'idle mind,' not his body that responds:

He, like an Adder, lurking in the weeds, His wandering thought in deepe desire does steepe, And his fraile eye with spoyle of beautie feedes...

Whereby close fire into his heart does creepe: So them deceiues, deceiu'd in his deceit, Made drunke with drugs of deare voluptuous receipt (II v 34)

The emphatic reiteration of Amavia's reference to 'drugs' is revealing. Acrasia's enchantments affect the mind, the rational faculty, of any given victim according to their specific sensual weaknesses, that of Cymocles being sloth.

This is made explicit in Canto xii, describing the voyage of Guyon and the Palmer to the Bower of Blisse. They pass many perils, including the Gulf of Greediness and the Quicksand of Unthriftyhed as well as Phaedria, in her 'little skippet' 'faining dalliance and wanton sport,' and the mermaids singing so sweetly that Guyon is almost beguiled. They are attacked also, by sea-monsters, and foul birds and, as they land by wild beasts: all former lovers of Acrasia. The Porter of the Bower is the false Genius of the place, who charms those who enter with 'semblaunts sly,' drawn from their own minds. He has no power over Guyon, who passes on with the Palmer in to the Bower itself. The almost stifling beauty of the place is exemplified by the vine-grown arbour of Excesse, where golden fruit is hung among those from which she squeezes the wine that Guyon refuses, and by the fountain, wreathed in 'lascivious armes' of gold enamelled ivy. Here 'Two naked Darnzelles' play seductively. Guyon pauses,

Them to behold, and in his sparkling face  
The secret signes of kindled lust appeare,

but he is recalled to himself by the Palmer. They come at last to the 'secret shade' where Acrasia lies with her new lover, Verdant:

And all that while, right ouer him she hong,  
With her false eyes fast fixed in his sight,  
As seeking medicine, whence she was stong,  
Or greedily depasturing delight...  
And through his humid eyes did sucke his spright,  
Quite molten into lust and pleasure lewd...

This vampiric image makes the same point as Marlowe's Faustus when the succubus in Helen's shape kisses him:

Her lips suck forth my soul: see where it flies! (1. 1330, 1604 ed.)

Even Acrasia's 'vele of silk' is a spiderish entrapment:

More subtle web *Arachne* cannot spin.

Guyon captures Acrasia and razes her Bower: her beasts are restored to human shape by the Palmer. The regret felt for the utter destruction of all that has been so tempting described is calculated to arouse longing for such loveliness uncorrupted: this will be satisfied in Canto vi of the following Book.

Books III and IV, of Chastity and of Friendship, have a continuous though complicated narrative line. Their joint subject is love: universal and human. The divine impulse to create is presented in terms of erotic delight in the Garden of Adonis (III vi) as is the continuum of that creation in the Temple of Venus (IV x) and its fulfillment in elemental concord in the Marriage of the Thames and the Medway (IV xi–xii). The narrative lines explore human love in its different aspects, positive and negative, and its part in the individual's growth to maturity and self-awareness as their adventures are involved in the universal allegories. The Knight of Chastity is the British Princess Britomart, who has fallen in love with a vision of her destined husband, Artegall, in Merlin's mirror, and who has come into Faerie Land to find him: they meet in iv–vi, and their narrative runs on through much of Book V. Her own virtue dictates that Britomart should encounter and defeat its enemies. Florimel, whose transcendent beauty acts on every male who sees her according to his nature, good or ill, first appears in Canto i. Only Marinell, whom she loves, is indifferent to her, until his awakening into adulthood at the end of Book IV. The stories of Belpheobe and her twin Amoret present complementary aspects of femininity, properly fulfilled in comradeship and marriage respectively.

Britomart's first adventure occurs in Canto i, when she comes to the Castle Ioyeous; a place of purely sensual delight, rich in deliciously erotic tapestries and 'superfluous riotize.' Its inhabitants, like Britomart herself are young: 'Damsels' and 'Squires';

And *Cupid* still amongst them kindled lusfull fires.

Their Lady, Malecasta, deceived by Britomart's knightly armour, goes to her by night, and the resulting tumult brings her attendant knights, to find,

...the warlike Mayd All in her snow-white smock,  
with locks vnbound, Threatening the point of her  
auenging blade...

The whole episode accesses a register close to that of Chaucerian comedy. Malcasta's temptations are primarily to folly and self-indulgence. Their fashionable manifestations in the outer circles of Elizabeth's own court are satirised in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*: 11 762–792. They are dangerous nonetheless: Britomart is slightly wounded by Gardante's arrow in the ensuing fracas before she arms herself and goes on her way.

Early in Canto i, Prince Arthur and his squire Timias saved Florimel from a forester intent on rape: Arthur follows her, and Timias remains behind, to vanquish the forester and his companions in Canto v. He is gravely wounded, but rescued by Belpheobe. In the Prologue to this Book we are told that Belpheobe is a mirror of the Queen's 'rare chasti tee' in his own world: her appearance here gives the opening for Spenser's account of her birth and upbringing in Faerie Land in Canto vi. She and Amoret are twin daughters of the virgin nymph Crysogone, begotten by the sun's rays. They are found by Venus, searching for her son Cupid with Diana's reluctant help. The goddesses agree each to foster one of the babes: Diana takes Belpheobe and Venus' Amoret.

The Garden of Adonis, to which Venus takes her charge, is in every way the counter to Acrasia's corrupted Bower. Its Porter is the true Genius:

He letteth in, her letteth out to wend,  
All that to come into the world desire.

The Garden itself is that aspect of the Creator's mind in which substance is drawn from Chaos and given forms, passing each into time in due succession. The central image is that of joyous love. Here,

Frankly each paramour his leman knows. In 'the midst of that Paradise' is Venus' Mount, where the Goddess, as substance, delights in her Adonis, '...the Father of all forms,' and: Possesseth him and of his sweetnesse takes her fill.

After many adventures, in Canto ix Britomart comes with the false knight Paridell to Malbecco's house for a night's shelter. Paridell seduces Malbecco's young wife Hellenore, using all the arts of the Ovidian sophisticate, as spilling his wine, and,

...therein write to let his loue be showne,  
Which well she red out of the learned line.

They elope, and *Pari dell* deserts her. She wanders through the forest, and is rescued by a group of Satyres (x 36ff). Malbecco follows after, and finds her with them, entirely happy in her new life. The episode is almost an inverted mirror to that of *Una's* sojourn with the wood-gods in I vi. *Hellenore's* Satyres entertain her with garlands, and music and dancing and tireless sex. She refuses to return with her husband, and that she is content to abandon full humanity for unthinking sensuality is Spenser's sole condemnation of her. Malbecco, jealous, mean, possessive, fares far worse, pining in 'selfe-murdring thought' until he becomes *Gealousie* itself.

Britomart has no contact with this intrigue. She leaves at dawn, before the elopement takes place. Presently, in Canto xi, as she is riding through the forest, she comes upon a knight 'all wallowed Vpon the grassy ground,' his shield, with Cupid's picture as its device, and his armour all cast from him as he lies there weeping. This is Sir Scudamour, who tells Britomart that his Lady, Amoret, has fallen into the power of Busirane, an evil enchanter:

Whilest deadly torments do her chast brest rend,  
And the sharpe steele doth riue her hart in tway,  
All for she *Scudamour* will not deny.

Britomart's response Scudamour's rather theatrical despair is briskly practical: she catches his horse, helps him on with his discarded armour, and accompanies him to Busirane's House. Its doors are blocked by flames and sulphurous smoke. Scudamour cannot pass through, but Britomart does.

The House is mysterious, threatening as an evil dream which resonates on many levels of consciousness differently shared between at least the three main characters. Certain clues as to what may Busirane's real nature are given in retrospect in the following Book. Here Britomart passes into the first chamber. No-one is there: only heavy tapestries, where the interwoven gold shows, 'Like a discolord Snake.' (Canto xi 28 ff). These depict the metamorphoses of the Gods into swan and bull, Centaur, and grapevine and many other shapes in pursuit of their loves. As with *Acrasia's* victims, such change is itself a degradation, as is made explicit by the

inscription beneath the statue of Cupid at the far end of the room: *Vnto the Victor of the Gods this bee.*

Britomart goes on into the second chamber, richly adorned with 'warlike spoiles,' like Scudamour's cast-off armour, of kings and heroes in whom love 'wrought their owne decayes.' Again, all is silence and 'wastefull emptinesse.' Then Britomart sees written round the room, 'Be Bold,' and over an iron door at the end, 'Be not too bold.' She is puzzled, but the reader should not be: these are the inscriptions found in *Mr. Fox's* frightful Castle in the savage English analogue to Bluebeard. Night falls at the opening of Canto xii, and presently a trumpet sounds, heralding a frightful storm. At last there enters from the last door the Masque of Cupid himself: a procession of all the trials and cruelties he can inflict. He is mounted on a lion, and wears no blindfold, the better to see and delight in the agonies of Amoret, who is led before him by Despight and Cruelty:

Her brest all naked, as net iuoroo.  
And a wide wound therein (O ruefull sight)  
Entrenched deepe with knife accursed keene...  
At that wide orifice her trembling hart  
Was drawn forth, and in siluer basin layd,  
Quite through transfixed with a deadly dart,  
And in her blood yet steeming fresh embayd.

The procession circles the room three times, and returns as it came, leaving the question of how, since he could not enter the House, Scudamour had such specific knowledge of Amoret's sufferings. Their description also recalls the death of Amavia, (II i), though Amoret is not dead but entrapped in nightmare. The details of her apparent torment however reveals the procession as a horrible parody of the Grail procession of the Arthurian romances: a spiritual sickness perceived through phantasmagoric sado-masochism.

The day passes, and when at night the door opens again, Britomart enters the last room (xii 29 ff). There is no sign of Cupid or his Masque, only Amoret, bound to a 'bras en pillour.' Before her sits Busirane himself: 'Figuring straunge characters of his art' in the blood that drips,

...from her dying hart,  
Seeming transfixed with a cruell dart,  
And all perforce to make her him to loue.  
Ah who can loue the worker of her smart?



The question is not merely rhetorical, as appears later. Britomart springs forward and smites Busirane to the ground, but Amoret prevents her from killing him, since only he can cure her pain. Britomart forces him, ‘...his charmes backe to reuerse,’ and as he does so Amoret’s chains fall away, and her wound is healed. As they leave the House with the captive Busirane it falls into empty desolation.

The Book has two endings. In the 1590 edition of Books I–III they rejoin Scudamore; he and Amoret embrace as though, ‘...they had bene that faire Hermaphrodite,’ and Britomart, seeing them, ‘...wisht like happinesse.’ In the 1596 edition of Books I–VI Scudamour has left, despairing of their return, and Busirane disappears from the story.

In Book IV Canto i Britomart escorts Amoret as they go in search of Scudamour, but first we are told the circumstances of Amoret’s abduction.

Amoret ‘neuer ioyed day’ since Scudamour first won her, in circumstances to be detailed in Canto x, for at her wedding feast, ‘...before the bride was bedded,’ Busirane,

Brought in that mask of loue which late was shouen:  
And there the Ladie ill of friends bestedded,  
By way of sport, as oft in maskes is knowen,  
Conveyed quite away to liuing wight unknowen.

Amoret’s agony in the House can be seen as virginal fear exacerbated to near insanity, with Busirane as the embodiment of her terror: her vision or sexual perception of Scudamour himself. Although his Masque is a phantom, a projection of perverse imaginings, the enchanter is something more. Britomart defeats her own enemy as well as Amoret’s tormentor, and reaches her own maturity as she does so.

Most of the manifold adventures recounted in Book IV deal in different ways with strife or misunderstanding and their reconciliation. In Canto x Scudamour has occasion to describe his wooing of Amoret in ‘the place of peril’: the Temple of Venus. The account is his own, not the narrator’s. He passes its guardians and comes to a marvellous garden where fond lovers and true friends consort in bliss. In the temple itself is Venus’ androgynous statue, veiled and with the tail-biting serpent of eternity about her feet, and about her, ‘A flocke of litle loues.’ Here are,

Great sorts of louers, piteously complaining...  
As euery one had cause of good or ill.

One sings a hymn, closely derived from the opening of Lucretius’ *De Natura Rerum*, praising the Goddess as, ‘.the root of all that ioyeous is’ throughout the natural order, and above all for her gift of sexual desire to birds and beasts and men, by which the cycle of creation begun in the Garden of Adonis is sustained in time. This theme recurs and is elaborated in *Colin Clouts Come Home Againe*, 11.793–893 and in the *Hymne of Loue*. At the feet of the statue is Amoret, surrounded by all the meeker feminine virtues. Scudamour siezes her hand, ‘Like warie Hynd within the weedie soyle,’ and leads her away despite her tears and protests. What follows from this brash wooing the reader already knows. The contrast with the warmth, wit, and delicacy of *Amoretti*, written for Spenser’s future wife, is marked.

Cantos xi and xii describe the Marriage of the rivers Thames and Medway: a marvelously sustained metaphor for that concord of the physical elements which is yet another aspect of the power of divine love. Here gather all the world’s rivers, praised for their fish, and for their fertile land and the cities that link them with human history. This celebration becomes the context for the new-found love of Florimell and Marinell, so that elemental concord is expressed also on the human scale. In his *Epthalamion*, 11 37–72, Spenser makes a very similar point, invoking the nymphs of river and mountain to deck and attend his Lady for their wedding.

In Book V Artegall is the Knight of Justice. Unlike Holiness, Temperance and Love itself, Justice, necessary only in a fallen world, cannot easily appear delightful, least of all through erotic attraction, and the ills Artegall faces are too obvious to need hightening by more than occasional faint of sexual repulsion.

Book VI was the last to be completed. Its subject, Courtesie, will be defined by the poet himself in his pastoral persona of Colin Clout as the ‘...skill men call Ciuility’ (x 23): the art of living in human society. As such it impinges naturally on sexual mores and their violation: the brutal pride of Crudor and Briana in Canto i, for example, and the sexual arrogance for which Mirabella does penance in Cantos vii–viii. The quest of its Knight, Calidore, is to render

harmless the Blatant Beast: that is malicious slander, and his narrative is interwoven with a number of others.

There are two episodes in which the diversified themes of the book are ritualistically concentrated through erotic imagery and association. The first is negative. In Canto viii Serena, separated from her Lord, Calepine, falls asleep in the forest and is captured by cannibals. Then,

Vnto their God they would her sacrificize,  
Whose share, her guiltlesse bloud they would  
present,  
But of her dainty flesh they did deuize  
To make a common feast, and feed with gourmandize.

They watch her sleeping, and, ‘..with their eyes the daintiest morsels chose,’ while their priest prepares fire, vessels, and garlands. The cannibals strip Serena naked, and it becomes clear that not only hunger excites them:

Those daintie parts, the dearlings of delight,  
Which mote not be prophan’d of common eyes,  
Those villains vew’d with loose lasciuious sight...

This base confusion of appetites expresses the nadir of social order. It is only their priest who restrains them from rape. They build an altar of turf and deck it with flowers, and at nightfall, as the priest raising his sacrificial knife, ‘Gan mutter close a certaine secret charme’ they shout to the barbaric sounds of bag-pipe and horn. The noise brings Calepine upon them. He rescues Serena with great slaughter of her tormentors. The rituals of cannibalism are an inversion of human decency at all levels: here specifically those of hospitality, sexuality and religious order, but they indicate it as being still human, not merely bestial. Neither is the behavior of the cannibals obsessive, like that shown in Busirane’s house. Anyone might be their victim.

Recollection of the prurient emphasis given to Serena’s helpless nakedness sharpens the positive shift of focus in the second episode: the Vision of the Graces. In Canto ix Calidore has come to the Valley of the Shepherds, where he falls in love with Pastorella. There he lingers, and in Canto x comes one day upon Venus’ lovely mountain, Acidale. There in her sacred glade he sees,

And hundred naked maidens, lilly white,  
All raunged in a ring, and dauncing in delight.

Their music is the piping of Colin Clout: Spenser’s own persona. In their midst dance the Graces themselves, showering their gifts upon Colin’s own beloved, as they do in *Epithalamion*, 11. 103–109. Sacramental love in that other very personal context is a part of their dance, as the mysteries of the marriage bed belong to Venus herself, whose sons, ‘..little winged loues’ (1 357) flutter round it as they do about her Temple’s statue. The vision beheld on Acidale is expounded in universal terms of ‘Ciuititie.’ The Graces are naked, being, ‘.. without guile, Or false dissemblance.’ They are desirable, not as an erotic end in itself, but as their ‘gracious gifts’ are to be desired, ‘Which decke the body or ad orne the mynde.’ They move so that,

...two of them still froward seem’d to bee,  
But one still towards shew’d herself afore:  
That good should from vs goe, then come in greater  
store.

Their dance replays the cycles of creation, generation and love at the highest level of human order. For these expanding perceptions erotic delight has been a triumphant metaphor throughout the epic, resonant above a full awareness of its perversions.

### Biography

Born in London in or around 1552: educated at the Merchant Taylors’ School from 1561 and Pembroke Hall, Cambridge from 1569: BA 1573, MA 1577. Secretary to John Young, Bishop of Rochester in 1578. He began *The Shepherdes Calender*, his first original published work, while still at Cambridge: it appeared in 1579. In the same year he married his first wife, Macabyas Childe, the date of whose death is unknown. He was by then in the service of the Earl of Leicester, but left to take up the post of private secretary to Lord Grey, the newly appointed Lord Deputy of Ireland. He remained in Ireland for the greater part of his life. There he held a number of posts, civil and military. In 1589, he was granted the manor of Kilcolman, in Cork, where much of his greatest poetry was written, including most of his epic *The Faerie Queene*, dedicated to Elizabeth I, to whom he presented Books I–III before their publication in 1590. He was rewarded with a pension of £50

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a year, at that time a respectable income. He married his second wife, Elizabeth Boyle, for whom he wrote the sonnet sequence *Amoretti* and the *Epithalamion*, in 1594. In October 1598, Kilcolman was burned in the Tyrone rebellion. Spenser escaped with his family to Cork, and was subsequently sent to London with dispatches, where he fell ill and died, January 16, 1599.

ELIZABETH PORGES WATSON

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# STENDHAL

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1783–1842

French novelist

Stendhal was the author of several novels, numerous short stories, various autobiographical writings, a large amount of non-fictional philosophical and historical writings, and many essays, articles, and letters. However, in terms of erotic writing, and literary critical success, his most interesting works are his novels, both finished and unfinished. Love was the predominant concern of Stendhal's life, thoughts, and writing. In his early years he was a dedicated pupil of the Ideologue Destutt de Tracy, and was greatly influenced by his ideas about the relationship between man and society. Following his example, he attempted to analyze the emotion of love scientifically in the non-fictional essay *De l'Amour* [Love], published in 1822. In this work, he separates love into four distinct categories: *amour passion* [passionate love], *amour-goût* [mannered love], *amour physique* [physical love], and *amour de vanité* [vanity-love]. Dismissing physical, or sexual, love as a purely sensual experience, he focused mainly upon the other three types of love, matters for the mind and soul. *Amour passion* is true love, an ideal that Stendhal presents as

man's ultimate aim, although only attainable in reality by a privileged few. It is natural and spontaneous, transcending social constraints and allowing lovers to experience a superior state of being. In contrast, the remaining two forms of love, *amour-goût* and *amour de vanité*, are presented as artificial, imitated emotions, the product of human vanity. A crucial element of Stendhal's philosophy was the conflict between nature and society; socialization is presented as restrictive and harmful to man's natural instincts, in particular destroying spontaneity, or what Stendhal termed 'énergie.' Throughout his work, he is highly critical of nineteenth-century French society, claiming that it has created a country of false, dull, artificial people, governed by vanity rather than passion; this he contrasts to Italy, a country he fell in love with, he claims, due to its 'natural' passion and spontaneity.

The opposition of the different types of love can be seen to guide and influence Stendhal's fictional writing. This is particularly evident in one of his most successful novels, *Le Rouge et le noir* [Scarlet and Black]. In this novel the protagonist, Julien Sorel, is presented with a choice between two very different women. For the motherly figure, Mme de Rênal, he experiences

*amour passion*, although initially his social ambition prevents him from appreciating the true value of this passion. He moves to Paris, where he comes to experience *amour de vanité* for the aristocratic, masculine, Mathilde de la Mole. Julien's seduction of Mathilde enables him to achieve his dreams of social success; their relationship is flawed, however, in that they cannot relate to each other openly on an emotional level. Mathilde's love for Julien is essentially based on his feigned emotional immunity; if at any point Julien reveals the true nature of his love to Mathilde, she loses interest in him. At the height of Julien's success, a defamatory letter from Mme de Rênal provokes him into the rash act of attempting to shoot her. In prison, separated from the social pressures of the outside world, Julien comes to experience the full joy of his *amour passion* for Mme de Rênal, with whom he is reunited, and rejects Mathilde's attempts to save him. The novel ends with his execution, which is presented less as a tragedy than as a welcome escape from the mundane world which, through *amour passion*, Julien has already transcended.

This narrative structure, focused around two types of love and two types of women, is repeated in Stendhal's other major successful novel, *La Chartreuse de Parme* [*The Charterhouse of Parma*]. This novel is set in Italy, the land of spontaneous passions. The hero, Fabrice, is loved passionately by his aunt, the celebrated Gina Sanseverina, whose existence revolves around the social realities of life at court: the focus of her passion for Fabrice is thus to promote his social and material success. Fabrice, however, being one of Stendhal's emotional elite, prioritizes spiritual matters over worldly concerns. He rejects his aunt's love in favor of a deep *amour passion* for Clélia Conti, a passion that is almost religious in its strength and devotion. As with Julien, this passion develops while Fabrice is in prison in the Farnese tower, high above the world and cut off from the social maneuvering and politics taking place below. Another of Stendhal's protagonists, Lucien Leuwen, also experiences this divide of passions, his *amour passion* for Mme de Chasteller being contrasted with the passion he feigns for Mme Grandet. The crucial element of *amour passion*, in all of Stendhal's novels, is its complete independence from social considerations. Social obstacles prevent the fulfilment of the lovers' passion: only once they have overcome these

obstacles can they achieve the state of total bliss associated with Stendhalian true love.

As Stendhal specifies in *De l'Amour*, this blissful *amour passion* is a spiritual and mental attraction: sexual attraction is not only unimportant but irrelevant. This is made explicit in Stendhal's final novel, *Lamiel*. Dispassionately, in a purely scientific quest for knowledge, the heroine pays her father's servant to relieve her of her virginity. Unlike typical romantic descriptions of such episodes, Stendhal is cold, clinical, and brutally factual. Lamiel herself expresses complete disillusionment, unable to understand why society assigns such a basic animal act so much importance. This disillusionment has been considered to mirror that of Stendhal himself, who, in the autobiographical *La Vie de Henry Brulard* [*The Life of Henry Brulard*], dismisses the long-awaited loss of his virginity in a couple of lines, a meaningless event which he claims to have forgotten. Love, for Stendhal, is a purely spiritual affair. It has been suggested by many critics that the dissociation of physical and emotional love in Stendhal's works is the result of his own obsession with his mother, the barrier of incest preventing further development of this emotional attachment in his mind.

An interesting aspect of Stendhal's writings is that not one of his heroines retains her virginity, although, with the exception of Lamiel, the actual episodes of defloration are implied rather than described in detail. Refreshingly, for Stendhal the loss of the heroine's virginity is neither over-romanticized nor the first step on the path to her doom: it is presented simply as a natural progression of her love for the hero. Indeed, in a reversal of traditional sexual power relations, it is often the Stendhalian heroine who offers herself to her lover: Mathilde declares herself to Julien and invites him to her room, Clélia comes to Fabrice's cell, Lamiel controls and directs all of her sexual relations with men and the heroine of one of his shorter stories, Vanina Vanini, not only offers herself to her lover, but socially disgraces herself of her own accord. The creation of these 'masculine' heroines has often been praised by feminists, and is complemented by the feminization of many of the male protagonists, whose actions are driven by their emotions rather than their ambition or intellect. This traditionally 'feminine' quality is praised by Stendhal, and marks his protagonists out as superior in their fictional world, capable of

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reaching the heights of *amour passion*. Definitions of masculinity and femininity thus play an important role in his fiction, particularly in his first novel, *Armance*, where the hero, Octave, feels inadequate for the male role assigned him by society, resulting in his psychological impotence.

Stendhal's fiction can thus be seen as an exploration of, and a challenge to, conceptions of love, sex, and sexuality in nineteenth-century French society. Stendhal accurately predicted that his ideas would not be appreciated by his contemporaries, and the fact that most of his success was indeed posthumous demonstrates the radical nature of some of his views.

### Biography

Born Marie-Henri Beyle, in Grenoble, January 23, 1783. Educated at the École Centrale de Grenoble, 1796–1799; then moved to Paris to take the entrance exam for the École polytechnique, but renounced this idea in favor of writing. In 1800, Beyle began working for the Ministry of War; in October of that year he was called up to the 6<sup>th</sup> regiment of the dragoons. However, he hated military life and in 1802 he returned to Paris, where he dedicated himself to reading and attending the theater. In 1806, he accompanied Martial Daru to Germany, entering Berlin behind Napoleon. He participated in the campaign in Vienna in 1809, and in 1810 returned to Paris, where he was given an administrative role. In 1814, Paris was taken by the Allies, and, unable to find employment after the fall of the Empire, Beyle left France to settle in Italy where he wrote his first works, *l'Histoire de la peinture en Italie* and *Rome, Naples et Florence*, which were published in 1817, the latter being the first work to be published under the pen name Stendhal. In 1821, he returned to Paris and made a name for himself in the salons. Following the 1830 revolution he was appointed consul at Trieste and in the small port of Civitavecchia. From then until his death on 23 March 1842, he spent large periods of time living in various Italian cities and returning to Paris as often as his duties allowed.

SARAH F. DONACHIE

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# STRETZER, THOMAS

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d. 1738

English poet and novelist

***The Natural History of the Frutex Vulvaria, or Flowering Shrub and Arbor Vitae; or, The Natural History of the Tree of Life***

In 1732, two humorous pieces of erotica, *Arbor Vitae* and *The Natural History of the Frutex Vulvaria* were published, which contained detailed descriptions of the nature and functions of the male and female sexual organs. Published under the pseudonym “Philogynes Clitorides,” *The Natural History of the Frutex Vulvaria, or Flowering Shrub* has been ascribed to Stretzer. The vagina is described as a shrub:

The *Frutex Vulvaria* is a flat low Shrub, which always grows in a moist warm Valley, at the Foot of a little Hill, which is constantly water'd by a Spring, whose Water is impregnated with very saline Particles, which nevertheless agree wonderfully well with this Shrub.

*Arbor Vitae* was originally published as a poem and frequently emulated. It was regularly reprinted along with prose, or with *Natural History of the Frutex Vulvaria*. The prose version of *Arbor Vitae* was written under the pseudonym of “Roger Pheuequell,” and has been ascribed to Stretzer. The work was a skit on the *Catalogus Plantarum* compiled by Philip Miller, known and respected gardener of the day. The penis is described as the tree of life:

*Arbor Vitae, or the Tree of Life*, is a succulent Plant; consisting of one straight Stem, on the Top of which is a *Pistillum*, or *Apex*...Its *Fruits*, contrary to most others, grow near the Root; they are usually no more than two in Number.

In this material, botanical metaphors for genitalia were used to question scientific ideas circulating during the early eighteenth century. Although presented as titillating bawdy facetiae, these texts conveyed a certain set of attitudes towards the body and expose underlying

assumptions about male and female sexual behavior. Written as ribald humor, it satirised questions on generation, degeneration, and venereal disease which were current amongst the medical elite. Scathing attacks were made on the *virtuosi* and their new botanical notion of attaching gender to plants. As such, this erotica was a weapon parodying debates already taking place on scientific and medical issues.

***A New Description of Merryland***

Written under the pseudonym of “Roger Pheuequell,” in *A New Description of Merryland*, the country was depicted as a woman’s body:

Near the Fort is the Metropolis, called CLTRS [clitoris]; it is a pleasant Place, much delighted in by the Queens of MERRYLAND, and is their chief Palace, or rather *Pleasure Seat*; it was at first but small, but the Pleasure some of the Queens have found in it, has occasion'd their extending its Bounds considerably.

*A New Description of Merryland* (1741) and *Merryland Displayed* (1741) provided erotica in the form of analogies between the body, nature, and landscape. An earlier example can be seen in Charles Cotton’s *Ετόπλι, The Present State of Betty-land*, (1684) which undoubtedly influenced Stretzer’s work. This erotica created “other worlds” in which the terrain is defined as the female body, a mini-cosmos.

Both the Renaissance cosmic view of man and medical analogies of women/nature depicted the body as a metaphor for the cosmos. Stretzer’s erotica used the same ploy to describe the sexualized body constructing sexual parables wholly in terms of metaphorical ribaldry. These scenes were loaded with agricultural metaphors, pelagic allegories, and classical allusions producing the image of the landscaped body as a mini-cosmos. This use of the human body to describe the workings of the world was an ancient trope, the classical tradition of the erotic landscape and garden continued to resurface. Women’s bodies become a euphemistic landscape; hills become

breasts, caves become vaginas, and shrubs become pubic hair.

A *New Description of Merryland* (1741) (an updated and modernized version of *Εροτόπολις, The Present State of Betty-land*) and *Merryland Displayed* were reprinted in a collection of erotic works entitled *Potent Ally*. This new description of Merryland parallels the themes and style of seventeenth-century Bettyland but it has moved on from agricultural descriptions of the farmer and his land. The analogies more reflective of the wider world setting of coasts and topography with explicit anatomical terminology defining the female body. This time the analogy was extended to depict a woman's body as a whole continent, with its own government, religion, canals, tenures and coastal surveys. Merryland sits in "a low Part of the Continent, bounded on the upper Side, or the Northward, by the little Mountain called MNSVNRS [Mons Venerus], on the East and West by COXASIN [left hip] and COXADEXT [right hip], and on the South or lower Part it lies open to the TERRA FIRMA."

In the stance of a gynecological exploration, Merryland and "its Divisions and principal Places of Note" is investigated, with specific explorations of the clitoris and the hymen. Doubts surface around the detectability of the hymen. In *Merryland*,

Another part of the Country, often mentioned by Authors, is HYM [hymen], about which there has been great Controversies and Disputes among the Learned, some denying there was ever such a Place, others positively affirming to have seen it.

Seduction is described as a battle:

At the End of the great Canal toward the *Terra Firma*, are two Forts called LBA [labia], between which every one must necessarily pass, that goes up the Country, there being no other Road. The Fortifications are not very strong, tho' they have *Curtains*, *Hornworks*, and *Ramparts*; they have indeed sometimes defended the Pass a pretty while, but were seldom or never known to hold out long against a close and vigorous Attack.

A *New Description of Merryland* mentions sodomy only to dismiss the subject as disagreeable; "I shall leave the Affair of the *Antipodes* to those who have a *Taste* that Way; only shall observe, there are some People who very

preposterously (as I think) give the Preference to the PDX [podex]." The text addresses problems of both venereal disease and the production of too many children. Condoms are advocated as protection against disease rather than as a contraceptive measure. The narrator advises "always to wear *proper cloathing*, of which they have a Sort that is very commodious, and peculiarly adapted to this Country; it is made of extraordinary fine thin Substance, and contrived so as to be all of one Piece, and without a Seam, only about the Bottom it is generally bound round with a scarlet Ribbon for Ornament."

### *Merryland Displayed*

Written in the style of a mock critique of *A New Description of Merryland*, Stretzer probably wrote *Merryland Displayed* spurred on by Curll in an attempt to cash in on further sales and publicity. Curll published at least two editions of *Merryland Displayed* in 1741. *Merryland Displayed* states that *New Description of Merryland* went through seven editions in three months it was so popular "besides some Thousands of pirated Copies that were sold in the Town and Country."

### Biography

Little is known about the life of Stretzer (sometimes known as Stretzer) apart from that he was a hack employed by the notorious pornographer, Edmund Curll, to write some of his publications. As with many writers of pornography in the eighteenth century, there is a question about whether he wrote everything ascribed to him.

In a literary context, Stretzer was among those who developed a form of erotica containing botanical and agricultural analogies in which landscapes were depicted as a woman's body. These "other worlds" displayed anatomical details while depicting both classical and contemporary images of landscapes and gardens. Within these erotic settings, genitalia are described in botanical euphemisms; the penis described as "the tree of life," the vagina as the "flowering shrub," the woman's body as a geographical terrain, a country called *Merryland*.

JULIE PEAKMAN

**Editions**

It should be noted that Curll was well-known for using false imprints, including false dates and “borrowing” the names of respectable publishers.

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*Merryland Displayed, Or Plagiarism, ignorance and impudence detected.*

Being observations upon a pamphlet intituled [sic] *A New Description of Merryland.* A satirical pseudo-criticism of the work written previously by himself. London, E. Curll, 1741; Bath: J. Leake, 1741.

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## SUN WEI

C. tenth century  
Chinese author

***Biographies of Goddesses***

Most, if not all, of the six stories about divine women that make up the collection entitled *Shennü zhuan*, and ascribed to the rather obscure author, Sun Wei, are to be found nearly verbatim in the great compendium of stories completed during the Taiping era (976–983), the *Taiping guangji* [*Extensive gleanings of the Reign of Great Tranquility*], which devotes twenty-five chapters out of five hundred to stories related to gods or goddesses. The first biography has but its title changed, the second one, quoted by Robert van Gulik not even that: *Wanruo* is the name of an elder sister-in-law on the husbands side; she acts as a medium for the goddess. The *Taiping guangji*, chapter 491, gives its sources: the *Han Wu gushi* (ancient stories about Emperor Wu of the Han dynasty, reigned

140–187 BCE), a sort of fictional romance of Taoist inspiration, popular in the period when Zhang Zu’s novelette, *Visiting the Fairy Cave*, was written. The text of the *Han Wu gushi* which came to us is likely to be a garbled version.

The other story, partially translated by van Gulik, is the third one in the collection; it too has been copied from the above-mentioned compendium, at the end of chapter 295, under the title *Liu Ziqing*; the source is given as the *Bachao qiongguai lu* [*Records of Fathomless Strangeness From Eight Dynasties*], a lost work by an unknown author living at the beginning of the seventh century. Some ten pieces of it survive, copied or quoted in various compendia, half being rather elaborate stories about encounters with goddesses. The original text is slightly shortened and the title changed into *Kang wang miao nü* [*The Girls From the Temple of King Kang*]. Liu Ziqing is the name of a poor scholar who received the visit of two girls in their teens. They come every ten days to make



## SURREALISM

love with him, both of them, for years, till he discovers their figures among the nearby temple statues.

The idea that a divine woman, a goddess, could have cured General Huo Quping by having sex with him, instead of depleting him as a demonic woman would have (fairy-fox with or without nine tails, etc.) may testify to a common belief rather than clearly reflect the influence of the handbooks of sex and their theories about Yin supplementing Yang during sexual intercourse properly mastered. Is not the reversal of what is commonly believed extraordinary enough to make a good story?

*Biographies of Goddesses* is included in several collections of Tang fiction published in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The work was taken as genuine until recently and more research would be needed to ascertain the time of the forgery.

Several of its pieces do belong to a period close to the time of composition of Zhang Zu's *Visiting the Fairy Cave*, vindicating van Gulik's point about this closeness. We may as well quote his excellent summary of *Wanruo*:

*The second story relates that the Han Emperor Wu used to make sacrifices to a female deity on the Po-liang Terrace. When his famous general Huo Quping*

*fell ill, the Emperor advised him to go and pray to this deity for recovery. She appeared before the general in the shape of a beautiful girl and invited him to have intercourse with her. He refused indignantly. Then his illness grew worse, and shortly afterwards he died. Thereupon the goddess revealed to the Emperor that the general had been failing in Yang essence. She intended to supplement this with her Yin essence and his refusal brought about his death.*

### Biography

Sun Wei probably lived in the early tenth century. While *Biographies of Goddesses*, compiled from ancient pieces no later than the eighteenth century, has long been attributed to him, none of it is likely to be of his composition.

ANDRÉ LÉVY

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# SURREALISM

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From the time of its foundation in 1919 in France, the Surrealist movement responded to the trauma of the First World War through an active endeavour to bind desire with human creativity. It did so through poetry (Paul Eluard, André Breton), the pictorial arts (Salvador Dalí), and cinema (Louis Buñuel) amongst other art-forms. While Surrealism must be seen in the context of the politics of the avant-garde movements of the time, in particular the Dadaist movement as founded by Tristan Tzara in 1916 in Zürich, it can also be read partly as a response to the rationalist philosophical tradition in

France with its insistence on will as a primary ordering factor in human life. Contrary to this philosophy, Surrealism took as one of its main objects the promotion of eroticism, in all of its forms, and the reinvention of the arts through an immense confidence in desire and the breaking of taboos—both in literary and philosophical terms.

The word “surrealism” in all probability stems from Guillaume Apollinaire's 1918 theatrical farce *les Mamelles des Tirésias* [*Breasts of Tiresias*] (1964), which was subtitled “une drame surréaliste.” The word itself was then adopted by the

self-proclaimed official leader of the Surrealist movement: the writer and poet André Breton.

In 1924, Breton pushed the movement into the public domain with the publication of the *Manifeste du surréalisme*, in which the main tenets of surrealism were outlined. The ‘manifeste’ presented the idea that the subconscious mind could be accessed through a form of automatic writing, a procedure of non-revisionist writing enacted under a semi-hypnotic state, in which language would simulate as well as regenerate the use of dreams as a valid springboard for artistic revolt and subsequent liberation.

In spite of the inner contradiction inherent in ruling out the poet’s reasoning faculties during moments of creativity—the so-called automatic process—the Surrealists saw their practice in the light of an imaginative role-play rather than an attempt to mimic earlier symbolist practices and discourses. According to them, it was within the nature of believing in simulation as a creative process in its own right that the erotic could be privileged as the most effective way to temporarily move out of a restrictive and bourgeois way of life. Despite differences amongst the Surrealists in terms of how they wrote on the erotic, most efforts shared a fascination with the prohibition of desire in bourgeois society, the random divisions between reason and madness, and an affirmative faith in the poetic qualities of the unconscious.

More than any other Surrealist of the 1920s and 1930s, André Breton’s literary output extended the main tenants of surrealism, whilst at the same time focusing on the erotic and romantic aspects of the urban environment that formed the backdrop for most Surrealist fiction.

In *Nadja* (1928), Breton’s chance encounters with a woman of the same name constitute the acknowledged meeting of the fantastical and the irrational with the erotic attributes of the female, usually through a series of meetings mysteriously connected to Breton’s own independent wanderings through Paris. As such the erotic for Breton, and for other members of the surrealist group—in particular Louis Aragon and the poet Paul Eluard—was fundamentally linked to a belief in the supernatural and fantastical properties of the signs and portents that guide the “urban flaneur” (see *Baudelaire*) through the urban landscape. While these signs and portents may be of an overtly fetishistic nature, Nadja’s gloves for example, they are also often the very

locations in which sexual behavior is unleashed from its bourgeois trappings. Hence the arcades and parks of nineteenth Century Paris become erotically charged due to their convenience as places for prostitution and secret rendezvous.

The linking of the erotic aspects of the Surrealist romance with a nostalgia for a form of life prior to the twentieth century, not only feeds into the unattainable quality of the female figure but becomes one of the prerequisites for Breton’s desired “amour fou” (lending its name a later Breton romance: *L’Amour fou* (1936) as well). In one of Breton’s earlier artistic collaborations, with the surrealist Philippe Soupault: *Les Champs magnétiques* (1921) the feminine is equated with the hysterical and the irrational in ways influenced by Freudian principles of sexuality by way of a deeply romanticized vision of insanity as a viable revolt against the bourgeois code of rationalism. According to Breton and Soupault the actual sources of *Les Champs magnétiques* were accounts given by mental patients at the Saint-Dizier hospital in 1916 combined with extensive readings of Freud’s theories on sexuality. Thus while madness is celebrated in both eroticized and poetic terms it also, in line with Surrealist politics, refers to the anguish of survivors of World War I.

In this respect, Surrealism’s attitude to the erotic and to women in particular may appear intrinsically flawed by its paradoxical relationship to reason, but the Surrealists nevertheless unashamedly promulgated the disavowal of rationality and saw love as demarcated precisely in these terms. Partly due to its uncompromising stance on the issue of rationalism vis-à-vis contemporary politics (disagreements regarding their various Communist affiliations also caused problems) the Second World War saw a lessening of the surrealist impact on literary and intellectual life as Existentialist thought entered the arena in France and elsewhere. During the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s interest on Surrealism resurfaced; for example on the impact of female Surrealists in what was traditionally considered a predominantly male field.

CAROLINE BLINDER

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## SUSANN, JACQUELINE

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# SUSANN, JACQUELINE

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1918–1974

American author and actress

Jacqueline Susann was widely derided in her lifetime as a hack writer of trash, and her best-selling work has only recently been acknowledged as a major influence on popular erotic literature. An actress turned writer, Susann never had pretensions to literary refinement; but her novels combined sincerity, compelling narratives, and an almost anthropological eye for detail in order to explore the varieties of human sexuality. The extraordinary success of her books brought to a mass audience subjects found (and perhaps better handled) in more recondite erotica, thus allowing greater visibility to erotic literature as a whole in American and Anglophone culture. In fact, it is hard to overestimate Susann's importance in mainstreaming erotic themes for popular literature.

### *Valley of the Dolls*

Jacqueline Susann's first published novel, *Valley of the Dolls* (1966), was a *roman à clef* that followed the lives of three successful career women working in the entertainment business that Susann knew so well, concentrating on their experiences of love, sex, and drugs. Its core theme is innocence corrupted. The protagonist is Anne Welles, an innocent whose progress through romance, sexual knowledge, and ultimately to drug abuse forms the central plot of the book. Her story is intertwined with those of her friends Neely O'Hara, a worldly entertainer who ultimately betrays her, and Jennifer North, a blonde bombshell with a lesbian past. Their adventures permit Susann to present a conspectus of sexual attitudes and mores from 1944 to 1966 with the starkness of a medieval morality play. In successive scenes, *Valley of the Dolls* addresses a series of sexual "issues" (e.g.,

abortion, divorce, homosexuality, pornography, etc.) within a compulsively readable narrative that makes the reader suspend disbelief. One of the remarkable features of *Valley of the Dolls* is its relatively sympathetic treatment of women in lesbian relationships—these romantic and idealized figures are in sharp contrast to the haunted, guilt-ridden lesbians found in the work of Susann's contemporaries. In general, *Valley of the Dolls* treated sexual relations with a frankness and matter-of-factness that provided much of the book's appeal. Although it is certainly not as sexually explicit as other writings available at the time, its then-unusual combination of sex and drugs, the voyeuristic thrill of its *roman à clef* aspects and a shrewdly orchestrated marketing campaign made *Valley of the Dolls* one of the bestselling and most widely distributed novels of all time.

### *The Love Machine*

Susann followed the success of *Valley of the Dolls* with *The Love Machine* in 1969. With its male protagonist, absence of lesbian subplot, and "happy ending," it is somewhat anomalous in Susann's output, but this difference gave her the opportunity to examine more threatening manifestations of sexuality. Sexual violence and the degradation of prostitution are juxtaposed with stunning images of sexually motivated body transformations. Again Susann used the format of a *roman à clef* to explore her themes, this time basing her characters on personalities from the television industry. Robin Stone, a newscaster turned television executive, acts out a series of sexual relations while attempting to come to terms with his complex and abused past. His insatiable sexual appetite and mechanical attitude towards its satisfaction make him the "love machine" of the title. Drug use is still a minor theme, but this time around Susann was more interested in exploring the possibilities of surgical body modification to enhance sexual attraction and change sexual identity. She develops this most fully in the episode where Robin Stone visits the prostitutes on Hamburg's Reeperbahn, culminating in an encounter with a transsexual dancer. Later, Stone's violent assault on another prostitute enables him to understand why he equates sex and violence, and so comes to a greater self-knowledge. The novel adopted the ancient Egyptian *ankh* sign as a symbol of

sexual power and vitality, so providing a uniquely recognizable cover image that greatly aided promotion of the book. *The Love Machine* is also notable for its positive treatment of male homosexuality through a sympathetic portrayal of a minor character. Although not as well received as *Valley of the Dolls*, *The Love Machine* did much to establish Susann's reputation in Europe.

### *Once Is Not Enough*

In her final major novel, *Once Is Not Enough* (1973), Susann returned to an initially innocent female protagonist while casting a (perhaps surprisingly) jaundiced eye on the world of sexual permissiveness and licence that she herself had earlier helped to promote, if not create. The novel is, in essence, a tale of a sexual utopia gone haywire through excess—seen through a daughter's incestuous longing for her father in world of people too rich, too beautiful, and too powerful for their own good. In some ways, the heroine of the novel, January Wayne, is a fantasy portrait of Susann herself in her earlier years as an aspiring actress. January's childhood is characterized by her worship of her movie-producer father Mike Wayne, her innocence kept secure in a girls' school and a Swiss clinic. Her defloration and initiation into the "swinging" sexuality of 1970s New York is guided by Linda Riggs, a hip women's magazine journalist based on *Cosmopolitan* editor Helen Gurley Brown. Linda introduces the reader to an unsentimental world of sex and drugs that is continually contrasted with January's idealized childhood. January reluctantly accepts Linda's guidance while continuing to worship her father, but later transfers this attraction to a married novelist with sexual dysfunction. January's adventures are paralleled by Susann's caustic running commentary on contemporary mores. She satirizes the dangerous advice of women's magazines and then-popular trends such as "nude theater" as well as several literary figures who had ridiculed her earlier work, including Norman Mailer and Truman Capote, who appear as grotesque caricatures. A major subplot revolves around the lesbian relationship of January's step-mother, socialite Dee Milford Granger, with reclusive Garbo-based actress Karla. An extensive digression covers Karla's past: her early lesbian desires and war years in Poland, culminating in a

## SUSANN, JACQUELINE

startling account of mass rape in a convent. The deaths of January's father and step-mother make January unimaginably wealthy, but also cut her adrift in a world she is unequipped to handle. Her wanderings take her from a sexually explicit play to a drug-fueled orgy that is one of the most astonishing scenes in the book. Susann uses a stream-of-consciousness narrative style to convey January's dislocated experience of a variety of group sex situations while under the influence of LSD. The final resolution of the book reworks Susann's then-unpublished sci-fi fantasy *Yargo*. January hallucinates a handsome alien that looks like her father and, her dreams fulfilled, disappears and is presumed dead. Her sense of erotic dislocation is taken to its logical conclusion as she flees this world altogether.

### Other works

Susann's short roman à clef *Dolores* (1976), based on Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and her sister Lee Radziwill, explored the themes of love, sex, and drugs among the very rich. Initially commissioned as a story for *Ladies' Home Journal*, it was published as a book only after Susann's death; perhaps out of fear of libel or deference to her magazine audience, this novella is relatively unexplicit, but intriguingly develops themes of sex and class. A number of unfinished projects never saw the light of day, but Susann's early attempt at a science fiction romance, *Yargo*, was published in 1979 to disappointing sales. The afterlife of Susann's work has been considerable: each of the major novels has been filmed, some more than once, and have appeared in various forms on stage and television. An estate-sanctioned sequel to *Valley of the Dolls*, *Jacqueline Susann's Shadow of the Dolls* by Rae Lawrence, was said to be based on a detailed outline by Susann herself, but failed to capture either the tone or the spirit of the original, and was poorly received. Various unauthorized sequels and parodies of Susann's work have had greater success. Of especial interest in the reception of Susann's work has been its enthusiastic adoption by young authors of lesbian erotica: the stories published in the irreverent tribute zine *Dead Jackie Susann Quarterly*, for

example, show the unmistakable influence of Susann on a wide range of authors.

### Biography

Born in Philadelphia, 20 August 1918, also educated there. Worked in theater and television in New York from 1936; married publicist Irving Mansfield in 1939, one son. Began writing plays in collaboration with Beatrice Cole, of which "The Temporary Mrs. Smith" and "Lovely Me" were produced on Broadway; began work on prose fiction in the 1950s. Diagnosed with breast cancer in 1962, first book (*Every Night Josephine*) appeared in 1963. First published novel, *Valley of the Dolls* (1966) was enormously successful, as were two others, *The Love Machine* (1969) and *Once Is Not Enough* (1973), in part because of innovative promotion techniques. Appeared in the films of all three novels. Died of cancer, 21 September 1974; posthumously published works include a novella, *Jacqueline Susann's Dolores* (1976), and a romantic science fiction fantasy, *Yargo* (1979, written 1953–1956).

T.G. WILFONG and DOMINIC MONTSERRAT

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# SUYŪTĪ, JALĀL AL-DĪN AL-

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1445–1505

Pre-modern Egyptian polymath

Al-Suyūṭī is, by all accounts, the most prolific author in Arabo-Islamic history. It is estimated that he authored 900 works in various genres and fields. His most famous and important contributions are in Qurānic commentary, theology, exegesis, and history. At least eleven of his works, most of them extant, but not all edited or published, are solely concerned with sexology (al-bāh)- an established genre in pre-modern Arabo-Islamic culture. The most important and famous of these are the following:

*Rashf al-zulāl min al-sihr al-halāl* [*Drinking the Sweet Water of Licit Magic*]. Also known as *Maqāmat al-nisā* [*The Harangue on Women*]. This work is a collection of twenty *maqāmas* (harangues; a pre-modern Arabic narrative genre written in rhyming prose). The overarching frame narrative of the work centers around a group of scholars who went to the mosque on the feast and listened to a sermon in which the imam encouraged them to abandon adultery and homosexuality and to marry. Having heeded his advice, they meet afterwards and each narrates, in painstaking detail, his sexual intercourse with his bride. The work is chock-full of punning as each narrator employs terminology, concepts, and titles from his own field of knowledge to describe intercourse. Among the twenty narrators are a Qurān teacher, exegete, *hadīth* scholar, jurist, linguist, grammarian, prosodist, mathematician, physician, logician, and mystic. This approach undoubtedly allowed al-Suyūṭī to display his erudition, wit, and mastery of the various fields and their respective terminology. *Shaqā al-utrunj fī rāqā iq al-ghunj* [*The Citron Slices of Delicate Coquetry*] is an epistle centering around the theme of *ghunj* [coquetry, both verbal and physical]. However, in delineating the wide semantic field of the word, al-Suyūṭī, as in many of his works and the genre in general, tackles many other related themes and terms such as *rafath* [obscene, lewd, or immodest

language, especially during intercourse]. The epistle expounds on the theme following the typical structure of the *bāh* [sexology] genre in Arabic. The general division starts out with related and relevant quotations from the Qurān and the *hadīth* [prophetic tradition] on the term or theme under question. This is usually followed by anecdotes, excerpts, and sayings from various sources of belles-lettres and, finally, excerpts of poetry. This is one of his most popular erotic works in the Arab world and is available in a few popular editions.

*Mabāsīm al-milāh wa-manāsīm al-sabāh fī mawāsīm al-nikāh* [*The Mouths of the Beautiful and the Morning Breeze of the Seasons of Intercourse*] is a lengthy encyclopedia divided into seven parts. The first part includes excerpts from the prophetic tradition on sex, the second focuses on sex in lexicography, the third prose anecdotes, the fourth poetry, the fifth is devoted to the anatomy of male and female sex organs, the sixth: medicine, and the seventh focuses on sexology. The work was so large that al-Suyūṭī abridged it himself and entitled the smaller selection *al-wishāh fī fawā id al-nikāh* [*The Sash on the Advantages of Intercourse*]. The section on lexicography, for example, is subdivided into four parts covering the various terms used to describe intercourse (a mini dictionary of sorts), a section on the various names for the penis and its parts, a similar section for the vagina, and finally a section on the various expressions and terms for sexual acts, positions, and related themes.

*Nawādir al-ayk fī ma rifat al-nayk* [*The Fresh Branches in the Knowledge of Intercourse*]. Al-Suyūṭī, in the introduction to this work, writes that it is an addendum to the aforementioned *The Sash*. This, too, is a smaller compilation of quotes, anecdotes, and verses spread out in chapters on sexual intercourse and its pleasures, the various types of penetration, various sexual positions, a taxonomy of sizes and shapes of sexual organs, advice on achieving the greatest sexual pleasure. *Nuzhat al-muta ammil wa murshid al-muta ahhil* [*The Sojourn of the Reflective*

## SWINBURNE, ALGERNON C.

and the *Guide for the Married*] is a manual for newlyweds. It is divided into nine parts dealing with intercourse and its advantages and disadvantages (maladies and sicknesses), foreplay, preferred and religiously sanctioned positions and conditions, a taxonomy of preferred types of women and erotic physiognomy, a similar section on men, the rights of the wife and husband, and the protocols and rituals of copulation. *Al-Īdāh fī ilm al-nikāh* [*The Book of Exposition in the Science of Intercourse*] is attributed to al-Suyūṭī, but probably originally composed by al-Shīrāzī. Aside from the general scheme and obvious subject, what distinguishes this work is the relatively extensive use of Egyptian colloquial language in its various anecdotes.

A significant number of al-Suyūṭī's works, including erotic ones, have yet to be edited and published. Many others are forever lost. Of these it is worth mentioning *al-Yawāqīt al-thamīna fī sifāt al-samīna* [*The Precious Stones in Praising Plump Women*].

### Biography

Born in Cairo in October 1445. His father was a teacher and judge. He was precocious (started writing at the age of seventeen) and possessed a prodigious memory. Al-Suyūṭī was trained in the Islamic sciences by the prominent teachers of the day, including some women who

taught him the science of *hadīth*. In 1463, he inherited his father's position as a jurist and law teacher and his fame quickly spread outside Egypt. He retired from public life in 1486 due to tensions with the rulers and his disdain of widespread corruption. In 1501, he shunned public life and retreated to his house where he dedicated his time to editing his own works until his death on October 17, 1505.

SINAN ANTOON

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## SWINBURNE, ALGERNON C.

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1837–1909

English poet, dramatist, and critic

### *Lesbia Brandon*

Swinburne's incomplete novel survives in fragmented form. It is impossible to reconstruct the exact details of the plot from the various chapters and detached passages that remain. The poet, having begun it in the mid-1860s, had intended to finish and publish it at various stages

in the 1870s. But it seems that his friend Theodore Watts, later Watts-Dunton, did what he could to prevent this, including losing parts of it and muddling the script. The volume was first made available only in 1952 in an edition by Randolph Hughes (who gave it its title). *Lesbia Brandon* explores some of Swinburne's consistent preoccupations including the sea and sea swimming, and the death of the desired and beautiful. It also touches on radical Italian politics. But central to *Lesbia Brandon's* energies is

sadomasochism, in particular the relations between sexual desire and flogging. In this it testifies to Swinburne's relatively new enthusiasm for the works of the Marquis de Sade to whom Swinburne pays the tribute of imitation not least by titling chapter XIV "Les Malheurs de la Vertu," the subtitle of the version of de Sade's *Justine* published in 1791.

*Lesbia Brandon* begins with the childhood story of Herbert Seyton who, perhaps, articulates some of Swinburne's own feelings as a young boy at Eton. Seyton, after his father's death, is taken to live with his sister, Margaret, and Lord Wariston, her husband, at a house named Ensdon, a place of "stately recluse beauty" (195). There, he takes pleasure in sea swimming, and his enchantment with the sea's dangers marks the beginning of the sadomasochistic discourse of the novel. For him, the sea is both beautiful woman and vicious animal, and Seyton's passionate engagement with it prompts the most memorable sexualized lyricism of the novel. The knowledge [of] how many lives went yearly to feed with blood the lovely lips of the sea-furies who had such songs and smiles for summer, and for winter the teeth and throats of ravening wolves or snakes untameable, the hard heavy hands that beat out their bruised life from sinking bodies of men, gave point to his pleasure and a sheathed edge of cruel sympathy to his love (198).

Seyton's private delights, the religious intensity of which make him a "small satisfied pagan" (199), are soon disturbed by the arrival of a new tutor, Mr. Denham. Denham is appointed to improve Bertie's chances of succeeding at school. But training the "crude mind" necessitates, his new instructor believes, the disciplining of the "vile body" (200).

Swinburne's own interest in the sexual pleasures of flogging began at Eton. In *Lesbia Brandon*, the flogging scenes—both regular and motivated by the least transgression—include a particularly brutal occasion when Denham beats his pupil while still dripping wet from the sea. The motivation for "swishing" Bertie increases as Denham vents his frustration for his growing, unrequited passion for Margaret by viciously beating her brother, and this enables new combinations of the language of pain, hatred, and sexual yearning. Throughout, Bertie's sense of what is admirable masculinity becomes associated with the acceptance of being beaten,

though he admonishes himself for his failure to be indifferent to it. Swinburne adds what appears to be a brief incest theme to the novel's presentation of dissenting sexuality as, in chapter III, Bertie and Margaret kiss ardently, leaving Bertie to dream "passionately of his passion till he woke" (265). Jean Fuller suggested that one of Swinburne's original intentions for the novel was to sustain the incest plot, having Bertie, in the end, kill himself for love.

The character of Lesbia Brandon, "poetess and pagan" (350), is introduced late in the surviving novel. The beautiful daughter of Sir Charles Brandon, she falls in love with Margaret while Bertie falls in love with her (she turns out to be Denham's half-sister). Her self-inflicted death from poison precipitates a new configuration of contrary feelings that look forward to the violently oscillating emotional world of D.H. Lawrence. Bertie, seeing her on her deathbed, "felt a cruel impersonal displeasure, compound of fear and pain, in the study of her last symptoms. Then by way of reaction came a warm sudden reflux of tenderness" (347). Rooksby (1997) proposed that the death of Lesbia reflected Swinburne's memories of the final illness of his favorite sister, Edith. The generically and stylistically composite nature of *Lesbia Brandon* means that it includes various songs and ballads. Rooksby (1997) referred to it as "like a mad tea-party story told in turn by Jane Austen, Emily Brontë, an Eton schoolboy and an anthologist of Northumberland border ballads" (101).

### Biography

Algernon Charles Swinburne was born in London into a distinguished family. Taught first by his mother, he entered Eton and Balliol College Oxford, though was sent down from the former and briefly rusticated from the latter. He left Oxford without a degree. His first published work was dramatic (1860) but he attained prominence with the controversial *Poems and Ballads* (1866), reflecting his interest in the Marquis de Sade, to whose work he had been introduced in 1862, and in paganism. *A Song of Italy* (1867) and *Songs before Sunrise* (1871) arose from his life long commitment to radical politics that led to an enthusiasm for Blake. Swinburne was a prolific writer, and in his later years he continued to publish extensively,



## SZÛ-MA HSIANG-JU

though critical preference remains in favor of the earlier work. His *oeuvre* includes many volumes of poetry, essays, translations, criticism, and two novels: *A Year's Letters* (1877) and the unfinished *Lesbia Brandon* begun in the early 1860s. Swinburne died in Putney and was buried at Bonchurch on the Isle of Wight.

FRANCIS O'GORMAN

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## SZÛ-MA HSIANG-JU

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d. 117 BCE  
Chinese poet

Szû-ma Hsiang-ju has traditionally been regarded as the greatest exponent of the *fu* or rhapsody. The rhapsody, an essay marked by the use of rhyme and meter, is an intermediate literary form between poetry and prose. During the Han dynasty (206 BCE–220 CE) this was an extremely popular court literary form, and many rhapsodies were commissioned by royal or imperial patrons. Rhapsodies were intended to entertain the reader with the rich and beautiful language used, and often described scenes of great luxury and exoticism. Szû-ma Hsiang-ju's work was noted for the elements of fantasy that he liked to incorporate. His rhapsodies were marked by the use of lists, cumulatively conjuring up impressions of sensual pleasure and

physical beauty. Rhapsodies were traditionally supposed to contain a critical element, for they were thought to be a good means of advising rulers and directing them away from dangerous pleasures. This was a comparatively minor part of Szû-ma Hsiang-ju's work, perhaps because so many of his rhapsodies were commissioned by members of the imperial family.

According to the catalogue of the Han Imperial library, Szû-ma Hsiang-ju wrote twenty-nine rhapsodies. Six of these survive as more or less complete works. Three more survive in a handful of quotations. Of these surviving pieces, four are of unquestioned authenticity, since they were included in Szû-ma Hsiang-ju's official biography in the Han dynastic history. These are the *Tz'u-hsü fu* [*Rhapsody of Master Empty*], and its companion piece *Shanglin fu* (*Rhapsody of Shanglin Imperial Park*), which was presented

to the emperor in 138 BCE. Also of unquestioned authenticity are the *Ai Ch'in Erh-shih fu* [*Rhapsody in Mourning for the Second Emperor of Ch'in*] and the *Da-jen fu* [*Rhapsody of the Great Man*]. Of more dubious authenticity are Ssu-ma Hsiang-ju's two erotic works: the *Mei-jen fu* [*Rhapsody of Beautiful Women*] and the *Ch'ang-men fu* [*Rhapsody of the Tall Gates*]. Both were to prove highly influential in traditional Chinese erotic literature. The three fragmentary surviving rhapsodies are the *Li fu* [*Rhapsody of the Pear Tree*], *Yu-tsu fu* [*Rhapsody of Salt Fish*] and *Hsin-tong shan fu* [*Rhapsody of Camphor Mountain*]. Too little survives of these works to be able to guess the subject. Szû-ma Hsiang-ju was also credited with the composition of a short love-song, describing the mating of phoenixes, with which he was said to have wooed Cho Wen-chü;n. This musical seduction inspired a key scene in the famous erotic play, the *Hsi-hsiang-chi* [*Romance of the West Wing*].

Traditional scholarship on Szû-ma Hsiang-ju's rhapsodies focused on trying to relate these works with events in his life, or with specific historical individuals. The *Mei-jen fu* described in lyrical terms how an attractive and handsome young man resisted all attempts by a series of beautiful women to seduce him. This rhapsody was frequently said to be autobiographical, although some scholars have suggested that this rhapsody should be understood as about Szû-ma Hsiang-ju (a famously good-looking man) rather than by him. According to tradition, when Szû-ma Hsiang-ju arrived at the court of the king of Liang, one of the other court poets accused him of licentiousness. Szû-ma Hsiang-ju was said to have written this poem to exculpate himself. At the culmination of the rhapsody, one woman approached the poet naked, and her beauty was lyrically described. Although some translations suggest that the couple end up making love, this rhapsody was in fact about sexual continence. The *Mei-jen fu* has other counterparts in traditional Chinese literature, and a number of Han dynasty poets wrote verse on the theme of sexual continence, most famously the *Teng t'u-tz'u hao-se fu* [*Rhapsody of Master Teng-t'u, the Lecher*] by Song Yü; (fl. 3rd century BCE). In this witty rhapsody a handsome young man accused of licentious behavior points out that he has resisted all attempts by his neighbor's beautiful daughter to seduce him,

while his accuser has a disgustingly unattractive wife with whom he has had many children.

The *Ch'ang-men fu* was supposedly commissioned by Empress Ch'en, the neglected wife of the Han emperor Wu-ti. Some scholars have doubted the story of the commission, which is given in a separate introductory paragraph, but regard the rhapsody itself as genuine. This rhapsody described in great detail the emotions of the neglected wife, and her sexual frustration. This rhapsody was highly unusual, if not unique in Han dynasty literature, in its portrayal of female sexuality. Subsequently the *Ch'ang-men fu* was to prove enormously influential, as many later poets were drawn to the theme of the loyal and loving abandoned wife, pondering her bleak life as her husband enjoys himself with a new favorite. Although only two of Szû-ma Hsiang-ju's works contained a significant exploration of erotic themes, but both were important and influential literary works, which inspired numerous later Chinese poets.

### Biography

Szû-ma Hsiang-ju was born in Ch'eng-tu, the capital of Shu (Szechuan province) in western China in approximately 179 BCE. During the reign of the Han emperor Ching-ti (r. 157–141 BCE), Szû-ma Hsiang-ju held a minor court appointment but did not find favor with the emperor, therefore he accepted an appointment with Liu Wu, King of Liang (r. 168–143 BCE). The king of Liang was a great patron of the arts, particularly poetry. During his stay in Liang, Szû-ma Hsiang-ju wrote the earliest of his surviving works. When the king died, Szû-ma Hsiang-ju returned to Szechuan, where he met and eloped with a young widow, Cho Wen-chü;n, the daughter of one of China's wealthiest men. They lived in great poverty until Cho Wen-chü;n was reconciled with her father. Szû-ma Hsiang-ju was employed as an official by the Han emperor Wu-ti (r. 141–187 BCE), and played a crucial role in promoting the acceptance of Chinese rule in Szechuan. The emperor also periodically commissioned poetic works from him. Thanks to his wife's wealth, from 130–120 Szû-ma Hsiang-ju was able to concentrate on his poetry. Szû-ma Hsiang-ju retired in 119, and went to live in Mao-ling outside

## SZÛ-MA HSIANG-JU

the Han capital Ch'ang-an, where he died in 117 BCE.

OLIVIA MILBURN

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## TABOOS

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The term “taboo” entered Western culture in 1777 when the English explorer Captain James Cook encountered and appropriated the Tongan word *tabu*. *Tabu* is one variation of a word found throughout Oceanic languages; another form, occurring in Maori and Polynesian, is *tapu*. Deriving from *ta*, “to mark,” and *pu*, an adverb of intensity, *tabu* literally means “very marked” as in “very marked off” or set apart. In its original context *tabu* and its equivalents describe a complex system of ritual, superstition, and social restriction.

In the West “taboo” has come to signify those things or acts which are forbidden through social or religious prohibition and the threat of punishment. During the 20th century, “taboo” was extended to often offensive or obscene words, expressions, or topics. A “taboo word” or “taboo topic” is one which should not be used or spoken of in social intercourse.

By separating that which is allowed from that which is not, taboos mark a boundary between the socially allowed and the socially prohibited. Taboos are the strongest inhibitions which a culture imposes on itself in order to guarantee its own survival; they protect and maintain the

complex framework of regulation and division upon which civilization depends. Although most taboos are culturally or historically specific (and constructed), many regard the two oldest and most universal taboos: incest and murder. The fact that these acts are universally prohibited illustrates that taboos refer to the basic codes of civilization and to what humanity most fears and abhors. As such, “taboo” carries a more powerful sense of the forbidden than, for example, “unlawful.” However, if taboos represent prohibition and fear, then it is also important to note that these feared acts are often accompanied by desire for that which is forbidden—after all, there is no need to forbid acts which no one wishes to perform, only those which are somehow desired. As domains where the feared and/or socially unacceptable often meet desire and fascination, sexual behavior and eroticism are principal sites where the interplay between taboo and transgression occurs.

Taboo’s powerful associations derive from its original location at the boundary between human culture and more potent, universal forces. Oceanic religion regarded both the sacred, pure world of Gods, idols, tribal chiefs,

## TABOOS

and priests, as well as the unclean or impure (e.g., menses and decaying bodies) as powerful and potentially dangerous to society. Based on the belief that such danger was contagious and could be transferred to others, taboos served to segregate these sources of “contagion” from the profane realm of human society. Thus taboos surrounded the clothing and sleeping places of menstruating women as much as tribal chiefs, sacred icons, and priests. In this way it is important to note that taboos existed to protect the inviolability of the sacred as much as to protect ordinary people *from* the power of the sacred.

Despite their power, at specific times (such as during festivals) taboos could be freely broken. As a general rule, however, to break a taboo meant (and indeed means) punishment. The punishment depended on the taboo which had been violated: sometimes ritual atonement was possible. If atonement was not possible, the risk to society posed by the defiled and now “contagious” transgressor could be nullified only by his or her execution.

The study of taboos in “primitive” societies formed a major part of 19th-century, Western discussions concerning the origin of religion and civilization. European anthropologists collected and listed thousands of “primitive” taboos as examples of how early spirituality affected early social existence. These studies often used taboos to discuss primitive concepts of the sacred. Because taboos protected against both the pure and the impure, primitive religions were seen as lacking any distinction between the holy and the dangerous. Influenced by contemporary evolutionary theory, such discussions usually posed Christianity—in which the sacred refers only to purity—as a more “evolved” form of religion.

Influenced by these earlier discussions, Sir James Frazer’s *The Golden Bough, Part 2: Taboo and the Perils of the Soul* (1911) provides a seminal study of the topic. Frazer shows how all “primitive” societies throughout history have relied on temporary or permanent taboos. Comparing and contrasting different taboos from various societies, he illustrated how taboos regulated all aspects of traditional culture and life events, including birth, sexual behavior, and death—and (among other things) eating, clothing, worship, property, hunting, warfare, knotting, and naming.

The 20th century saw a change in the perception of taboos and their transgression. It became clear that as much as taboos regulated “primitive” societies, taboos remained central to modern culture. Just as “primitive” civilizations depended on them, so taboos maintained a framework of restriction within and around modern civilization. Discussions of taboo shifted to illustrate the similarities, rather than the differences, between the “primitive” and the modern. The most influential 20th-century analyses of taboos presented them as social creations (no longer as religious prohibitions) vital to the functioning of civilization.

Sigmund Freud’s influential *Totem and Tabu* (1913) suggests that taboos prohibit acts which are unconsciously desired. Freud identified the desire to perform murder and incest as intrinsic to human nature and traces these desires back to his theory of the Oedipus complex.

In 1957, the French erotic writer Georges Bataille, whose fiction describes murder, incest, necrophilia, and other taboo acts, published *L’Érotisme [Eroticism]*. *L’Érotisme* is an exploration of human history in which equal importance is ascribed to both taboos and their transgression. According to Bataille, civilization depends upon taboos because they protect society from mankind’s primal, violent urges. However, just as civilization depends on taboos, so taboos cannot exist without their transgression. Thus, for Bataille, taboos, civilization, and transgression are mutually dependent forces.

Another influential text, Mary Douglas’s *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (1966), aligns human civilization with order; an order rigidly enforced and emphasized by social divisions such as within and without, male and female, right and wrong. Opposed to this order, dirt, decay, and unregulated sexual activity represent disorder. As much as “primitive” man, modern man perceives disorder—that which is outside the socially ordained, allowed, and “civilized,” and therefore taboo—as dangerous, contagious, and threatening.

Emerging from all previous writing on taboo, however, is the recurrent motif of realization that throughout history, as much as humanity has erected taboos, so too has it been, and continues to be, drawn by desire and fascination toward that which taboos prohibit.

BEN JACOB

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## TANG YIN

1424–1524

Chinese scholar and poet

### *The Ocean of Inequities of Monks and Nuns*

The book called in Chinese *Sengni niehai* is a compilation of stories about the sexual misdemeanor of Buddhist monks and nuns—most in classical Chinese language, some in colloquial, and others in a mixed style. Sources have been identified for almost half of them, and the tales are sometimes copied verbatim. The anthology must have been published between 1618 and 1631, the earlier date found in one of the stories and the later one in another work mentioning this title. It survived in two incomplete manuscripts and one print in Japan's library entitled *Saeki bunko*. These slightly different copies amount to 36 monks' stories, besides the appendix, with 11 for the nuns.

Some stories end with more humorous than moral comments. Though there is no homogeneous style to speak of, the work seems to be of erotic import and often jocular, rather than a castigation of Buddhist clerics. For example, the very first story, about the Tanxian affair of mid-sixteenth century, in which Queen Hu was "compelled by her licentiousness and lust to do things repellent to even the most lewd women

and prostitutes," concludes: "According to the karmic retribution, if a person thinks of the Buddha at the time of death, he can cross over to the other bank to Nirvana's shores. But if his mind is on animal lust, then he sinks to the rebirth wheel. Since Queen Hu had sown many good seeds of enlightenment, both in life and after death, she must have been thinking about Buddha all the time. So she must have been reborn as a happy and carefree monk."

Whether practiced by widows, nuns, or monks, celibacy is portrayed as pretense, for sexual urge cannot be contained: such is the axiomatic truth to be found in every tale. And the longer the urge is restricted, the wilder it eventually bursts out. Women, religious or not, even procuresses, are usually indulged more than monks, who are often condemned to death when hidden affairs, discovered, turn into judicial cases. The second tale about monks, the longest one, offers, besides many others explicit sights, an uncommon one in Chinese erotica: "With two young monks sitting [on] either side, she looked to her right and left and could hardly control herself. She let the two monks make love to her, her one vagina accommodating two penises" (Levy and Yang: 27). Deflowered by a monk, the girl is later married to an unknowing husband.

## TAXIL, LÉO

The fifth tale is a brief account of the strange case of a bisexual nun who is condemned to death. The sixth nuns' tale consists of a few lines introducing three satirical poems about girls leaving their religious state in order to get married. In fact, the first two stories are the only ones with sophisticated plots.

Such a collection of tales hardly amounts to an anticlerical tract. It should be noted that the anthology called *Jingu qiguan*, published less than a decade later, did not retain any of the monks' few judicial cases of its sources. One of the earlier stories, "The Stolen Slippers," has been translated several times. Tales based on judicial cases of the judge Bao Zheng (999–1062) or other clever judges, quite popular in the sixteenth century, would yield many more topics on brutal monks or lewd nuns.

### Biography

Tang Yin cannot be the author of this work, as it contains several pieces dated or referring to events more than half a century following his death. His erratic career as a scholar, painter, and poet created a legendary aura of a figure overindulging in wine and women. A favorite in popular literature, he became the main character of the *Romance of Three Smiles* [*Sanxiao yinyuan*], which copies the plot of a play written several centuries earlier.

ANDRÉ LÉVY

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# TAXIL, LÉO

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1854–1907

French polemicist and hoaxer

Although Taxil has often been described as a pornographer, he preferred salacious innuendo and imputation to graphic description and always claimed to be serving the interests of morality. His innumerable anticlerical works draw on the shocking juxtaposition of religion and

sex, in the tradition of Gothic fiction and sensational melodrama. His absurd *Amours de Pie XI* [*Love Life of Pius XI*] (serialized 1881) portrayed the recently deceased pontiff as an indefatigable womanizer who would stop at nothing, including abduction and torture, to procure a tasty virgin. The book version (1884) was attributed to an ex-papal chamberlain and provoked a lawsuit instituted by the pope's heir. Taxil was hit with

a fine of 60,000 francs and a beating by a *Le Figaro* reporter on whom he had tried to pin the real authorship.

The unending proliferation of Taxil's libels was enabled by recycling his own and others' work, at the risk of being labeled a plagiarist. *Les Livres secrets des confesseurs* (1883) is simply a reprint of a number of manuals for parish priests and seminarians, excerpting those chapters on questions of sex, chastity, and conjugal relations. Defending his infringement of copyright in the interests of the public welfare, Taxil declared that state-subsidized seminaries are breeding grounds for lust and that these manuals, put into the hands of susceptible young celibates, lead them in turn to seduce the working-class women who flock to their confessionals. *Lettres d'un Ignoratin à son élève* is a somewhat expurgated reissue of the much-circulated pornographic *Lettres amoureuses d'un frère à son élève* (1878), in which an ecclesiastic tries to win over his pupil to sodomy.

One of Taxil's non-anticlerical treatises on sex was *La Prostitution contemporaine. Étude d'une question sociale* (1883–84). This massive work conflated earlier publications of physicians and police inspectors, mingling statistics and municipal ordinances with lurid anecdotes. It introduced a mass public to such recondite topics as "labial and anal masturbation" and the eccentric brothel patron who wanted a burning omelette dropped onto his belly. The next year Taxil was sentenced to a 2,000-franc fine and a fortnight in prison for the alleged obscenity of three of the work's engraved illustrations of perversions (necrophilia, pederastic foot fetishism, and brothel lesbianism). As usual, to raise money to pay his fines, Taxil brazenly published the trial proceedings. In 1891, he updated the work as *La Corruption fin-de-siècle*, with even greater emphasis on homosexuality.

### Biography

Born Gabriel-Antoine Jogand-Pagès in Marseilles, March 21, son of a devout Catholic businessman. Molested by a priest at a Jesuit academy; ran away; was apprehended and placed in a rural borstal. At 16, working on a newspaper, changed his name to Léo Taxil. Run out of Geneva, 1875, for peddling aphrodisiac bonbons. Moved to Paris, where in 1879 he founded *L'Anti-clérical*,

a weekly whose popularity prompted him to publish a spate of vitriolic screeds against the Catholic Church, the clergy, and the pope, bringing him excommunication and several lawsuits for outrage to religion and defamation of character. Legal costs and growing competition forced his publishing house into bankruptcy. To recoup his losses, he returned to the Church, overwhelming his confessor with trumped-up "facts" about his part in a murder. Delighted to have such a notorious convert, the Church paid his debts and set him up as a dealer in pious, anti-republican, and, especially, anti-Masonic works. From 1885, Taxil's ferocious "exposés" of Freemasonry earned him a small fortune and celebrity in religious circles. Under the name Dr. Bataille, 1892–95, Taxil issued a series of attacks on spiritism, *Le Diable au XIXème siècle*, which purported to reveal a secret, devil-worshipping Masonic order called the Palladium. At a public meeting in Paris on April 17, 1897, Taxil confessed that his anti-Masonic polemics of the past twelve years had been a tissue of fabrications, invented to embarrass the Catholic Church. Thereafter, served as copy editor in the government printing office, republished some of his anticlerical works, and churned out racy novelettes; his exposés were now directed at adulterated groceries. Died Paris.

LAURENCE SENELICK

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## TEMPLE D'APOLLON, LE

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## TEMPLE D'APOLLON, LE

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Seventeenth-century French collection

*Le temple d'Apollon* occupies a minor place among the libertine collections that flourished in France during the first quarter of the 17th century. In fact, the collection does not properly belong to this genre, for it contains numerous non-erotic poems, including conventional amorous sonnets, occasional verses addressed to the king, and funereal consolations. Nevertheless, the collection also contains a certain proportion of bawdy poems. This means that although it is not part of the libertine collections, the work partakes of the general permissive spirit that allows for their publication. In fact, during the reign of Henri IV, then in the regency of Marie de Médicis, and in the first years of the reign of Louis XIII, censorship displayed a relative tolerance. It was a time during which the young nobility was able to brandish its atheism, to frequent cabarets, and to celebrate carnal bliss. In such a context of loose morals, important sensual literature made its appearance, including *Le temple d'Apollon*.

The foreword to the book purports, as is often the case with this type of preamble, that it presents only new material. This is only a half-truth: *Le temple d'Apollon* comprises two

volumes, but the second is a collection of four compilations previously published (from 1597 to 1600) by the same printer, Raphaël du Petit Val, of Rouen. One supposes that with this work of 1611 he was intent, in part, to profit handsomely from a commercial affair, for half of the collection is only a disguised reissue. However, the first volume does contain a certain number of previously unpublished poems, or at least poems that have never appeared in earlier collections published by Raphaël du Petit Val.

Among the new authors, one finds in particular François de Malherbe (1555–1628), the Court's official poet, the initiator of French classicism, and writer of religious poetry, but also known in private for his libertinage (his friends called him "Father Lewdness") and his erotic writings. Jean Bertaut (1552–1611), the king's secretary, first almoner of the queen, Marie de Médicis, also distinguishes himself by his 27 poems. Jean Bertaut was appreciated in his time for his love verse, and *Le Temple d'Apollon* contains, among others, a poem narrating the origin of Hermaphrodite, emblem of perfect love. It is also important to note that about a quarter of the poems published in this first volume are anonymous. Anonymity was a common practice in the collections of the time, especially

in the satirical collections, and points to the growing importance the author's figure took with regard to the judicial institutions and moral norms. The disappearance of the author's name testifies to the increased risk linked with the production of erotic writings.

Eroticism as presented in *Le temple d'Apollon* is opposed to the rules acknowledged and imposed by society. Above all, eroticism seeks to manifest blasphemy with a maximum of presence, by shocking our proprieties. For example, one poem opposes honor, which is considered a simple, inconsequential word in comparison with the reality of the flesh. Honor is but an arbitrary convention whose effects are terrible: shame creeps in, consumes woman, and wastes her youth. The different ages of woman constitute an object of preoccupation for the poets of this compilation, asking which woman is most suited for love: the virgin, the mature woman, or the widow, thus echoing Brantôme's fourth discourse in *Les dames galantes* [*Lives of Fair and Gallant Ladies*]. Generally, they incline toward the virgin, whose fire still burns and who is therefore the most fitted to awaken desire. To initiate the young girl to sensual pleasures is held by man to be an incomparable privilege. Thus defloration constitutes a recurrent fantasy. However, contrary to modern eroticism, which usually shows hatred of childbirth and babies, some poems of *Le temple d'Apollon* describe pregnancy as a natural and estimable result of the sexual act. The pleasure to reach maturity follows the pleasure of knowing a man for the first time: "Non, vous nous direz la belle, / Le bon soir d'une pucelle, / Et demain au point du jour / D'une femme le bon jour" [Nay, you will bid us, fair one / The goodnight of a maiden / And tomorrow at dawn / You will greet us as a woman] (vol. 1: 246).

Men-women relations presented in this work are fairly balanced between the sexes: most of the time, man displays roughly his desire, but the sexual act itself reveals mutual respect. In this sense, a long comparison between love and music is the occasion to show one lover resting while the other continues to play the piece. Like music, sexuality is based upon a perfect harmony, of which each note is made of a "blow": "Je sçay qu'à divers coups se forme l'harmonie, / Et naist de la parole un doux contentement, / Et sçay qu'encore il faut pour l'accomplissement, / Qu'on employe deux corps à la rendre fournie"

[I know that many blows shape harmony / And that from speech arises sweet comfort / And I know that for its completion it takes / Two bodies to make it plentiful]. Here, two characteristics of the libertine *ars erotica* are worthy of notice. First, the inexhaustible energy. In the same poem, the lover declares: "Souvent passe le jour sans que j'aye cessé, / De pousser, d'entonner, de monter, et de descendre. / Je suis d'un naturel qui travaille et endure" [Often the day goes by without seeing me cease / From pushing, striking up, going up and down. / I have a patient and industrious disposition]. The stamina of the libertine lover is in proportion to the intensity of his desire. The other noticeable element is the fundamental value attributed to dynamism in the course of sexual coupling. For this reason, French erotic poetry from the beginning of the 17th century, following that of the 16th century, distinguished itself from that of Pietro Aretino (*I Sonetti lussuriosi* [*Lascivious Sonnets*]) by the fact that it does not have recourse to the figure of the positions (*posizioni*). The tradition founded by Aretino shapes the carnal act according to predetermined postures, or at least it gives preference to the bodies' precise disposition in space in order to describe the lovers. On the contrary, in the libertine *ars erotica* of the beginning of the 17th century, the body's gestures and spatialization is subordinate to the synthetic power of movement. It seems that agitation abstracts and incorporates the entire body. Thus the sexual act is described using verbs that, above all, denote animation: "Et qu'au retour de l'Aurore / Soyez fretillans encore / Que les premiers esveillez / Vous trouvent enfretillez" [And upon Aurora's return may you / Be still quivering / So that those first awake / May find you quivery] (vol. 1: 248).

DAVID DORAIS

### Editions

*Le Temple d'Apollon ou nouveau recueil des plus excellens vers de ce temps*. Rouen: L'Imprimerie de Raphaël du Petit Val, Libraire et Imprimeur du Roy, 1611.

### Further Reading

Few serious works have been written about French erotic poetry of the 17th century. The best reference is still the voluminous work of Frédéric Lachèvre, *Le Libertinage au XVIIe siècle*, 15 vols., 1909–1928, Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1968.

## TENCIN, CLAUDINE

The following two works deal directly with the subject but are of little interest:

Bougard, Roger G. *Érotisme et amour physique dans la littérature française du XVIIe siècle*. Paris: Gaston Lachurié, 1986.

Loude, Michel. *La Littérature érotique et libertine au XVIIe siècle*. Lyon: Aléas, 1994.

These two articles are valuable for the background information they provide:

Houdard, Sophie. "Vie de scandale et écriture de l'obscène: Hypothèses sur le libertinage de mœurs au XVIIe siècle." *Tangence* 66 (2001): 48–66.

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# TENCIN, CLAUDINE

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1682–1749

French novelist and *salonnière*

Inevitably associated with the excesses of the Regency, Claudine Tencin was known for her audacious affairs with the elite of Paris, her central role in literary salons of the early eighteenth century, and, finally, her novels.

At the age of eight, Claudine Tencin was sent to a convent, where, by all accounts, she was miserable. Even before being compelled by her father to take her vows, she made it clear that she wished only to be relieved of them. After her father's death, she left the convent, had her vows annulled, and made her way to Paris, where she entered public life as Madame de Tencin. She immediately earned renown as the mistress to a long succession of some of the most powerful men in Paris, including Philippe d'Orléans, Richelieu, Cardinal Dubois, and Lord Bolingbroke, to name only a few. Her liaison with the Duc d'Orléans was short lived: it was widely reported that he disliked her habit of talking politics in bed. She mingled with the literati at Mme de Lambert's salon and after Lambert's death, hosted one of the most important salons of the day, with regulars including Montesquieu, Fontenelle, Helvétius, Madame du Châtelet, and Marivaux.

The most scandalous of the many episodes of her Paris life occurred in 1726 when one of her estranged lovers shot himself in Tencin's house. The day before, he had given his solicitor a letter to be read in the event of his untimely death, accusing Tencin of wishing to assassinate him.

She was arrested, then transferred to the Bastille, where she remained for several months, until she was finally acquitted. She emerged from prison the notorious subject of gossip and calumnious songs and verse.

After her acquittal, she focused her attention on salon life and, at the same time, quietly began writing novels. She published her first and best-known novel anonymously in 1735, *Les mémoires du comte de Comminge*. After the relative success of her first novel, she wrote and published two more. Surprisingly, perhaps, her novels offer little of the worldliness, vulgar language, and sexual improprieties for which she was notorious. On the contrary, the tales were praised for their unflinchingly virtuous women and duty-bound men. Her novels all treat similar themes: mistaken identity, paternal authority, forced vows, the conflict between love and duty, and the improbability of consummating true love.

Written in the popular tradition of the first-person memoir novel, *Les mémoires du comte de Comminge* was a literary success, reprinted in nearly twenty editions throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It is the story of the young comte de Comminge, who, traveling under a false name to recuperate documents that will restore his father's fortune, falls instantly in love with Adélaïde, the daughter of his father's rival. This *coup de foudre* [love at first sight] sets in motion a chain of events that perpetually keep the two apart. Adélaïde marries a cruel man she doesn't love; Comminge stabs him and flees to a monastery, where, several years later, the deathbed confession of a monk

reveals that a fellow monk at the monastery is, in reality, Adélaïde, who never stopped loving Comminge and had disguised herself as a man in order to be close to him. Adélaïde dies immediately after her unveiling, and Comminge retreats to a hermitage to mourn his twice lost love.

Set at the time of the Hundred Years' War, *Le siège de Calais* is a novel that opens with a seduction scene based on mistaken identity: the charming comte de Canaple, aided by a groggy valet, ends up in the wrong bed. He finds himself in the company of his friend's wife. The sleepy Mme de Granson does not realize until the next morning that the man in her bed was not her husband. Canaple has already retreated in haste, wracked with guilt at his act of betrayal. In spite of the passion Mme de Granson feels for Canaple, she acts with uncompromising virtue, offering him only a cold shoulder. In the end, many years, intrigues, and battles later, virtue is rewarded. The husband dies and Mme de Granson, disguised as a man, tries to be executed in the place of Canaple. Touched by the display, the queen intervenes and in the end Granson and Canaple marry.

Published two years before Tencin's death, *Les malheurs de l'amour* is the story of the thwarted love between Pauline and M. de Barbasan. Barbasan is sent to prison for his part in a duel and escapes by seducing the jailer's daughter. Meanwhile, out of duty, Pauline marries the upstanding Hacqueville; distressed at not being truly loved, he dies of grief. Barbasan then returns only to be mortally wounded while saving Pauline from an attacker.

Beginning with the Goncourt brothers in the nineteenth century, literary historians have been more concerned with Tencin's life than her works, recounting her biography as a libertine tale: multiple lovers, escape from a convent, murder, and prison. This emphasis on her sensational biography however, led to the invention of Tencin as a paradox: her legacy is one of a conniving, immoral woman who nevertheless created virtuous, dutiful characters. While ignoring Tencin's own novels, literary historians have compared her to two fictional characters: Suzanne Simonin, the recalcitrant nun in Diderot's *La Religieuse*, and Madame de Merteuil, the calculating libertine from Laclos's *Les liaisons dangereuses*. The very inclusion of Tencin in an encyclopedia of erotic literature is symptomatic of a persisting conflation of her life and texts.

The seduction scenes in her novels serve to promote fidelity and warn of the consequences of unchecked passion; the eroticism that fueled her public and private life is inevitably sublimated in her own literary creations. Perhaps the task still at hand today is the same task feminist critic Naomi Schor outlined for another woman writer, George Sand, whose scandalous life has often overshadowed her texts. For Schor, it is imperative "to devise a reading strategy" that will allow readers to "make sense of the fused texts of her fiction and her life" (183).

### Biography

Born in Grenoble, April 27. Sent to a convent at Montfleury, 1690; took vows in spite of her written, notarized protest, 1698; death of her father, Antoine de Tencin, in 1705, which allowed her to leave the convent, 1708; arrived in Paris and began a series of liaisons with some of the most powerful men in Paris, including the Duc d'Orléans, around 1710; official annulment of her vows, 1712; gave birth to and abandoned a son (Jean le Rond d'Alembert, the future editor of the *Encyclopédie*), 1717; imprisoned for the alleged murder of a lover, Charles de La Fresnaye, April 1726; acquitted, July; initiated her own salon, 1733; published her first novel, 1735; died at her home in Paris.

DIANE BERRETT BROWN

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# THAI EROTIC LITERATURE

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An overview of Thai literature available in English translation reveals a frank acknowledgment of the erotic throughout a variety of texts, ranging from the *Ramakien*, the ancient Thai epic based upon the *Ramayana*, to courtly poetry of the Ayutthaya period, to novels and short stories exploring the mores and ramifications of contemporary Thai life in both country and city. The rich heritage of the Hindu-based epics—such as the *Ramakien*—in conjunction with open acknowledgment by Theravadin Buddhism of desire (ideally to be mastered in order to avert suffering), provides a foundation for a literary use of the erotic remarkable for its integration into portrayals of complete lives. While works that present themselves as specifically erotic exist (*The Story of Jan Darra*, 1966, for example), they seem less remarkable given the way that many more mainstream novels and stories incorporate the erotic as a matter of course of everyday life.

Klaus Wenk traces the origins of Thai literature into the 13th century, though the Hindu epics and stories of Buddha's life predate the writings of the Sukhothai court. These provide the founding models for literary structures which inhere to this day. For most of its history, "literature" was the province of the court—kings often being noted and celebrated for their ability to compose elegant poetry. At the same time, there was a strong tradition of oral literature and visual art that frankly represented human—and divine—sexual desire. These gradually came to influence one another, first in the form of drama, and then, with the rise of literacy in the twentieth century, in fiction.

The *Ramakien*, an epic of kingship that involves petty jealousies, drives for revenge, fantastic battles, attempted rapes, presumed infidelities, and divine interventions, is richly erotic, though its eroticism is often more apparent in visual, theater, or dance representations than in the literal translations. The idyllic love of Rama and his consort Sita is disrupted when Ravana, a giant, kidnaps Sita because he desires her beauty. There follows a number of struggles and schemes to rescue Sita from Ravana's realm. Upon rescue, Sita insists on proving her fidelity to Rama through a test of fire, but even that is ultimately not enough to quell the jealousy in Rama's heart, and ultimately Shiva must intervene to reconcile the couple. The short story "Sita Extinguishes the Flames" by Sidaoru'ang (collected in *The Sergeant's Garland*) provides an excellent illustration of a reworking of a *Ramakien* episode into a tale of contemporary marital infidelity.

The themes of female chastity and male promiscuity (because of the woman's ravishing beauty) persist throughout the courtly poetry of the 15th–18th centuries. Unlike courtly love poetry of the West, Thai poetry of this period is marked by far more overt willingness to discuss sexual desire without coding it in complex symbolic systems, as suggested by, for example, "The Boat Song in Praise of Copulation" cited by Wenk.

Much of the literature of the Ayutthaya kingdom was lost when the Burmese sacked the capital in 1767. With the relocation of the capital to Bangkok and the foundation of the Chakri

dynasty in the 1780s, Thai literature revived. Rama I, the first Chakri king, wrote (or had written) a new text of the *Ramakien*. Under the Westernizing influences of King Mongkut (Rama IV) and King Chulalongkorn (Rama V), public literacy became a high priority. At the turn of the 20th century, Western novels became available to Thai intellectuals, and these in turn served as models for the generations of writers that followed.

A relatively early Thai novel, *The Prostitute* (1937) by Kanha Surangkhanang, surprised many at its publication in the late 1930s. Attacked as pornographic, the novel in fact sympathetically explores the fate of a beautiful young girl, Reun, from rural Thailand who is seduced to Bangkok and then abandoned in a brothel. There she falls in love with Khun Wit, a young man of good family who, despite his feelings for her, abandons her, unaware that she is carrying his child. She and her fellow prostitute, Samorn, set up housekeeping, with Samorn continuing to work in the sex industry while Reun keeps house and raises the child. This portrait of female friendship and support is rich in love, if not sexualized, and adds an erotic dimension to what would otherwise be a novel of despair. Predictably, their fortunes sour. Samorn dies and Reun is forced back into prostitution, where she reconnects with Wit shortly before she herself dies. Khun Wit, a typical—if generally more decent—young man exploring his sexuality before marriage, is nonetheless also an ethical character and accepts responsibility for his daughter.

Surangkhanang frames the novel with two men who meet on a train and speak slightly of Wit's early attachment to Reun, thus counterpointing the difference between male and female attitudes toward erotic relationships. Men, in general, are simply more casual about such relationships, and women are left to pay a high price for male promiscuity. This theme can be observed in many works, including *Snakes* (1984) by Wimon Sainimnuan and the story of the prostitute in M.R. Kukrit Pramoj's *Many Lives* (1954). Novels that deal with the historical periods of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including *Four Reigns* (1953) by Kukrit Pramoj, candidly deal with the practices of multiple wives and husbandly infidelity. Pramoj's heroine, Phloi, is adjured by her mother not to accept the role of a minor wife, and early on has her

heart broken by an attractive young man who pledges himself to her but then marries someone else.

Utsana Phleugntham's *The Story of Jan Darra* treats male sexuality and the desirability of women with almost salacious candor. The novel details the diverse sexual exploits of its hero, Jan, including most notoriously his liaisons with the mistresses and lovers of his own (presumed) father. The author himself advises in an introductory note: "This is the writer's first novel, and he must insist that his work of fiction is unsuitable for kids and most offensive to sanctimonious pricks." Told in the first person, the novel uses its overt eroticism to explore the development of character and to expose the complexity of power relationships within an aristocratic Thai household.

As almost a polar opposite, Chart Korbjitti's *The Judgment* (1981) pursues the fate of a young man, Fak, whom everyone in the village assumes is sleeping with his stepmother. Again, the people of the village, and the men in particular, make broad assumptions about male sexual behavior and the "easiness" of women which, in Fak's case, prove to be untrue. They make vulgar jokes, attempt to spy on Fak, and torment his stepmother. The villagers' hatred drives Fak to drink—and ultimately to his death.

Heterosexuality and the tensions between carnal desire and spiritual love provide the center of most eroticism in Thai literature. But that is not to say that homosexuality, passionate friendships, unrequited love, and idealized romance do not also appear. While much remains inaccessible to those who do not read Thai, there are a number of works in translation which give fine representations of the variety and power of the erotic in Thai literature and culture.

KEITH E. WELSH

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In Greek mythology, Thanatos is the personification of death, who bears away men's spirits when the threads of their lives have been cut by the Fates. He was portrayed in classical art not as the wizened or skeletal figure one might expect, but as a beautiful winged youth, bearing a sword and an extinguished torch. In the context of modern philosophy, *Thanatos* is a conceptual term, coined by Sigmund Freud in 1920 and used to describe the principle of death as a driving force of psychical and cultural life.

Thinking about Thanatos in relation to erotic literature raises an apparent paradox. Sexuality appears at first sight and in a "commonsense" understanding to be wholly in the service of the creation and preservation of life. However, as suggested by the unlikely image of death embodied in a virile Greek youth, the idea that mortality is inexorably linked to eroticism is deeply rooted and widely represented in our culture. Various causal relations have been posited to account for this link. Firstly, there is the fact that nonprocreative sexual intercourse, masturbation, and homosexuality are condemned as sins in Judeo-Christian discourses, creating a climate of guilt and mortal danger around the idea of pleasurable sex. Even those who have consciously rejected religious faith

cannot easily escape these deep-rooted cultural associations.

Pursuing different lines of inquiry, philosophers of transgression have drawn on the very dynamics of sexual excitement to account for its fatal overtones. Georges Bataille has posited that sexual rapture shares qualities with death, as both are states in which the integral boundaries of the self are transgressed and put into danger. In *The Accursed Share* he writes: "Anguish, which lays us open to annihilation and death, is always linked to eroticism; our sexual activity finally rivets us to the distressing image of death, and the knowledge of death deepens the abyss of eroticism."

More prosaically, it has been pointed out that the sexual act entails the exercising and exorcising of the initial motivating desire, the temporary exhaustion of the impulse which led to the act. The economy of sexual pleasure (at least of male sexual pleasure), with its energetic rhythms of buildup and discharge accounts, perhaps, for the equation of sexual release with the point of no return of mortality. The universality of this idea is encapsulated in such linguistic phenomena as the French euphemism for orgasm: "la petite mort" [the little death], a phrase which has been incorporated into most European languages.

The linking of sexuality and death is found in literature from the earliest times and persists as a motif in modern and postmodern writing. Many examples can be found in classical myth. Aphrodite, the goddess of love, is said to have sprung into being from the semen of a murdered man. Similarly, in Egyptian mythology, Isis, wife of the god of death, Osiris, gives birth to her son Horus after impregnating herself with the seed from her husband's corpse. While such myths can be read as being about the triumph of life over death, it is also possible to read them as foregrounding the very centrality of the ideational qualities of death in the erotic imagination.

It is possible to identify (though not always to dissociate completely) two ways of thinking about the fusion of desire and death. The first strand of thought posits that death is structurally intrinsic to sexuality or, to quote Shakespeare, that "Desire is Death" (Sonnet 147). The philosophical concept of the deathly insatiability of desire can be traced through the works of prominent thinkers such as Plato, Hegel, Schopenhauer, and Lacan. A comprehensive account of this idea and the texts it produces is found in Jonathan Dollimore's *Death, Desire and Loss in Western Culture* (1998). One literary trope which expresses the lack-driven quality of desire is that of idealized and impossible Romantic love, ending in death. The popular medieval myth of Tristan and Iseult provides a particularly apt illustration of the seamless collapse of the erotic and the thanatic in the love relationship. Unable to sate their desire for each other in life, the lovers must die in a consummatory *Liebestod* (love-death). The concept of the love-death, which continues to resonate in literature and art, suggests that death is the true *aim* of desire, as well as an escape from its sovereignty.

The second way in which the link between death and sexuality is commonly articulated is by means of fantasies, images, and practices in which death itself becomes a conscious object and/or necessary condition of sexual excitement. The aphrodisiac properties of death are testified to by Thom Gunn in his poem "In Time of Plague" (1992):

My thoughts are crowded with death  
and it draws so oddly on the sexual  
that I am confused  
confused to be attracted  
by, in effect, my own annihilation.

While considered rare and pathological in the medical sphere, extreme fantasies regarding death are relatively often represented in literature and, moreover, occur frequently in otherwise mainstream erotic and pornographic writing. A good example is found in Anaïs Nin's short story "The Woman on the Dunes," commissioned and written in the 1940s and published in the collection *Little Birds* (1979). The story contains an anecdote recounting a woman's encounter with a stranger, which takes place while she is standing in a crowded town square watching a public execution. As the condemned man's death grows nearer and tension mounts in the crowd, the woman feels herself being held and penetrated from behind by an unknown man she cannot even see. Nin exploits the juxtaposition of the two actions (the hanging/the sexual encounter), suggesting that what is particularly exciting about the proximity to death is precisely that it makes the living subject feel more alive. She writes: "[T]he pain of watching him was so great that it made this touch of flesh a relief, a human, warm, consoling thing," and, "As the condemned man was flung into space and death, the penis gave a great leap inside of her, gushing out its warm life." What is unspoken, however, in this description is the similarity of the two experiences, given that a hanged man's final sensation will be ejaculation in his moment of death (see *Erotic Asphyxiation*). Identification with the dying man, then, is implicit in this apparent celebration of life and pleasure.

Another literary figure which links death and sexuality is the "murder as sex" conceit. In Robert Browning's poem "Porphyria's Lover" (1836/1842), for example, the lover cannot bear to be separated from his adulterous mistress. He dreams of a lasting and deep consummation with the object of his desire. Finally, he settles upon a resolution:

That moment she was mine, mine fair  
Perfectly pure and good: I found  
A thing to do, and all her hair  
In one long yellow string I wound  
Three times her little throat around  
And strangled her.

The eroticism implicit in this poetic murder is neutralized by the Romantic conventions Browning deploys. His possessive killing of the lover is re-encoded as an act of love.



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Some poets have been less squeamish regarding their mapping of murder onto sex. Charles Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* [*The Flowers of Evil*] (1855) contains many explorations of this idea. One of the most striking, "A celle qui est trop gaie" [Against Her Levity], describes a fantasy of murderous wounding. The poet recounts his desire to create a new hole in his mistress's abdomen, more beautiful than her original sexual opening, into which he can inject his "venin" [venom]. This poetic fantasy of wounding suggests a metaphorical means of transforming sex into murder. This is particularly visible in the climactic image of ejaculation, in which the substance ejected is not life-giving sperm, but fatal poison.

A few texts exist in which the erotic frenzy of sexual murder is explicitly described. The final section of the Marquis de Sade's *Les 120 Journées de Sodome* [*The Hundred and Twenty Days of Sodom*] (1784–5), entitled "Les Passions meurtrières" [Murderous Passions], is devoted to the many varieties and configurations of eroticized killing. Typically, these killings are designed to juxtapose Eros and Thanatos for aesthetic effect, as in the following example, which conjoins maternity and murder, life-giving and death:

Un grand partisan de culs étrangle une mère en l'enculant; quand elle est morte, il la retourne et la fout en con. En déchargeant, il tue la fille sur le sein de la mère à coup de couteau dans le sein, puis il fout la fille en cul quoique morte [An amateur of arses strangles a mother while bugging her. When she is dead, he turns her over and fucks her in the cunt. While ejaculating, he kills the daughter on the mother's breast with a knife blow to the heart; then he buggers the daughter, even though she is dead].

For de Sade, destruction epitomizes the most erotic experience, as it confirms man's agency and power in the world. Moreover, for de Sade, murder is "natural," since, he argues, Nature herself carries out random creation and destruction of all of her creatures, with no guiding principle of morality.

As has been demonstrated above, expressions of the link between death and eroticism are not limited to one historical period or culture. However, an important moment in the conceptualization of this link, and one which demands specific attention, is the late nineteenth century, which marked the dawning of modernity in

Europe. The rise in clinic-based psychology at this time, coupled with the birth of the modern science of sexology, saw an increased interest in understanding and naming the varieties of sexual expression and dysfunction. The Enlightenment principles underpinning this project meant that sexuality was seen as a knowable and analyzable concept for the first time. However, significantly, this ambitious scientific project was also contemporaneous with pessimistic currents of thought such as degeneration theory and literary decadence, prevalent in England, Germany, France, and Italy at the end of the nineteenth century. In his philosophical work on *fin-de-siècle* European subjectivity, *The Decline of the West* (1918), Oswald Spengler describes a phenomenon that "suddenly emerges into the bright light of history," which he goes on to describe as "a metaphysical turn towards death."

The historical co-incidence of the Scientific Revolution and Decadent philosophy produced a certain strand of European writing about sexuality and death that blended both cultural influences. One of the most interesting example [s] of this kind of literature is Emile Zola's *La Bête humaine* (1889), which tells the story of Jacques Lantier, a young man who is troubled by an obsessive desire to kill any woman he finds sexually attractive. As a writer influenced by the scientific theories of heredity popular at the time, Zola presents this desire as a flaw inherited from a tainted bloodline. The story of Jacques Lantier approximates a case history of a lust murderer such as would be found in the works of Krafft-Ebing and other sexologists. However, as well as incorporating features of fashionable scientific discourse, Zola proposes in *La Bête humaine* an ambitious philosophy of masculine sexuality based on the proximity between sexual feeling and murderous aggressiveness.

Following Jacques's first sexual experience with the heroine, Séverine, he is amazed by the fact that he feels satisfied and does not experience the urge to kill her. Framing the question from Jacques's narrative point of view, Zola asks whether sex and death are psychically the same thing: "Depuis qu'il la possédait, la pensée du meurtre ne l'avait plus troublé. Était-ce donc que la possession physique contentait ce besoin de mort? Posséder, tuer, cela s'équivalait-il dans le fond sombre de la bête humaine?" [The thought of murder had not troubled him since he had possessed her. Could physical possession

satisfy that need for death? Possessing, killing: did they mean the same thing in the dark heart of the beast in man?] The novel pursues the theory that owing to deep-rooted, atavistic impulses, the male of the species is inclined to equate the aggression of sexual conquest with the absolute possession of destruction.

However, of the two terms—murder and sex—Zola’s protagonist ultimately prefers the former. The novel’s climax takes the form of Jacques’s murder of Séverine. In a gesture of passion, Séverine offers her bare throat to Jacques to be caressed. Unable to resist this incredible provocation, Jacques plunges his knife into her neck. The fact that Séverine hastens her own death in this way stands as Zola’s bitterly ironic comment on the fatal impossibility of passion between the sexes.

The flavor of these turn-of-the-century European writings, both theoretical and literary, would influence one of the most important and ambitious theories of death and sexuality to emerge in the twentieth century. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920), Freud postulated controversially that alongside the drive to survive, procreate, and flourish (Eros, or the life drive), there exists an apparently opposing principle, the death drive, or Thanatos. While the life drive seeks to decrease tension and to maintain the organism in a state of equilibrium (the pleasure principle), the death drive works in excess of this, seeking to return the subject to an originary state of nothingness, of radical absence. Drawing on Empedocles’s opposition between *φιλία* (love) and *νῆκος* (discord), Freud thus portrays psychological life as characterized by a constant struggle between two forces which battle for supremacy. When internalized, the death drive leads to a masochistic repetition of unpleasurable experiences and fantasies. When externalized, it manifests as aggression.

It has been suggested that literary creation is one of the spaces in which we have privileged access to the workings of Eros and Thanatos. In his classic text of narrative theory, *Reading for the Plot*, Peter Brooks argues that the processes of literary storytelling reveal, by their very construction, the impetus toward ending. He writes: “Desire is the wish for the end, for fulfilment, but fulfilment must be delayed so that we can understand it in relation to its origin and to desire itself.” Brooks reads Freud’s *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* as a work of literature as well

as a theoretical text. For him, it is the exemplary tale of the relation between beginnings and endings. The desire to achieve a state of stasis is seen as the driving force that motivates the forward-flung desire of any text, as well as of any individual life. In suggesting that the death drive operates an intrinsically destructive creation, Brooks offers up literature as a privileged space for examination of the workings of Thanatos, directing the course of sexuality into dying *only in its own way*. For Brooks, the novel’s form may be said to demonstrate mimetically the *structural* properties of Thanatos.

In *The Ego and the Id* (1923), Freud discussed those cases in which the death drive and the life drive merge and are made manifest in the world. Freud proposes that the fusion of the drives (*Triebmischung*) is visible in sadistic and masochistic performances of human sexuality. Freud’s notion of the death drive as a repetition beyond what is pleasurable provides an elucidatory tool for reading certain texts which do not at first appear to be about an erotic relation to death. Annie Ernaux’s *Passion simple* (1991) is a semi-autobiographical, first-person erotic narrative which recounts an obsessive love affair. The narrative describes the repetitive rituals undergone by the female narrator, who has spent a year of her life doing “rien d’autre qu’attendre un homme” [nothing other than waiting for a man]. Her sexual thrall is described as an addiction, something consummately pleasurable while at the same time destructive of the other aspects of her life. Ernaux, read through the lens of Freud, exposes the death-driven impulses at the heart of the apparently most erotic relationships and the most life-driven sexual practices.

Several feminist critics in the twentieth century have critiqued the linking of death and sexuality, claiming that it reveals a pervasive masculine fantasy of power and dominance. They posit, variously, that the male fear of femininity and of death leads to the sexualization of dead women in culture (Bronfen); that the figure of the male killer is eroticized and glamorized in popular culture (Caputi); and, most radically, in an argument that echoes the logic of Zola’s *La Bête humaine*, that penetration is innately aggressive and always already accompanied by a fantasy of destruction (Dworkin).

Some twentieth-century literary texts play with and mobilize the dominant paradigm

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of male aggression and female victimization that these accounts identify. Muriel Spark's *The Driver's Seat* (1970) offers a particularly inventive example of this strategy. The novel opens with the heroine, Lise, about to go on holiday to Italy in search of a particular—and unnamed—type of erotic encounter. On the plane, she spots a man whom she recognizes instantly as “the one” with whom she wishes to have her adventure. However, he appears afraid and resistant to her approaches and, on arrival at their destination, he manages to give her the slip. Evading her pursuit of him throughout the course of the holiday, he is finally cornered in the closing pages of the book, whereupon she leads him to a park and tells him what it is that she wants: “Kill me”, she says, and repeats it in four languages.” When Lise’s chosen killer/victim (for the roles have become radically confused at this point) indicates he would much rather have sex instead, her response is uncompromising: “You can have it afterwards.”

Certain commentators, who take the novel at face value, have criticized it heavily for its apparent endorsement of female masochism to the point of self-destruction. Passages of dialogue such as the following appear to universalize the desire for victimization:

“A lot of women get killed in the park.” . . .  
“Yes, of course. It’s because they want to be.”

However politically incorrect it may be, Spark’s novel is extremely self-conscious in its intention to amuse and to shock. It disconcerts our perceptions of aggression and passivity by focusing throughout on the driving subjectivity of the “victim” who seeks out, predatorily, her (reluctant) killer. By naming death as the aim of the sexual encounter, this self-aware novel makes radically transparent the commonplace representations of discourses of sexuality, in which death is the omnipresent but unspoken underside of eroticism.

Thanatos occupies a paradoxical position in erotic representation. Death, as we have seen, is central to discourses of eroticism, yet its presence is either undertheorized or dismissed as politically problematic by critics. This co-presence of obsession and silence is characteristic of the human relationship to death in general. In Freud’s 1915 essay “Our Attitude Towards Death,” he describes the cultural tendency, in

peacetime, to disavow death, to eliminate it from life. Several commentators on Western culture, most notably Phillippe Ariès, have written about this tendency in the context of a particularly modern consciousness. In Ariès’s historical account of attitudes toward death (1974), he asserts that while medieval culture understood mortality with reference to discourses of mysticism, in the atheistic modern period, death has become shameful and taboo. Ariès goes on to claim that the rich history of eroticizing death finds its pathological apotheosis in the modern fascination with erotic violence: he contends that death has become “admirable in its beauty.” Given the thanatic qualities of much erotic writing, literature may present the most privileged site available to us for exploration of the problematic relationship between desire and destruction that has informed thought since the earliest time.

LISA DOWNING

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## THÉÂTRE ÉROTIQUE DE LA RUE DE LA SANTÉ, LE

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French pornographic puppet shows

In the early 1860s, a small group of writers and actors would gather on Sundays at the home of the man of letters Amédée Rolland (1819–1868), at 54 rue de la Santé, in the Parisian suburb of Batignolles. Along with Georges Bizet, Alphonse Daudet, and Théodore de Banville, the regulars numbered the journalist Jean Duboys (1836–1873), humorist and caricaturist Henri Monnier (1799–1877), itinerant actor-poet Albert Glatigny (1839–1873), and Louis Lemercier de Neuville, nicknamed Lemercier (1830–1918), littérateur and budding puppeteer. To enhance their amusement, they created a little marionette theatre in a glassed-in antechamber. The spatial limitations meant that only two operators—Lemercier and Duboys—could work the dolls, and no more than four puppets could be on stage at one time. The author of a play would stand beside the stage and read out his work, while the wooden actors mimed it. There were eight puppets in all, their heads carved by the actor Demarsy.

The first performance of what Rolland called the *Erôtikon théâtre*, May 27, 1862, was attended by fifteen persons, including two actresses. Irreverence, derisive irony, and bawdiness were the hallmarks of these entertainments. For the second performance, a burlesque poster announced that the play *Le dernier jour d'un condamné* was not Victor Hugo's, that *les misérables* would be anyone who didn't applaud, and that the performance would conclude with *La puce enceinte ou l'innocence reconnu*.

The three-scene play performed at the opening, and revived five times thereafter, was *Signe d'argent* by Rolland and Duboys. A nobleman who has managed to get his wife with child (actually the servant's) is eager to indulge all her cravings, including sticking a peacock's feather in his arse (a joke as old as pre-Revolutionary obscene libels of Marie Antoinette). In the next scene, a soldier and a peddler defecate in a country landscape, a parody of the realist school of painting and literature. The pregnant Marquise develops a craving for the smell of a turd, a situation developed to the point where her husband is made to eat it.

*Le dernier jour d'un condamné*, played only once, at the second performance, was written by the actor-playwright Jean-Hippolyte Tisserant (1809–1877), author of a dramatization of *The Vicar of Wakefield*. A sardonic attack on French law, the scenes unfolded in three acts against a traveling panorama three meters long, starting at the Palace of Justice and ending at the guillotine. The play's interest lies in its blasphemy, cynicism, and use of underworld argot. Its protagonist, the murderer Jean Coutaudier, recurs in Monnier's dialogues as Jean Hiroux, and there was an debate over which character came first.

*Scapin maquereau* (originally *Scapin ruffian*, January 1863), written by Glatigny in alexandrines, centers on a girl who doesn't know the use of a bidet. Scapin the brothelkeeper promises the girl's father to teach her cleanliness at his place. It's just before her wedding, and when her bridegroom comes to the brothel to try his

luck, he runs into his bride. Scapin brings him the basin of water and all ends happily with the purification of the bride's bottom and the crowning of a bust of de Sade.

The most famous of these plays is *La grisette et l'étudiant* by Monnier, although he repudiated authorship even while reciting all three roles. A period piece, set between 1830 and 1840, it offers a steamy episode from the Romantic *vie de bohème*: a student and a working-class girl making strenuous love in a garret are interrupted by the indignant voice of the next-door neighbor, M. Prud'homme, Monnier's hybrid of Pecksniff and Mrs Grundy. As the girl gasps in ecstasy, Prud'homme is heard to bellow through the wall: "Here, that'll do! If you don't stop I shall be forced to lay violent hands on myself!"

*Les jeux de l'amour et du bazar* by Lemercier de Neuville, whose characters' names come from Marivaux's neoclassic comedy *Le jeu de l'amour et du hasard* but whose dialogue is in slang, introduces us to Sylvie, a whore who wants to taste true love. While on the game, she is met by the pimp Dorante, who decides to play at being a john. Charmed by his considerable virility, Sylvie lets him have her without payment. When he reveals his identity and says he wouldn't keep such a stupid cow on his team, she agrees to let him be her manager. The finale included a chorus of policemen painted on a single piece of cardboard manipulated by one puppeteer. This innovation was then adapted to other plays.

The title of *Un caprice*, also by Lemercier (October 1863), alludes to Alfred de Musset's comedy. In this two-hander, a husband, who likes to visit whores, can't get an erection and goes back to his wife. At the moment when the tart Urinette peed in a pot, the German scholar Louis Wihl, who was under the misapprehension that he was attending a serious literary puppet show, insulted his hosts and erupted from the room. *Un caprice* was later revived at Emile Renié's marionette theatre.

Indeed, the fame of the *Erôtikon théâtre* was such that newspapers carried glowing though veiled reviews, and the puppets were invited to other venues. The first external exhibition of the *pupazzi* was in *Le bout de l'an de la noce* (1863), a parody of a sketch by Théodore Barrière, played at the home of the fashionable photographer Carjat. The psychologically

subtlest of the plays of Lemercier and Duboys, it depicts two newly married society ladies waiting for their former lovers in a private room in a restaurant. As they while away the time recounting their various disappointments with men, they begin to develop a romantic interest in one another and, when the waiter announces the gentlemen's arrival, escape through a side door to taste the joys of Lesbos.

Finally, *La Grande Symphonie des Punaises*, an operetta about an epic battle between military men and bedbugs, penned by the journalist, caricaturist, and photographer Nadar (Félix Tournachon, 1820–1910) and the writer Charles Bataille (1831–1868), was performed at the home of Jacques Offenbach. He composed the score for it, recycling some of the music into *La Belle Hélène*.

This Rabelaisian theatre lasted only a year and a half (1862–3) but was perpetuated in print. A guest at the premiere was Auguste Poulet-Malassis (1825–1878), the publisher of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs de mal* (1857), for which he had been prosecuted and fined, along with the author. In 1864 he issued from Brussels the five plays of the *Erôtikon théâtre* plus the bedbug operetta, with his own prefaces and a frontispiece by Félicien Rops, as *Le Théâtre érotique de la rue de la Santé*. An expanded octavo edition of 1866 added another Rops plate and a facsimile of the original invitation. Later editions include *Les deux gougnottes*, Monnier's licentious playlet in which two persuasive lesbians recruit a third woman to their pleasures. (It may have been inspired by an incident when Glatigny surprised Rolland's cook and serving-maid in their sapphic lovemaking.)

LAURENCE SENELICK

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## THEOCRITUS

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c. 285–246 BCE  
 Greek poet

Theocritus is credited with 24 surviving epigrams and a body of 30 or so poems, some of which are of doubtful authenticity. The poems bear the general title “Idylls,” meaning “pictures” or short descriptive pieces on rustic, bucolic, or pastoral subjects, but also on town life, legends of the gods, or passages of personal experience. Theocritus has a sharp eye for realistic detail, and his poetry is elegant, witty, and charming. Love plays an important part in his subject matter, but Theocritus is more interested in portraying the emotional states of the victims of love than depicting sensual details.

Unrequited passion is described in a number of poems. In Idyll 2 (one of his finest), the enchantress Simaetha has been jilted by her handsome lover Delphis. Fired by erotic jealousy and torn between hope and despair, she casts a spell to bring him back to her (“I want to chain to me my dearest love who causes me such pain”). In her loneliness, she tells the story of her love to Selene, goddess of the Moon. In Idyll 3, a love-sick goatherd approaches his beloved Amaryllis and pleads with her, but she remains cold and indifferent. The ugly Cyclops Polyphemus in Idyll 11 shows his infatuation and naive vanity in trying to woo the nymph Galatea: he recalls the beginning of his love and dreams of a future life with the object of his desire. The poem, which may be satirizing some Alexandrian romantic clichés, declares: “There is no remedy for love, except the Muses’s song” and closes with the advice that the Cyclops should find another girl (compare Idyll 29). Idyll 14 is the story of a

jealous lover and a faithless girl. In Idyll 20, an oxherd complains that Eunice, a town girl, has unreasonably rejected him. Idyll 23 is on a pederastic subject: a young man, scorned by the boy he adores, comes to the latter’s house, predicting that the boy’s beauty will eventually fade and that he in turn will experience the pangs of unrequited love. The man hangs himself, and the boy, unmoved, goes off to the gymnasium where a statue of Eros falls and kills him. Other poems also have homosexual themes. Idyll 12 is a monologue addressed to a boy whose brief absence the poet regrets; on their coming together again, he expresses the wish that posterity will remember their perfect union. This poem contains references to the youths who competed in the “Contest of Kisses,” held at the town of Megara. Idyll 13, a conversation on love and the sufferings which it causes (“No one is proof against love, not even the mightiest of men”), tells the story of Hercules’s strong but tragic passion for Hylas, the youth who was treacherously seduced and drowned by some nymphs. Idylls 29 and 30 are both titled “Paedica” [Lads’ Loves]. The former is addressed to a fickle boy (“I’m only half alive because of your beauty: when you agree, I’m in Heaven, when you don’t, I’m in Hell”). Together with advice to remember that youth is fleeting (a characteristic observation on pederastic love), the poet hopes that when the boy has grown a beard, they will both be the firmest and noblest of friends. There is, however, a sting in the tail: “I’ll go through fire and water for you, but if you say ‘Why do you keep on bothering me,’ you’ll call for me in vain—for I’ll be cured.” Idyll 30 is a dialogue between the poet and his

## THEOCRITUS

soul on the theme that now that he is growing old, he should behave correctly and not let himself be seduced by a boy's smile.

A large number of the idylls are constructed in dialogue form, usually as a song contest or conversation between two pastoral characters. This allows more than one view of a subject to be expressed. Thus in Idyll 1, Thyrsis, a shepherd, sings the celebrated story about Daphnis, who angers the goddess Aphrodite by being indifferent to love. In consequence she makes him fall victim to a violent passion from which he dies. In Idyll 5, Lacon, a shepherd, and Comatas, a goatherd, have an angry exchange of words and then engage in a singing contest, part of which deals with their amorous adventures. In the course of their argument, Comatas, the elder, forcefully reminds Lacon how he had once sodomized him. Idyll 6 provides a variant on Polyphemus's story: here Damoetas, taking on the role of the Cyclops, sings how his feigned indifference to Galatea is a trick to bring her down a peg and make her surrender. In Idyll 7, Lycidas sings how he wishes Ageanax a prosperous sea voyage on condition he grants him his favors, for he is in love with him. This is answered by Simichidas's song describing Aratus's love for Philinus, who, it seems, is past his prime. The charms and snares of love are wittily and delicately evoked. Idyll 10 is a song contest at harvest time. Boucaios is so deeply in love he cannot sleep. He sings in praise of his girl, Bombyca, but in reality she is skinny and sunburned. Milon, who hears all this, is unimpressed. Of the remaining idylls where love is the subject, Idyll 27 ("Sweet Talk") is charming, but unfortunately incomplete at the beginning: Daphnis, a cowherd, persuades a shepherdess to go with him to the nearby woods, where he does not have to try too hard to get her to yield. Idyll 18 is a marriage hymn sung to Helen by her maiden companions before her wedding. Helen, its hearers would have known, was the epitome of beauty and was destined to commit adultery and cause the

Trojan War. Theocritus's *Idylls* have been widely appreciated since they first appeared in print in about 1480, but before the twentieth century most translations were simply censored by omitting alleged indelicacies, or bowdlerized by the substitution of female for male pronouns.

### Biography

A Greek poet of the Hellenistic period, Theocritus was probably born at Syracuse (Sicily) and left there at a relatively early age to go to the royal court of the Ptolemies at Alexandria in Egypt. Details of his life are simply inferences, drawn from his poetry, and no reliable biographical information has come down to us.

PATRICK POLLARD

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# THEOTOKIS, CONSTANTINOS

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1872–1923  
Greek novelist

Constantinos Theotokis is a Greek naturalist writer who figures at the origin of the Greek social novel. His works bear the brand of a hard and crude naturalism inspired by Zola.

Theotokis's works arouse a feeling of horror. His characters live in a rural world marked by rapes, murders, suicides, blackmail, and death threats. The human body is depicted in its least noble functions. Dishonor, when it is abused, is obscene and ugly, and hurts decency and intimacy. Theotokis is very far from the beauty Plato celebrated in *Hippias majeure*. Indeed, he conveys only violated and violating pleasure—the sensual appeal of Cicero's taste and distaste finds a wonderful illustration in Theotokis.

Honor and love often trigger murder or suicide. As in the case of Petros Peponas in *Ο Κατάδικος* [*The Convicted*] (1919), the individual cannot escape from the tyranny of the code of honor: the deceived husband is forced to kill his wife to win his honor back. Violence is always directed toward women: they find themselves abandoned, like Rini in *Η Τιμή και το χρήμα* [*Honor and Money*] (1912), or they are left to die after being repeatedly raped, like Chrysavgi in *Αγάπη παράνομη* [*Forbidden Love*] (1906). Murder adds to this gloomy picture of a society in which love is missing: In *Πίστομα* [*On the Stomach*], the amnestied bandit Coucouliotis, on his return home, kills his wife's lover out of revenge and forces his wife to bury alive the child they had together. Similarly, in *Ακόμα* [*Not Yet?*] (1904), Kourkoupos, another deceived husband, takes his revenge by stabbing his wife to death in their own house.

Theotokis's entire work stages ugly, disgusting, and loathsome situations, which shock the inner self and the very harmony of the mind and offend moral standards. There is no love in his works. This lack of love is conveyed in its most sublimated form—evoking the birds' nuptial songs and dances become extreme and pathological, turning man into an animal. There

is neither magic nor rapture in these lives, only acts of violence which degrade man; neither duality nor complicity (except perhaps Rini in *Honor and Money*), only carnal and violent instincts. Under the yoke of sexual desire, Theotokis's male characters obey a primitive, violent force which thwarts chastity and honesty. It is precisely this primitive force, this appetite, this voracity, this ravenous force that Theotokis tried to highlight in those of his novels considered most outrageous—at the dawn of the twentieth century, he dared to put brain, mind, and sex together.

More than the theme of dishonor in *Honor and Money* (which highlights the bargaining of marriage), and much more than *Η παντρεία της Σταλαχτής* [*Stalacti's Marriage*] (1905), in which the dishonored and desperate heroine throws herself into a well to put an end to her sufferings, *Forbidden Love* stages the incestuous love of Stathis Therianos with Chrysavgi, his daughter-in-law. A calculating criminal, Stathis hatches a monstrous scheme to get Chrysavgi: he has his son marry the young woman in order to have her at hand under his roof. A ravenous power seems to be at the origin of all these depraved behaviors, the metaphysical root of obscenity. The satisfied but not totally assuaged desire of Stathis, a modern Oedipus without the shame and heartbreaks of Sophocles's character, turns into an incestuous urge to possess his daughter-in-law. The forced sex act takes place in his house with the concupiscent complicity of his wife Diamanto, in the shameful alcove where the young woman will leave her weary flesh. The affair she is forced to have with her father-in-law is doubly perverse.

More than any of his other works, *Η ζωή και ο θάνατος του Καραβέλα* [*The Life and Death of Karavelas*] (1920) is a book of crime and perversity. With fierce Naturalism, it portrays a sexually obsessed old man, manipulated by a couple in the grip of cupidity. In this work where obscenity reigns supreme, Eros is no longer the chubby and winged boy poised in an ethereal sky, the very emblem of human lightness and



amorous exhilaration, luxury, calm, and delight. Theotokis's Eros is taken from the Platonic figure of the Banquet: he inherited from Shortage, his mother, the lack of beautiful and good qualities and from Makeshift, his father, the means to achieve them, thanks to procreation: "He is filthy and brutal and has absolutely no delicacy or pleasantness" (Lacarrière: 272–3). Persevering and stubborn, he is always up to no good, plotting some mischief. Thomas Kranias, the protagonist, is no sympathetic character: he is perverted, lustful, cruel, violent, and short-tempered. Possessed by a demonic lechery, he lusts after his young neighbor Maria. He even makes a deal with her brother-in-law: the house in exchange for Maria's body. He first has to get rid of his old, sterile wife as quickly as possible to be able to taste of this longed-for happiness. So he murders his wife, abandoning her in her bed, where she suffers horrible death pangs and is to be found there in a putrefying state. Suffering from unassuaged desire, driven to despair because he cannot possess Maria, Kranias is slowly led to suicide. In an attempt to debase mankind, Theotokis gives his characters the frenzy of filth.

In this novel, Eros generates Thanatos. The theme of Eros-*nosos* [illness], which leads to madness, was elaborated by Sophocles and taken up again by Euripides, who distinguishes two Erores: the one which leads to virtue and the one which leads to indignity (Lévy-Bertherat: 564–73). It is precisely this pleasure which can be seen in Theotokis's works. Indeed, the novel includes many allusions to the psychological appetites of a pervert, but Maria shows herself as she really is, namely, a whore. Impervious to shame, she displays her private parts in front of the old man with a daring quietness, convinced as she is of the all-powerfulness of her flesh. She is a maneater. She both delights in arousing the old man's real and concrete desire and frustrates it, out of perversity. Karavelas's desire is below human love. It is pure concupiscence. Maria represents two things: a womb likely to bear children and a free servant.

Theotokis's moral nakedness imparts to all his characters, above all to Maria and Thomas

Kranias, the frenzy of garbage. *The Life and Death of Karavelas*, *The Convicted*, and *Forbidden Love* are novels of the flesh, studies of social customs of a rural society considered at their most erotic or most amoral. Perverted men and women, the preys to victims of the unleashed frenzy of their desires, indulge in incredible adventures of shame and madness. Such is the prevalence of the relationship between Eros and Thanatos in our modern literature.

### Biography

Constantinos Theotokis was born into the Corfú aristocracy. He studied in Graz, Austria, where he was influenced by the Russian novel and became a committed socialist.

EFSTRATIA OKTAPODA-LU

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# THÉRIAULT, YVES

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1916–1983

Canadian novelist and short story writer

## *Oeuvres de chair*

The title of Yves Thériault's erotic short story collection, *Oeuvres de chair* [*Ways of the Flesh*], brings to mind the common religious exhortation: "The ways of the Flesh shall be had in wedlock only." The religious connotation is linked to sexual activities and brings to mind the notion of sin, or even transgression, since in many of Thériault's short stories, the protagonists are priests, nuns or monks who do not abide at all by their vows of chastity. The title also evokes the pleasures of the table—*flesh* can refer both to sensual pleasures and to meat served as food—and the short stories play on this ambivalence to offer detailed recipes as well as fine meals as preludes to sexual intercourse. *Ways of the Flesh*, then, combines the pleasures of the table and those of the bed.

The period used as a setting for the three short stories "Sister Jeanne's Coq en pâte," "The Monastic Stew," and "Quill and Quail" is the Middle Ages and consequently the characters are a nun, a countess, a monk, and a peasant, who indulge without any restraint or remorse in sexual transgression. Thus, Sister Jeanne flees her convent, intent on losing her virginity. She meets Flavian and arouses and seduces him: "In the twinkling of an eye, Sister Jeanne bared her breasts, then pulled her long skirt up over her head. To Flavian's surprise, she was naked underneath, and suddenly all his fears gave way before the onrush of desire" (14). Later on, Sister Jeanne invites Flavian to the convent so that he can reveal the ways of the flesh to her virgin companions. Flavian and the nuns first share an abundant meal of hams, roasts, and ribs whose *piece de resistance* is, of course, Sister Jeanne's *coq en pâte*, a delicious capon in a crust, prepared with her own hands. Once he has been well fed, Flavian must tackle the delicious task of initiating the nuns to sexual

pleasures: "The several deflowerings were performed quickly, methodically, and without embarrassment. Flavian, who was fairly bursting with desire, applied himself vigorously to his task" (22–3). Suddenly, the mother superior enters the room where the collective sexual initiation is taking place and discovers her nuns in flagrante delicto. Thinking they will be seriously upbraided, the nuns hang their heads, but to the surprise of all, the mother superior gives Flavian fellatio as a preliminary to wild sex. Thus, religious authority becomes completely subverted in "Sister Jeanne's Coq en pâte," since the mother superior becomes a sort of procuress.

"The Monastic Stew" bears analogy to "Sister Jeanne's Coq en pâte" in that the main character is a mendicant friar, Sebastian, who goes from village to village collecting alms. He arrives in a big farmhouse where he finds three idle sisters, Gervaise, Marie, and Dominique Pécelet. The teenagers, gripped by intense sexual desire, cook a monastic stew, a kind of beef stew they offer to the mendicant. Once the monk's hunger has been satisfied, the three sisters get to the business of seducing him: "It therefore wasn't long before the saintly man showed hard, tangible evidence of his reaction to this abundance of temptations. Dominique was the first of the girls to discover the holy staff and enjoy its initial discharges" (177). Here again, the characters indulge in collective lovemaking in which neither family ties nor vows of chastity hinder their climax.

The third and last short story set in medieval times, "Quill and Quail," describes the heterosexual love affair of a countess and Joachim, a peasant. This story, drawn from *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, tells of the countess's love story. Like Constance Chatterley, she is married to an old, impotent aristocrat. In order to fulfill her cravings, she follows the peasant to his hut in the woods. There they partake of a preliminary feast: a pair of truffle-stuffed quails. Sexual intercourse occurs as soon as the meal is over, when the noble countess abandons herself in

the peasant's arms. Here as in Lawrence's novel, the transgression takes place at the social level where an upper-class woman gets involved with a commoner who is much more adept at satisfying her sexual appetites than his betters in rank.

*Ways of the Flesh* includes several short stories with a contemporary setting, such as "Two Chicks Are Better Than One," in which Myrielle meets Hans Bjering on an Air Canada jetliner and invites him to comply to her whims and eat chicks before he is to provide the dessert: "You're going to have me first, then I'll share Amelia with you, and to finish off, Amelia will have me. I can't think of a more irresistible and sophisticated conclusion to our dinner" (45). Whereas the short stories set in the Middle Ages describe transgression emanating from the looseness and insouciance of the characters, in the more recent ones transgression is justified by modernity, by the evolution and opening of mindsets in opposition to traditional religious interdicts. The story "Ecclesiastical Meatballs" is, without any doubt, the most exemplary of "erotic modernity." The main character is Gertrude, a former nun who has only recently left her order and who has known only masturbation as sexual activity. She is still a virgin, but a haunting question is gnawing at her: where then is her man? (102). She gets to meet him on a Saturday in a bookstore in the shape of Germain Constant, who claims to be a social worker but does not get into any detail. Gertrude falls under his spell and he invites her home to dinner, where he prepares his own dish of meatballs. The recipe offered in the text describes an extremely refined variation on a traditional beef stew. Afterward, in keeping with the structure of the short stories in the book, they end up in bed for Gertrude's initiation: "Once she felt the unaccustomed member inside her, this sudden revelation of virility, Gertrude began to thrash about in the throes of an incredible orgasm and let loose a long throaty cry" (105). The end of the short story reveals a characteristic of the modern period, which is even more permissive

in terms of sexuality and the decline of religious institutions, when Germain tells Gertrude: "I'm afraid you'll have to be off soon, my dear. I'm the priest of the neighboring parish and tomorrow is Sunday" (105).

The short stories in *Ways of the Flesh* explore all avenues of sexual variants—homosexuality, lesbianism, sex across age differences, etc. Each short story, without exception, presents a very detailed cooking recipe. On reading Yves Thériault's book, the reader can but acknowledge the fact that, after all, the recipes are presented in greater and much more precise detail than the sexual acts. It is important to note here that this collection of short stories is the first of its kind in Quebec; its merit lies in the fact that it combines various sensual pleasures and overcomes taboos that had so long silenced any erotic expression.

### Biography

Thériault was born in Quebec City on November 28. He dropped out of school when he was 15 and started writing for the National Film Board and Radio Canada, 1945. His best-known work is *Agaguk* (1958), a tale of cultural conflict between Eskimos and white men. Thériault died October 20.

ÉLISE SALAÜN

Translated by HENRY C. MERA, PH.D.

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# THOMAS, D.M.

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1935–

British novelist, poet, translator, editor

## *The White Hotel*

Donald Michael Thomas's *The White Hotel* continues to shock readers with its mixture of eroticism and suffering, of Eros and Thanatos. This binarism of what Sigmund Freud conceived of as love and death is particularly apparent in the first two sections and in the Holocaust scenes.

Section One immerses readers in "Don Giovanni," a poem Thomas had written earlier, offering a dozen pages of obsessive sexual activity in a context of death and destruction. The poem's persona addresses a "Professor" (Freud) whose son seduces her on a train and takes her to an Alpine hotel where the two engage in a nonstop orgy. The poem details his titillating her anus and sucking her nipples so long and so hard that they begin to produce milk, as well as her masturbating him and performing fellatio. Their sexuality includes other guests, especially a middle-aged corset maker who joins the couple in bed. The persona shares the milk from her breasts in the dining room, particularly with the "kind old priest," later identified as "Freud." While this "polymorphous perverse" sexual activity goes on tirelessly, there are reports of drownings and avalanche fatalities and of a fire in the hotel itself, which claims more lives.

Section Two, "The Gastein Journal," offers a prose narrative rendition of the events in Section One. This section is a bridge between the rhapsodically erotic fantasy of the first section and the "scientific" rendition of the persona's experience in Section Three, "Frau Anna G.," a fictional "case study" written by the novel's "Freud," a character almost as important as Anna G./Lisa Erdman. Section Two thus modulates the extreme eroticism of the earlier section, which many readers would judge pornographic. It ends with the woman being "mounted from behind" by Freud's son, or the hotel's chef—she

cannot be certain which. This image of a sexual threesome will prove central to Anna/Lisa's analysis. Sexuality becomes more "human" and personal here, evident in the episode of Freud's son and the persona's al fresco lovemaking, interrupted by a kindly nun who apologizes for her intrusion and bids them return to their intercourse.

These two sections provide an apt contrast between the "pornographic" and the "erotic," as clarified by D. H. Lawrence in his essay "Pornography and Obscenity." Lawrence states: "No matter how hard we may pretend otherwise, most of us rather like a moderate rousing of our sex. It warms us, stimulates us like sunshine on a grey day" (Lawrence: 173). "Pornography [in contrast] is the attempt to insult sex, to do dirt on it" (175). Lawrence might worry, as some readers have, that the mechanical or compulsive nature of the sexual act diminishes the erotic. In Section One, for example, the persona notes the "man's unrelenting stroke . . . driving like a piston in / and out, hour after hour."

Section Three of *The White Hotel*, "Anna G.," describes the period of Lisa Erdman's analysis by "Freud" in 1919. The date is important because Freud was working on *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, a major turning point in his theorizing. Freud could not explain why shell-shocked World War I veterans were compulsively drawn to painful battlefield nightmares. Observing his grandson casting away and retrieving a spool on a string, Freud theorized that compulsive repetitions of painful experience are motivated by a death wish, the desire to recover of an Edenic, prenatal quiescence, before the fall into sentience with the infant's explosion into a world of sensory stimuli at birth.

The remaining sections of *The White Hotel* continue the erotic tendencies within a Freudian context of faith in reason to explain sexual dysfunction. "Freud" narrates the life of "Anna G.," or Lisa Erdman, whom he treated for "hysteria," evidenced by pains in her left breast and pelvic area, with no apparent physical cause.

Anna/Lisa also experienced “breathlessness” in anticipation of full sexual intercourse with her husband who was returning from World War I. (She had been insisting on coitus interruptus to forestall an early pregnancy.) “Freud” focuses on breasts and ovaries as maternal images, leading back to Anna’s early loss of her mother in a hotel fire and the subsequent rejection by her father.

Anna/Lisa leads “Freud” to believe that she sought a “white” relationship with A., as later with her husband, because she feared pregnancy and motherhood. She narrates an episode on a yacht in which A. torments her by having intercourse in her presence with another woman in *more ferarum*, or entering the woman from behind. She tells “Freud” of witnessing a “primal scene” of her “aunt” and uncle in an erotic embrace in a summer house. Lisa’s “uncle” and her mother were having an affair, and their bodies may have been in a sexual embrace when the two were consumed by the hotel fire.

Section Four moves forward a decade from 1919 to the correspondence between the middle-aged Lisa Erdman, who has achieved modest success as an opera singer, and the aging Freud, recovering from mouth and throat surgery for cancer. The “corrections” Lisa offers to the manuscript of Section Three’s “case study” take readers further into the erotic details of her past. Her letter begins with acknowledgment of the “painful pleasure” his case study caused her. Lisa reveals how the misrepresented yacht scene with A. and the summer-house scene were “screens” for an earlier “primal scene” when as a child she saw her “uncle” having sex with her mother and aunt, identical twins, aboard her father’s yacht. It is also “intercourse a tergo,” a threesome in which the man is entering the kneeling woman from behind. Lisa’s parents had had an essentially “white marriage” following her older brother’s birth, suggesting the distinct possibility that her father was actually her uncle, making her Christian, like her mother, aunt, and uncle, rather than Jewish like her father. Lisa offers another correction to her earlier rendition of the episode on a ship which was more “vile and frightening” than she had told her analyst. In her “baptism,” the sailors berated her as a Jewess and forced her to perform fellatio. Later, it is revealed that even her corrective letter was incomplete because she had not included the loss of her virginity to a

stranger on the train from Odessa to Petersburg. The letter was already too long, she adds.

Section Five, “The Sleeping Carriage,” brings the narrative to its powerful climax at Babi Yar, the Nazi concentration camp in Russia where thousands of Jews were machine-gunned and buried in a ravine. Lisa has married and become the adoptive mother of Kolya, the son of an opera star whose wife, the singer whom Lisa replaced at La Scala Opera House, died giving birth to Kolya. At Babi Yar, Lisa and Kolya are beaten and forced to strip before being marched to their gravesite, the victims attempting unsuccessfully to cover their genitals. In a moment of anagnorisis, or tragic recognition, Lisa discovers why she feared pregnancy. It was not Freud’s “hysteria” which haunted her during sexual intercourse, but foreseeing her present dilemma: if she proclaims she is not a Jew she lives, but with “survivor guilt,” for as a Jew Kolya will die. Now, as in Sophocles’s *Oedipus*, she and the readers know fully the implications of her early statements that she could never feel pleasure while others were suffering on the “other side of the hill” and the worst horror was knowing that a child was suffering. Accordingly, Lisa *chooses* to be a Jew to ease the pain of Kolya’s dying. Still alive in the sea of corpses, she is almost raped by a Nazi soldier, who covers his impotence by kicking her breast and pelvis before mock-raping her with his bayonet. This tragically revealing conglomeration of rape and sexual love, Eros and Thanatos, points up Freud’s painfully inadequate attempt to explain Lisa’s pains and sexual dysfunction scientifically as “hysteria.”

Section Six, “The Camp,” offers an afterlife, a purgatory, set in “Palestine.” The Camp is clearly a return to the “white hotel” of the mother’s body, the mother being both Lisa’s biological mother she lost as a child and Lisa herself as mother now. The daughter suckles at the mother’s breast and then suckles her mother in a closing of the circle.

Thomas has continued to explore the relationship of Eros and Thanatos. His 1993 novel *Pictures at an Exhibition* focuses on Nazi experiments with sexuality at the Auschwitz death camp.

### Biography

Born Redruth, Cornwall, January 27. He published poetry for over a decade before his first novel, *The Flute Player*, appeared in 1979,

receiving the Gollancz Fantasy Novel Prize. His *Selected Poems* appeared in 1983. He has published almost a dozen novels, including the five-novel sequence *Russian Nights*, on the theme of improvisation. He has also published translations of Russian poets, preeminently Anna Akhmatova. None of his other work has achieved the fame of his best seller, *The White Hotel*, short-listed for the Booker Prize in 1981.

EARL G. INGERSOLL

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## THOUSAND AND ONE NIGHTS, THE

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In medieval Arabic literature there was no taboo on erotic or sexual explicitness. Apart from treatises on sexuality and love, which were used as medical handbooks and to enhance marital pleasures, erotic motifs and themes occurred in various genres, ranging from humorous anecdotes to entertainment literature, folktales, and farcical shadow plays. Poetry was concentrated on love themes from its beginnings, but it became increasingly sensual in Baghdad and Andalusia from the 9th century onward. Scabrous poetry appeared in the form of light verse seemingly without objection and it was sometimes composed by quite respectable scholars. Comical tales often played upon erotic motifs, and epic cycles usually contained several obscene passages.

Examples of most of the genres in which eroticism was explored can be found in the famous collection *Thousand and One Nights* [*Alf layla wa-layla*], which was probably based on Sanskrit or Persian models and which entered Arabic literature in approximately the 9th century, in an embryonic form. About the textual history of the *Thousand and One Nights* there is still much uncertainty. It seems that between the 10th and 15th centuries the original collection was reworked and supplemented to become a refined collection of entertaining tales, which was especially appreciated by the urban elite. The earliest extant version of the *Thousand and One Nights* is a Syrian manuscript dating from the 15th century, which probably contains a reworking of the oldest core of the work, consisting of 282

nights. This manuscript was brought to light by the French Orientalist Francois Galland (1646–1715), who used it for his translation, which appeared from 1704 to 1715. After the “discovery” of the work by Galland, several “complete” Arabic versions of the work were produced, some of which were based on obvious mystifications composed to satisfy European demand, while others may have been serious efforts to reconstruct what may have been the original *Thousand and One Nights*. As we will see below, some of these reconstructions show a remarkable preference for scabrous tales.

During the course of time, the *Thousand and One Nights* acquired the reputation of being an erotic masterpiece of world literature. This perception was inspired first of all by the frame story of “Shahriyar and his brother,” in which it is explained how the cycle came into existence: After having discovered the adultery of his wife with a black slave, Sultan Shahriyar, disillusioned by the perfidity of women, decides to marry a new virgin every evening and have her executed in the morning. After a while, Shahrazad, the vizier’s daughter, decides to put an end to this vicious cycle. She marries the Sultan and starts telling tales after their love-making until daybreak, inducing the Sultan to keep her alive in the morning to hear the continuation of the tale the following night. The storytelling continues for a thousand and one nights and Shahrazad and the virgins of the empire are saved. Apart from several references to sexual acts, the frame story explores the overlapping fields of storytelling and eroticism, and since it serves as an explanatory introduction to the collected tales, it puts the work as a whole in a specifically erotic perspective. Even if stories hardly refer to sexual activity, the reader is induced to believe that the stories somehow have an erotic dimension. This erotic subtext is preserved especially in the oldest core of stories, which contains, for example, “The Porter and the Three Ladies of Baghdad,” with its playful and explicit erotic references, and the tales collected in the cycle of the “Hunchback,” which contain many ironic erotic motifs. As in the frame story itself, these stories can be read as a comment on traditional gender roles and perceptions of female sexuality.

There is no evidence that in medieval times the *Thousand and One Nights* was condemned for its frivolity or obscenity, but in more recent

times Muslim scholars have sometimes expressed their disapproval of the collection, which, in their view, presents an incorrect image of the Arabo-Islamic tradition. It is true that the work, due mainly to its stylistic properties and fantastic elements, does not belong to the classical canon, with its strict stylistic and generic conventions, but was rather part of the corpus of entertainment literature. It enjoys a wide popularity among Arab literati and intellectuals, but many new reprints which appear in Arabic countries are severely bowdlerized.

Part of the objections of the religious scholars no doubt derives from the way in which the *Thousand and One Nights* has been incorporated into European culture, which especially relished its more scabrous aspects. The first translation which appeared in Europe—the French version compiled by Antoine Galland—was adapted to what was called the *bienséance*, or “good taste,” of the audience. Certain passages were skipped with the excuse that they were too obscene or too rude for the readers’ taste. Similarly, the first English translation, by Edward Lane (1801–1876), which appeared in 1838–1840, was censored to accommodate the prudish taste of the Victorian public, explicitly stating that the omitted parts and stories were too obscene. Of course, the lacunae in the translations of Galland and Lane aroused the curiosity of the public, and in the course of the 18th and 19th centuries the narrative material provided by the *Thousand and One Nights* was widely used for erotic and pornographic publications. Stereotypical images of cruel sultans, passionate odalisques, fierce eunuchs, and jealous lovers were utilized to evoke the image of a sensual Orient which indulged in wealth and physical pleasures. Examples of “decent” literary works with erotic motifs inspired by the *Thousand and One Nights* are *Les Bijoux indiscrets* by Denis Diderot (1713–1784; published in 1748) and *Le Sopha* by Crébillon fils (1707–1777; publ. 1740). It should be noted that at the same time, the *Thousand and One Nights* also served as a source for didactic tales and children’s books.

In 1885–88 the Orientalist, traveler, soldier, explorer, polyglot, and ethnographer Richard Burton (1821–1890) published his famous, or notorious, English translation of the *Thousand and One Nights*. Burton stated that the translations made by Galland and Lane gave a wrong, anemic image of the Oriental temperament, and

especially its erotic component. As an expert on Oriental sexuality, he proposed a new, unexpurgated, translation which would set this straight. Burton's translation is marked by the erotic interests of its translator. Not only is the text itself adapted at some occasions to accentuate erotic details, but the work is supplemented with numerous footnotes, many of which provide information of a sexual nature, and a "Terminal Essay," which includes chapters on pornography and pederasty. Evidently, the fixation on sexuality in Burton's translation reflects the "other side" of Victorian prudishness, which hid an increased interest in sexual matters, prostitution, and pornography. It is obvious that Burton used the *Thousand and One Nights* to confront what he saw as the narrow-minded morality of his contemporaries and that he hoped to contribute to a form of sexual liberation. Burton's translation was banned on several occasions, both in Britain and in the United States, and in 1886–87 an expurgated version was published under the auspices of his wife, Isabel.

In France, the scabrous reputation of the *Thousand and One Nights* was confirmed by the translation of Joseph Mardrus (1868–1949), which appeared in 1899–1904. The translation should perhaps rather be called a reworking, since it was not based on an Arabic manuscript or printed text but consisted of tales taken from a variety of sources, revised to emphasize their sensual and erotic aspects. Mardrus succeeded in evoking a romantic vision of the Orient, which, together with Edmund Dulac's *art nouveau* illustrations, generated a wave of Oriental fashions and tastes. Léon Bakst (1866–1924) was inspired by it while designing the costumes and backdrops for the Ballets Russes (*Shéhérazade*, *Alladin*), and Paul Poiret created harem costumes, made of silk and transparent tissues, and Oriental perfumes and gave a notorious "Thousand and Second Night" dress party. Again, the *Thousand and One Nights* was used to create the image of a sensual and passionate Orient, exploiting age-old fantasies of palace harems and lascivious odalisques.

The erotic image of the *Thousand and One Nights* found expression, too, in the visual tradition which was inspired by the work, starting especially in the 19th century. From time to time "adult" editions appeared, which were often accompanied by erotic illustrations. Although

in Burton's translation some evocative, but unprovoking, nude pictures occur, it is only with Mardrus's text that the erotic potential of the work is exploited in illustrations, some with the aim of arousing the reader, some only exploring the visual possibilities of frivolous Oriental themes. It should be noted that the illustrations to the *Thousand and One Nights* were only remotely linked to the tradition of Orientalist painting which emerged throughout Europe in the second half of the 19th century. Special mention should be made of the lithographs of Kees van Dongen for the 1955 edition of the Mardrus translation, which combine Oriental exoticism with modern imagery inspired by the Folies Bergères. Other visual media which made use of the erotic aspects of the *Thousand and One Nights*, in the course of the 20th century, were comic books, advertisements, and cinema, focusing on figures such as Aladdin and Sinbad, belly dancers, kohl-eyed princesses, and mean and lustful viziers.

Due to the various imaginative translations of the *Thousand and One Nights* and the visual imagery which accompanied them, Shahrazad became the prototype of Eastern sensuality and a paragon of beauty. This image is only partly corroborated by the Arabic versions, in which not her beauty, but rather her intelligence and knowledge are accentuated. According to modern Western standards, the scabrous passages which occur in the Arabic texts are not very shocking, and when erotic intrigues are woven into the story, they are usually meant to enliven the narrative, add an element of playfulness, or give the story a touch of humor. There are only a few examples of stories or passages which are intended to arouse or to shock the readers, although there is no aversion to bizarre sexual habits or violent passions. There are differences between the various texts, of course. It seems justified to say that the Wortley-Montague manuscript, which dates back to the 18th century, contains the most obscene anecdotes, some of which were incorporated by Burton into his translation.

In his survey of erotic motifs in the *Thousand and One Nights*, or, more precisely, in the version of Mardrus, Dehoï contrasts European visions of sexuality—subject to taboos and moral reprehension—with Oriental perceptions, in which love is seen as a natural part of life, as a form of art, conceptually linked to a mystical



worldview. Although this idea may have been inspired by a romantic vision of the Orient, it is true that in the *Thousand and One Nights* eroticism is linked to idealized concepts of love and that the narrator shows little inhibition in relating physical details. The story of "The Porter and the Three Ladies of Baghdad" has already been mentioned above. In this story a humble porter is teased by three beautiful nude ladies in a swimming pool in a quite explicit play of words. It also contains the tales of the three qalanders, or dervishes, which include motifs of love, incest, adultery, and homoeroticism. In these stories eroticism is embedded in a world governed by magic and the inescapable interaction between love and fate. A similar fateful view of sexuality can be observed in the story of "Aziz and Aziza," in which a young man is initiated into the world of love and sexuality by his cousin—to whom he is intended to be married—and two demanding lovers, one who keeps testing his refinement and dedication in matters of love and another who commands him to do with her "what the cock does to the hen" and locks him up for a whole year. Eroticism is described here as a world full of confusion, dominated by the unfathomable desires of women, who communicate through secret signs and messages. In this domain dominated by women, the hero finally loses his manhood.

Dominating women are a recurrent theme, too, in several anecdotes—for instance, the tales collected in the story of the "Hunchback." In one of these tales, the hero has his thumbs and toes cut off because he ate a spicy dish just before approaching his beloved, a slave girl in the harem of the caliph (the "Reeve's Tale"). In other stories, men are humiliated for their lascivious fantasies by women who are in control of the situation. According to some observers, these stories characterize the *Thousand and One Nights* as a work of proto-feminism, in accordance with the purport of the frame story, but according to others the stories were conceived by men and meant to be related to a male audience. The occurrence of dominating women should be seen as conforming to a male fantasy.

In love stories, too, men are often portrayed as anti-heroes, as compared with the vigilant and courageous heroines. In these stories, some of which probably date back to pre-Islamic times, social conventions and the prohibitions of strict

fathers have to be overcome before the loving couple can be united. In general these stories are rather prudish and conform to social conventions, but there are some exceptions—for example, the story of "Qamar al-Zaman and Budur," which begins with an erotic encounter and ends with a *démasqué* during an erotic game. It is suggested that the hero is averse to women but is subsequently "cured" by Princess Budur, who was from the beginning destined to marry him. In the story of "Ali Nur al-Din and Maryam the Girdle-Girl," the hero is ruined by an amorous escapade, but he is later saved—after numerous adventures—by a willful girl who defeats the forces of evil in the name of love. This story contains some explicit erotic poetry, which can also be found in the story of "Harun al-Rashid and Hasan the Merchant of Oman." In the latter story the hero visits a brothel and falls desperately in love with the daughter of the owner.

A separate cluster of stories comprise the anecdotes situated at the court of Harun al-Rashid. Some of these tales refer to the famous love between the caliph and his spouse, Queen Zubayda, others to the figure of Abu Nuwas, here presented as a court poet, a composer of scabrous verse, and an unscrupulous lover of young boys. It is these stories that have the libertine atmosphere usually associated with palace harems ("Harun al-Rashid and Queen Zubayda in the Bath," "Harun al-Rashid and the Two Slave Girls," "Abu Nuwas with the Three Boys"). A taste for the bizarre can be found in anecdotes such as "The King's Daughter and the Ape," about a princess who keeps an ape hidden in her closet, and "Wardan the Butcher," about a lady who has a bear as her secret lover. Typically obscene anecdotes from the Wortley-Montague manuscript include "The Lady with the Two Coyntes," "The Youth Who Would Fetter His Father's Wives," and "The Goodwife of Cairo and Her Young Gallants." There are a number of stories, finally, that describe the love between humans and jinn, but these do not explore the erotic possibilities of encounters of this kind.

The survey given above shows that a great variety of erotic themes and motifs occur in the *Thousand and One Nights* comprising various genres and types of tales. Erotic intrigues are often cleverly woven into the narrative fabric in the form of plots and subplots, humorous and scabrous intermezzos, and characterizations

of love and human passions, of the struggle between the sexes, and of sophisticated urban life. Eroticism allows the narrator to show his skill in ingenious descriptions, forms of elegant rhymed prose and verse, plot deferment, the creation of suspense, and other narrative techniques which, if Shahrazad is to be believed, are all part of the art of love.

RICHARD VAN LEEUWEN

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## TĪFĀSHĪ, AL-

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1184?–1253

Arab poet and story writer

A compilation of amusing and indecent tales of mixed verse and prose, *The Delight of Hearts: or, What you Will not Find in Any Book* [*Nuzhat al-Albāb fīmā Lā Yujadu fī Kitāb*] is ascribed to al-Tūfāshī. It belongs to the traditional genre of *munjun*, a style of composition which was particularly popular in Baghdad in the 9th and 10th centuries CE and was characterized by “verbal liberation from the shackles of decency” (M. Schild). There are similarities with the scabrous stories in the *Arabian Nights* and, in the West, with the tales of Boccaccio in the *Decameron*. In his preface the author is careful to claim that a knowledge of indecent matters teaches us to avoid them. He claims that he is writing his book for a sophisticated audience who will appreciate his wit and intellect, for such people, unlike common humanity, will be motivated more by their minds than by their

sensual appetites. Allah is to be praised for giving us the Word and for providing witty literary anecdotes, since mankind is so vulnerable to boredom. The salt of such pleasant tales is not for the uneducated, for where cultivated men see delicacy, ordinary folk can see only signs of weakness and immorality. The book is divided into twelve sections, the majority of which deal with sexual encounters between men:

1. “On the Twenty-two Types of Pimps and Go-Betweens” describes with illustrations and anecdotes the tricks, excuses, and subterfuges which women use to evade the vigilance of husbands, servants, and the like.
2. “On Adultery” advises how men between the ages of 16 and 30 can seduce both willing and not-so-willing wives.
3. and 4. “On Libertine Women and Men” includes stories of old men who, feeling

- the urge to have sex, can be satisfied in various ways thanks to their own ingenuity and the compliance of the women they seduce.
5. “On Lovers of Males” gives advice in story and verse on the seducer’s need to be well set up with convenient rooms, soft cushions, sweetmeats, and money.
  6. “On Youths Who Play the Field” includes stories of a boy who increases his price for every extra sexual refinement his client requests and of a richly dressed servant who replies to indiscrete questions that the Royal Mint is in his pants. A variety of tricks are described and commented on with witty aphorisms and verse.
  7. “On Corporal Blows,” which are described as elegant and health giving when delivered in the full flood of joy (examples are provided). They are often without corrective effect when administered as a punishment.
  8. “On Pederasty,” specifically the love of boys and youths, praises their beauty with tales that often have a reversal as conclusion. One story tells of the honorable judge who thinks his privacy is assured behind a curtain in the Baths, but who, slipping on a piece of soap, careers across the public space while still joined to his beloved. Another describes a gang of old men who seduce youths by appealing to their greed but withhold payment. Others illustrate a variety of dirty tricks, some of which are practiced by men who at first pretend to be passive.
  9. “Advice on Sodomizing Youths in the Dark,” for which, in one story, the would-be perpetrator needs a variety of objects, such as a needle and thread, three small stones, some powder, a pair of scissors, other bits and pieces, and one raw egg. The need for these is explained as the predator progresses. Several tales and poems in this section describe how the desired outcome is not always achieved, and several old men become the unwitting objects of nocturnal attentions.
  10. “On Sodomizing Women.” Several stories in this section illustrate the joys of this activity, and the women are often only too happy to comply. In one tale a presiding judge does not see it as a fault.
  11. “On Love Between Women.” This section gives the medical reasons for such behavior (eating too much celery and rocket, for example) and a descriptive list of different types of lesbians. Several stories illustrate the theme, among them one of a judge who catches two women in the act of love. He arrests one but is hoodwinked into putting her onto his mule, whereupon the beast gallops off in the wrong direction.
  12. “On Passive and Effeminate Men,” which ends with the medical opinions of Rhazes (c. 860–924) on the causes and treatment of effeminacy. The characters who feature in these stories are grown men with tastes for passive sexual activity. Here are witty anecdotes of shameless “inverts” and incorrigible old men who enjoy the charms of generously endowed youths, an analysis of the various desires of such men and how they can be satisfied, a debate on the relative attractiveness of penises when they are short, long, fat, or thin, and an allegedly moral tale on how a promisingly beautiful exterior can hide a disappointingly minute sexual instrument. Celebratory and condemnatory stories and verses illustrate a variety of situations among which feature the rags-to-riches tale of a well-hung stable boy and an educational manual detailing the joys of sodomy.

In this collection we generally find that conventional gender roles are adhered to: adult males (except the old) are active; youths, effeminate men, and eunuchs (there are not many of these latter) are passive; women are sexually demanding, and their modesty is often a pretense. The exceptions, often resulting from mistaken purpose or error of circumstance, give a witty twist to many of the stories. Although there are explicit descriptions of sexual acts, the narrative style, even in translation, enables us to appreciate the tongue-in-cheek lewdness of the author, who, when asked his opinion on a passive tomcat (section 12) replies that when witnessing these practices we should pray to Allah, the dispenser of all good things, to free us from them.

### Biography

Al-Tūfāshū (Abu ’l-Abbās Ahmad bin Yūsuf al-Tūfāshū) was probably born in Qafsa, in

present-day Tunisia, and traveled widely in North Africa. He studied law, natural sciences, medicine, and astrology and wrote a treatise on precious stones. He earned the nickname Shihāb al-Dīn [Meteor of Religion], or Sharaf al-Dīn [Honor of Religion]. He died in Cairo.

PATRICK POLLARD

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# TRANSGRESSION

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The English language acquired the word “transgression” via the French *transgression*, from the Latin *transgredi*—which means “to step across” (from *trans* meaning “across” and *gredi* “to step”).

Simply speaking, to “transgress” is to overstep a boundary. Although “transgression” can be used in a spatial sense—akin to trespassing—the boundaries it commonly refers to are more abstract and ideological: religious, legal, moral, or sexual. When it first appeared, “transgression” was used solely in a religious sense to refer to blasphemy or sin. Since then, “transgression” has acquired a host of secular definitions. Thus, transgression may be a violation of rights or duty, a breaking of the law, or a deviation from the socially acceptable. These are simple definitions. Rather like many aspects of sexuality (and for many of the same reasons), during the latter half of the twentieth century, transgression became linked to the theoretically loaded issues of cultural politics such as subversion, deviance, dissidence, and resistance. It has become a byword for any political or expressive act perceived as challenging the structures, limits, or framework inherent to society—this includes, in the field of textual theory, challenging the regulations and representative ability of culture’s symbolic system, language.

Even such a brief summary reveals that to talk about transgression is to address, alongside a complex, shifting concept, many intricate cultural issues. It is also true to say that transgression has a history as long as civilization and an intimate—some would say integral—relationship to humankind. This is so because civilization depends upon a framework of boundaries. These boundaries are policed by prohibitions or taboos, and wherever taboos exist, so too does man’s temptation to transgress them. As the body and sexual practice are the most taboo-laden sites in human culture, it is possible to see how an understanding of transgression relates to the wider cultural implications of sexual behavior—especially “transgressive” sexual desires or conduct, that is, any practice which deviates from the socially accepted norm.

Within, but certainly not limited to, the linked sites of the body, sexuality, and the taboos which control them, it is possible to see how powerful the temptation to transgress may be. It is also a temptation toward which culture exhibits a contradictory attitude. On the one hand, acts which violate socially acceptable behavior, taste, or ideology induce reactions of disgust and shock; they are perceived as offensive, perhaps immoral, and often threatening to “civilized” values and civilization. Often artists intend

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certain artistic, literary, or cinematic works to induce shock. Their purpose is to force the audience to react and question accepted social values. Such intentions also play into people's eagerness to be shocked and their fascination with the transgressive, for, on the other hand, transgression has a long association with knowledge, pleasure (there is, after all, a great thrill in doing wrong, and part of the excitement associated with erotic material is that it violates laws and the socially acceptable) and liberation, as if a more authentic existence or identity exists outside of civilization's restrictive taboos. Transgressive figures—such as the rebel, the mass murderer, and the sexual “pervert,” or, as with the notorious Marquis de Sade, figures who embody all three—are thus subject to both cultural repulsion and fascination. It is as if, by breaking culture's limits, these figures are privy to forbidden knowledge and/or forbidden pleasure.

One need only think of an ancient Judeo-Christian story—that of Adam and Eve (Genesis 3)—to see how the themes of forbidden knowledge, pleasure, sexuality, sin, liberation, morality, and mortality (which represents the violation of the boundaries of life itself) have haunted humankind and the notion of taboos and their transgression for millennia.

The influential 4th-century writings of Saint Augustine, *Confessions*, explored the same themes in terms of theological belief, temptation, sin, and divine forgiveness. More recently, transgression and taboo were theorized by the French writer of eroticism, Georges Bataille. Bataille's study *L'Érotisme* (1957) presents an exploration of human history and the importance of transgression within it. Although Bataille does not cite Freud, rather as Freud does in his essay *Totem and Taboo* (1913), Bataille shows how ritualized celebrations which allow individuals and entire communities to transgress acceptable behavior have existed throughout history. Bataille points out that although transgression is the violation of a taboo, transgression never actually destroys the taboo: for there to be transgression, the norm or acceptable must remain apparent. By suggesting that no taboos can exist without their transgression, Bataille extends the notion that without taboo there is no transgression and without transgression there is no pleasure, into a reading which challenges the division of transgression and taboo into mutually exclusive opposites. The two—transgression

and taboo—depend on each other and, in Bataille's study, are indissolubly entwined with that search for boundary experience, the erotic.

Since the 1960s, the implications of Bataille's study have been appropriated and extended by a number of influential critics. In *Préface à la transgression* [*A Preface to Transgression*] (1963), an essay written shortly after Bataille's death, the French philosopher Michel Foucault introduced and developed many of Bataille's theories alongside his own interpretation of transgression. This interpretation emphasizes transgression's link to sexuality and a secular world in which God is dead. Another seminal study is Peter Stallybrass and Allon White's *The Politics and Poetics of Transgression* (1986). In this work, transgression is explored in terms of the emergence and construction of the European bourgeoisie. Other cultural critics have argued that if transgression and taboo are mutually interdependent, then the same can be said of many cultural values; for example, sexual “perversion” and the socially accepted sexual “norm.” As in the earliest myths, however, integral to all these theories is that taboo-laden center of culture, the body, and the forbidden pleasure it promises.

BEN JACOB

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# TRANSLATION

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In his pioneering study *Libertine Literature in England, 1660–1745*, David Foxon noted that “every time a major pornographic book appeared on the continent, it was known in England within a year, and in many cases appeared in translation right away.” The same remark would generally hold true, despite the various efforts of the authorities to regulate the trade in pornography, throughout the second half of the eighteenth century and for much of the nineteenth century.

In many respects, the market for translated erotica mirrors the market for other forms of literature over the course of the last three hundred years. Although commentators in Britain have been keen to promote the idea that English fiction represents an independent cultural tradition, there is little evidence for such a view. Indeed, as far as subgenres such as science fiction, the Gothic novel, or erotic writing are concerned, there is overwhelming evidence for the view that the continental contribution to their development was very considerable, paramount even. The origins of science fiction, for example, may be clearly be seen in the *conte philosophique* of the 1750s; early British Gothic novelists such as Charlotte Smith or Sophia Lee began their careers as translators of French sentimental fiction; finally, with regard to erotic writing, the sophistication and extent of the French tradition tended to set the agenda for what was written and published elsewhere.

France was, of course, the dominant cultural force in Europe generally for much of the period in question. Even as late as 1900, let alone 1700 or 1800, there would have been few commentators who would have predicted that the English language would ever achieve sufficient prominence to replace French as the language of international diplomacy and commerce, as well as social and intellectual interaction. When Voltaire, one of the first great continental Anglophiles, sought refuge in England in the 1720s, being unable to speak English did not present a serious drawback: the language of the English

court was French and most of his aristocratic friends were fluent in his native language. In the second half of the century, British authors as diverse as Horace Walpole, William Beckford, and Edward Gibbon were sufficiently fluent in French as to be able to write complex works of fiction or scholarship directly in that language. Thus, it should come as no surprise that when, in early 1668 Samuel Pepys purchased a copy of Michel Millot’s *L’École des filles*, he bought a French edition rather than a translation.

The implication of this, however, is that translated erotic works in Britain (and, indeed, even in America) were aimed at a different class of readers to those whose education and taste allowed them to dispense with translations. Moreover, given the extremely fluid notion of translation that existed until quite recently, it cannot be taken for granted that any English edition represents a version of the original that might be described as faithful. Broadly speaking, translation is a word that has been used at various times to include activities as diverse as adaptation, rewriting, translocation, and, on occasion, even entirely original writing disguised as translation. Thus, the “translation” of Restif de la Bretonne’s *L’Anti-Justine; ou, Les Délices de l’amour* (1798), published by Charles Carrington in 1895 as *The Double Life of Cuthbert Cockerton*, not only anglicizes all the names of the characters but, surprisingly, relocates the setting of the action to Sheffield. Similarly, the first translation of J.-K. Huysmans’s *A Rebours* (1884), brought out by the American firm Lieber and Lewis in 1922 as *Against the Grain*, was considerably censored. Among many changes, the whole of chapter 6 (concerning a homosexual brothel) was omitted. Historically, such derivative or expurgated works have tended to be ignored or dismissed by scholarship; however, the modern view is increasingly that such cultural artifacts are far from valueless but should be studied and assessed on their own terms.

The history of translation in relation to erotic writing, however, must also include an account

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of the massive decline in the market for translated erotic works in English. Again, this reflects a decline in translation generally in Britain and America, where translated fiction nowadays (in 2003) accounts for no more than 2% or so of new titles published (this should be compared with other major European countries, where translation still accounts for as many as 25% of new titles published). This is clearly a reflection of the dominance of American (and, though to a much less extent, British) book and magazine publishers in international markets, such that the flow of works is now generally from English into other languages. Moreover, since the liberalization of censorship regimes in Britain and America in the 1960s, many of the niche markets developed by small publishers such as Olympia Press are now occupied by corporate magazine publishers. By and large, the strategic importance of Paris as a center of the erotic book trade from the late nineteenth century through to the mid-1960s was, in any event, a historical anomaly caused by the fact that the rate at which leisure time has become eroticized has varied from culture to culture.

The shifting relationship between French and English as the language of power and prestige is an important one with regard to the

development of erotic literature. Indeed, translation could and often did determine the dominant style of erotic writing at particular historical junctures. Little work has been undertaken, however, with regard to the various strategies adopted by translators at different times, the extent to which translated works were forced to conform to the cultural norms of the host community, or the relationship between translation and creative writing with respect to erotic writing. Many translators have been authors, or, indeed, publishers in their own right, and perhaps in no other literary field has the distinction between the profession of author and that of translator been so continually and systematically blurred. Generally speaking, translations commissioned since the early 1960s have tended to be much more scholarly and reliable than earlier translations, though this in itself perhaps indicates that the market for translated works of an erotic nature is motivated by different interests than those prevailing in, say, 1800 or 1900.

TERRY HALE

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# TRANSVESTISM

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All through history when it has been possible to relax societal barriers between the sexes, as during special festivals, gender blending has taken place, temporarily at least equalizing or destroying the inequality of gender and the rigid barriers which existed. Cross-dressing also often was part of the initiation ceremony into various cults or groupings. Both mythology and history are full of examples of individuals who broke gender barriers by living in sex roles different than their biological sex (Bullough and Bullough). The erotic implications of such activities, however, while undoubtedly a part of such behavior, are not always easy to document.

It was not until the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries that what might be called “playing with gender” became an erotic and titillating pursuit and that erotic connotations could be documented. While males playing women’s roles had been a standard of much of medieval and early modern drama, it was the increasing appearance of women on stage in England following the Restoration in 1660 which seemed to have imparted more erotic implications to crossing the gender barriers. Both sexes engaged in playing the roles of the opposite sex, and cross-dressing festivals or holidays associated with Mardi Gras or Halloween increased. In

literature, playing with gender became a major theme. from Ariosto's (1474–1533) poetic masterpiece, *Orlando Furioso*, to the *Arcadia* of Sir Philip Sidney (1554–86), to many of the plays of Shakespeare.

Women who actually managed to change roles and status in society through cross-dressing seemed to have been much admired by other women when knowledge of what they had done was reported, provided of course that the exposed woman finally settled down and married. Women readers seemed to enjoy the fact that the cross-dressing woman could successfully challenge male dominance, and undoubtedly fantasized that they too might be able to do so if they had had the opportunity. We know of hundreds if not thousands of ordinary women who temporarily or more or less permanently crossed over the gender divide. Public fascination is illustrated by over a hundred ballads that dealt with women cross-dressers between 1650 and 1850, all with more or less the same theme of a girl in love, who leaves her father's house, is forced to disguise herself as a man, has a stormy love relationship in which she shows unusual courage, and generally ends up married.

The men who donned feminine garb (except on comedic or carnivalesque occasions) seem to have belonged to the princely or upper classes. Some aristocratic boys were actually brought up as girls, like the most famous of the seventeenth-century female impersonators, François de Choisy, who has recorded his erotic escapades for us. The effect of cross-dressing, on both the individual and those who observed it, is illustrated quite effectively in Théophile Gautier's 1835 novel *Mademoiselle de Maupin*.

The more rigid separation of the roles of males and females which seemed to dominate much of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries simply increased, at least for males, the eroticization of all aspects of the female, particularly in terms of clothing and cross-dressing. In the words of a nineteenth-century observer, women's underclothes were comparable to a "tinted flower, whose innumerable petals become more and more beautiful and delicate as you reach the sweet depths of the innermost petals." Describing lingerie on display, Émile Zola (1840–1902), in one of his novels, said that it looked "as if a group of pretty girls had undressed, piece by piece, down to the satin nudity of their skin" (Steele: 201). In short,

women's underclothes for some men seemed to replace women, and wearing them, or holding them, seemed particularly erotic.

Even viewing postcards of photos of women in underwear seemed to be arousing to some men. The novelist Colette (1873–1954), in *My Apprenticeship*, describes Willy's apartment as "strewn" with postcards "celebrating" the attractions of underclothes. The eroticism of female "unmentionables" to men inevitably led to fictional and "true" reports of men wearing women's underclothes or even dressing as women in such magazines as the *Englishwoman's Domestic Science*, *English Mechanic*, and *Knowledge*, the last two magazines edited by Richard Proctor. Both of these latter often ran special articles on women's underclothes and received much correspondence, either real or made up, from men who delighted in the erotic joy of wearing women's clothes (Farrer: 4; Kunzle: 225).

As gender divisions became more formalized in the course of the nineteenth century, impersonation by both sexes became a staple of the stage. During the first part of the nineteenth century, more women than men played cross-dressing roles, but increasingly toward the end of the century, female impersonation dominated the game. One woman observer of the male impersonators stated that the impersonation illustrated the obsessive concern women had with sexual imagination. The heroes kill dragons and monsters, brave demons, outwit enemies, and rescue maidens, enabling women vicariously to have the mythic adventures they desired, to explore sexual boundaries, and to be excited or aroused by this, without threatening the males in the audience. Male impersonation was not confined to pantomimes or burlesque, but went on the serious stage with women playing Hamlet, Romeo, and such obvious roles as Peter Pan. Opera also included erotic scenes of women playing the male role, from Mozart's *The Marriage of Figaro* to Richard Strauss's *Der Rosenkavalier*, although here they often portrayed either effeminate men or youths whose voices had not yet changed. Women writers such as Virginia Woolf, in her novel *Orlando* (1928), had fun in illustrating gender change. The feminism of the 1960s led to a new wave of plays featuring women playing men's roles, seemingly satisfying erotic dreams of both men and women, as women not only achieved fictional equality but approached it in real life as well.



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Female impersonation remained more or less at the same level of popularity throughout much of the twentieth century, not only in vaudeville, but in the mainstream theater as well. Perhaps the dominant person in the first part of the century was Julian Eltinge (born William Dalton, 1882–1941), who was particularly liked by the women in the audience perhaps because he was so realistic that his “obvious femininity” threatened many males’ own concept of masculinity. Increasingly in the last part of the twentieth century, however, female impersonation came to be associated with the gay community. Esther Newton (1972) distinguished two different patterns for professional female impersonators, one of which she called the street impersonator, and other, the stage impersonator. Street impersonators tended to conform to the homosexual stereotype of the feminine male, and their lives were strongly oriented toward survival in the present. They were closely associated with prostitution, acting as B-girls pushing drinks to customers, arousing them enough to eventually have sex with them. The stage impersonators generally were more skillful and talented and played to both the gay and straight communities. Many men and women who see impersonators, such as Julie Andrews in *Victor Victoria* and Jack Lemmon and Tony Curtis in *Some Like It Hot*, find them erotically stimulating. Perhaps the greatest line in *Some Like It Hot* is its last, when Jack Lemmon snatches off his wig and tells his ardent pursuer Joe E. Brown that he is not a woman, to which Brown replies, without batting an eyelash, “Well, nobody’s perfect.”

As male transvestism began to come out of the closet in the 1950s, there was a growing erotic literature designed especially to appeal to transvestites. Virginia Prince, the founder of the modern transvestite movement, began publishing erotic short stories in her magazine *Transvestia* in the 1960s. They never mentioned sex or used the word *penis*, and when the person cross-dressed, he wore special items of clothing to keep “his manliness” under control. Her readership was so stimulated by such stories that her efforts were soon supplemented by a number of publishers issuing 100- to 200-page novelettes which increasingly became more graphic. Robert Stoller, who has studied transvestite fiction, called it simply pornography, since its

purpose was to “excite lust.” In a study of a random sample of materials available since 1950, Vern and Bonnie Bullough analyzed 96 works of fiction. The fantasy stories written under Prince’s influence in the first two decades of the study period featured more of a Barbie-doll type of cross-dresser, were aimed clearly at a heterosexual audience, and often involved the wife of the cross-dresser lovingly embracing her husband, while others simply leave the main character happy and contented simply to belong to the world of women when he/she has a desire to do so. In the 1970s, as the known population of cross-dressers expanded and more publishers entered the market for transvestite fiction, special audiences seemed to develop, some emphasizing sadomasochistic and others homosexual themes. These novels were far more sexually explicit. Surgical sex change began to enter into some of the stories. Still there remained a substantial base of transvestite fiction aimed at a heterosexual audience, although all the cross-dressing men in the stories seemed to be able to pass in public as a woman when they wanted to. A lot of attention was paid to wardrobe. Increasingly the fictional accounts were written in a variety of languages and settings, emphasizing that there was a large audience of men interested in partaking in what they fantasized was the feminine world.

There has been little comparable fantasy fiction dealing with female cross-dressers, although role change and the wearing of male clothing has been a subject of popular lesbian fiction since Radclyffe Hall’s *Well of Loneliness* (1928), if not before. The works that are extant seem to emphasize the ability of women to perform tasks traditionally regarded as men’s work. It seems clear, as Stoller emphasized, that wearing or seeing females wearing items such as denim jeans, engineer boots, and false mustaches can produce orgasmic sensations in women (Stoller: 135–36). As in the cross-gender fiction aimed at the male transvestite, some erotic changes have begun to appear in fiction aimed at the gender-bending woman. Nancy Friday, for example, in *My Secret Garden*, a collection of sexual fantasies, tells of a woman admiring herself in the mirror wearing male jockey shorts with a tampon penis protruding from them. The sale of devices to create a male-looking crotch has been increasing each year, as has that of two-pronged dildoes, which two women are able to use together.

Cross-dressing, transgenderism, or playing at gender bending is a significant erotic fantasy.

VERN L. BULLOUGH

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## TRIGO, FELIPE

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1864–1916

Spanish novelist

Felipe Trigo is, perhaps along with Eduardo Zamacois, the first systematic cultivator of the erotic novel as a subgenre in modern Spanish literature. He wrote almost twenty full-length novels and more than twenty novellas, in addition to a collection of short stories, *Cuentos ingenuos*. Most of these works display an explicit element of eroticism, and many of them explicate his personal conception of Eros as one of their fundamental components. Trigo also wrote several books of essays, two of which, *Socialismo individualista* and *El amor en la Vida y en los libros*, closely reflect his ideas about sexuality and society as developed in his novels.

Trigo defends the establishment of a new moral order based on what he terms “total love.” This new order reached beyond the conventional rules of erotic conduct prevalent in the society of his time. Influenced by the ideas of socialist utopians such as Charles Fourier and Robert Owen, Trigo envisioned a harmonious society in which the achievement of personal happiness resided in creating a collective environment of justice and of freedom that allowed for the expression of sensual and erotic impulses. This social and erotic ideal is, however, quite far from being fulfilled in his own fictional worlds. If it is fulfilled at all, satisfaction is attained only

within a limited personal sphere, as in *Alma en los labios* or as part of a scenario set remotely apart from Western civilization, as in *Las Evas del Paraíso*.

The clash between the real and the ideal provides the basic framework for the twofold depiction of eroticism present in many of his novels. The idealistic impulse allows for the recurrent creation of young and pure female characters endowed with delicacy, refined spirituality, and a beauty that approximates physical perfection. Not infrequently, these characters have been subjected to pernicious environments which have rendered them “fallen angels.” The possibility of redemption usually presents itself through the woman’s encounters with a male protagonist. Yet the protagonist himself has to overcome problems arising from the inadequate education offered by his social milieu, especially when he belongs to an upper class that for the most part is selfish and corrupt.

Trigo’s conception of such female characters is strongly influenced by the aesthetic premises of Decadent, *fin-de-siècle* literature and Hispanic modernism. In his hands, the balanced proportions, smooth surface, and quasi-pictorial perfection of the body seem to coincide with a liberation from the cultural conditions that unnaturally limit erotic exploration. The more these women are able to satisfy their natural desires, the more beautiful they become. Trigo’s texts

advocate a “religion of life” alien to the constraints and frequent hypocrisies of conventional religion. The narrators of these novels (usually the male protagonists) repeatedly present themselves as proponents of women’s development and autonomy. Certainly, these novels attempt a progressive defense of women’s intellectual expression, and they proclaim the legitimacy of women’s search for pleasure and for mastery over their own bodies as a mode of contributing to an enlightened society. There remains, however, a paternalistic attitude on the part of the narrators which, as some critics have noted, precludes a truly emancipatory perspective on the ideological subjugation of Spanish women at the beginning of the 20th century.

In contrast to the development of these stylized figures, the expression of eroticism in Felipe Trigo’s novels also accounts for what is perhaps the most common characterization of his work, which views him as a Naturalistic writer. Trigo repeatedly voiced his admiration for Emile Zola and, in spite of his frequent statements highlighting his unequivocal differences with the French novelist, he can be considered one of the most enthusiastic practitioners of Zola’s literary doctrine in Spanish literature. Although he eventually gave up his medical practice to devote all his efforts to literary creation, he was himself a doctor and thus enjoyed a profound familiarity with scientific methods and principles. In accordance with Zola’s proposals, he viewed the novel as a space for the acquisition of knowledge through experimentation with the human personality, in an attempt to evaluate scientifically all the environmental forces that condition the development of the self. In this sense, what he termed his “clinical notes” provided a vast source of primary materials for the construction of his fictional worlds.

The contemplation of sexual reality through the Naturalistic/materialistic lens results in a presentation of eroticism that is quite different from the one already discussed. This perspective tends to underscore the degraded character of a purely material carnal interaction. Prostitutes, *cocottes*, and aged bourgeois gentlemen become the protagonists of these sexual encounters; the repellent carnality of their worn-out bodies is barely hidden behind the falsehood of their makeup. Often, these two viewpoints of sexual relations (one with a materialistic, one with an

idealistic emphasis) coexist in the same work, depending on which characters engage in them.

The relatively explicit character of the sexual encounters described in Trigo’s books earned him a reputation as a pornographic writer, and not surprisingly, also a wide audience almost unsurpassed by any other Spanish author of his time. It must be noted, however, that such labeling frequently came from persons who had not even read his works, as he himself complained on several occasions. Although unquestionably advanced as compared with the general tone of romantic literature of the time, Trigo’s works would hardly be considered pornographic by even the most prudish reader today. Generally, his love scenes limit their adventurousness to descriptions of nude female bodies and to mild accounts of explicit sexual interaction that are either very stylized, “spiritualized,” or brief.

Affected by neurasthenia, a disorder that he would repeatedly re-create in the fictional realm, Trigo became progressively obsessed with the concept of a pagan religion of love that would advance the notions of inner purity and naturalness achieved through sensual satisfaction. Even while enjoying a stable family environment and a prosperous economic situation, Trigo’s emotional and mental states continued to deteriorate during his final years, when he was a victim of acute depressive crises. According to his biographers, during this period he may have engaged in turbulent extramarital affairs. The gap between his inner aspirations and the surrounding reality would only be exacerbated by the onset of the First World War, a conflict which prompted in him deeply disillusioned reflections regarding the present and future state of European civilization. All these circumstances intertwine in what has been considered his literary testament, the novel *Sí sé por qué* (1916), published a few months before his death as a final expression and reformulation of his long-established views regarding eroticism, society, and individual achievement.

### Biography

Born in Villanueva de la Serena (Badajoz, Spain), February 13. Studied medicine at the University of Madrid. At age 21 married 18-year-old Consuelo Seco de Luna. Worked as a military doctor at a penitentiary in the Philippines, a Spanish

colony. Wounded during a prison uprising, he received military honors and public acclaim on his return to Madrid. His first novel, *Las ingenuas*, was published in 1901, and his first erotic novel, *La sed de amar*, appeared in 1903. He committed suicide, shooting himself in the head, September 2.

RICARDO KRAUEL

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## TROCCHI, ALEXANDER

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1925–1984

Scottish novelist and poet

Alexander Whitelaw Robertson Trocchi wrote erotic fiction out of financial necessity rather than a desire to contribute to the genre. He was the founder and editor of the Paris-based literary journal *Merlin*. The magazine was an artistic success—publishing Samuel Beckett, Eugene

Ionesco, and many others—but a financial failure. In order to raise funds for the project, Trocchi and other Merlin contributors entered into a deal with Maurice Girodias of Olympia Press to translate French erotic classics into English. Thus, Trocchi’s translation of Apollinaire’s *Les Onze mille verges* was published in 1953. Shortly afterward, Girodias encouraged the Merlin group to write their own “dirty

books.” In 1954, Olympia published Trocchi’s *Helen and Desire*, *Young Adam*, *The Carnal Days of Helen Seferis*, *School for Sin*, and *Frank Harris—My Life and Loves: Volume 5*. In 1955 followed *Thongs* and *White Thighs*. He left *Merlin* and Olympia Press in 1956 to move to the United States. There he published his final erotic works, *Sappho of Lesbos* and *Angela* (a rewrite of *Helen and Desire*).

Trocchi did not consider the aforementioned erotic works as important as his serious novels—the original version of *Young Adam* and *Cain’s Book*—and it is on those two books that his literary reputation rests. Trocchi’s sense of himself as an author is seen in the way he differentiated his work. Olympia Press published his books under the pseudonym of Frances Lengel. Trocchi completed *Young Adam*, his first novel, in 1952 but was unable to find a publisher. He inserted several gratuitous erotic scenes in order to render it salacious enough for Girodias and it was published as a Frances Lengel book in 1954. However, as soon as he found a mainstream publisher for the work, he removed the extraneous passages and released it under his own name. Another measure of his attitude is that while he labored for months over his serious work, he spent only one week writing *Helen and Desire* and ten days on *Frank Harris—My Life and Loves: Volume 5*. This last work was published as if the real-life Harris, author of *My Life and Loves*, had written it. In fact, Trocchi created it from a handful of Harris’ notes, which Girodias had acquired. Many years later, when it was reprinted under Trocchi’s name, he claimed to have undertaken the project in order to “take the piss out of [Harris] using his own execrable style.” Likewise, he originally claimed *Sappho of Lesbos* was his translation of her long-lost autobiography, when it was actually his own work merely incorporating poetic fragments of Sappho.

Trocchi’s erotic work is often lightweight, escapist, and derivative. *Helen and Desire*, for example, is indebted to John Clelland’s *Fanny Hill*; and its sequel, *The Carnal Days of Helen Seferis*, reads like a hard-boiled detective novel. The sex itself is mostly conventional (though the novels with female protagonists inevitably contain some lesbian scenes) and described with florid prose. Trocchi’s style, though, is to interject moments of brutality and violence into what are otherwise adventurous erotic romps. Helen, for example,

ends up a slave in an Algerian brothel. His male characters fare no better, and the private detective who narrates *The Carnal Days of Helen Seferis* is whipped and humiliated by a group of women. The theme of torture emerges in several other novels. In *Thongs*, the female protagonist runs afoul of a secret society of sadomasochists, and in *White Thighs* the narrator’s father marks each sexual conquest with a carving in her inner thigh. Despite the violence, there is something lighthearted about Trocchi’s erotic work. The portrayals of sexuality in his serious novels reflect the existential gloom that permeates these semi-autobiographical works, as exemplified by the scene in *Young Adam* where the protagonist rapes his girlfriend. In contrast, writing erotic fiction seems to have offered him the freedom of detachment. He often wrote from the female perspective, described cities and countries he had never been to, and incorporated fantastic (perhaps unbelievable) plot developments. This almost carefree approach was perhaps necessitated by the lack of time he spent on the manuscripts, but it also serves to undercut some of the violent tension present in the books and more often than not works to their strength.

Trocchi was an anti-authoritarian rebel his entire life and clearly saw his erotic books as a way to challenge and offend conservative sensibilities. However, it is clear in his letters and essays that he thought that drugs, rather than sexuality, were the key to true cultural subversion. He described himself as a “cosmonaut of inner space” and sometimes signed his correspondence “Alexander Trocchi—Junkie to the Queen.” Indeed, when magistrates, in a ruling that expanded the scope of the Obscene Publications Act, declared *Cain’s Book* obscene in 1964, it was due to the graphic depiction of drug use in the novel. Ironically, his heroin addiction cut his literary career short, leaving *Young Adam* and *Cain’s Book* as his only “serious” works. Because of this limited output, Trocchi’s erotic novels, however flawed, remain an important, if not central, part of his body of work.

### Biography

Born in Glasgow, July 30. Enrolled at Glasgow University for a BA in English, political economy, and logic in 1942. Conscripted February 1943 and served in the Royal Navy. Released

from service in November 1946. Married Betty White, January 1947 (divorced 1954); two daughters. Returned to Glasgow University in 1947 with an ex-serviceman's grant as a student of English and philosophy. Awarded a Second Class Honours degree in English and philosophy in 1950; settled in Paris. Wrote a monthly "Paris Letter" for the *Scots Review*, November 1950–April 1951. Sold his first work (a poem) to the editor of the literary magazine *Botteghe Oscure* in the summer of 1951. Founded the literary magazine *Merlin* in 1952. Published erotic novels under a pseudonym for Olympia Press, 1954–55. Moved to New York City, 1956. Married Lyn Hicks, 1957; two sons. Published *Cain's Book*, 1960. Arrested for supplying drugs to a minor, April 1961, and fled to England to avoid prosecution. *Cain's Book* declared obscene by Sheffield magistrates and the ruling upheld by the High Court in the Strand, 1964. Lecturer in the sculpture department of St. Martin's School of Art, 1964–1966. Became an antiquarian book dealer, 1972. Died of pneumonia following lung cancer surgery, in London, April 15.

CHAD MARTIN

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## TURGENEV, IVAN

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1818–1883

Russian novelist, short story writer, and playwright

Turgenev favored social reform as the means for Russia's advancement and called for a Western-style democracy. Unlike those of his two great contemporaries Tolstoy and Dostoevsky, Turgenev's works reflect little mysticism or religious zeal. He maintained a moderate political view, alienating both reactionaries and radicals and facing bitter criticism from both sides. His works can be divided into two broad categories: the short fiction focused on courtship, marriage, unrequited love, and extramarital affairs, and the controversial social novels dealing with

more abstract issues of societal justice and freedom. The so-called social novels, the most famous of which is *Fathers and Sons* (1862), often have an erotic subplot or revolve around a love story, as in *Rudin* (1856) and *On the Eve* (1860).

### *Asya*

Narrated in the first person, *Asya* (1858) is highly autobiographical. It is a story of an illegitimate child and her frustrated love affair with the narrator. Both the heroine Asya and the "cruel widow" of the story are characters drawn from real life. Turgenev's uncle had a daughter Asya with a peasant woman, who, because of social taboo, was never acknowledged to be his.

## TURGENEV, IVAN

The widow is modeled after Turgenev's lover Pauline Viardot, a French opera singer with whom the author had a love affair which lasted many years and who was then having a passionate affair with another man, becoming pregnant by him.

The illegitimate Asya, like her real-life counterpart, was doomed to a life of ambiguous identity and status, neither a servant nor ever quite a "lady," inhabiting an uncomfortable social space. Turgenev weaves a tale of incest (the relationship between Asya and her half-brother), deceit (the attempt to cover up the facts of Asya's birth), and adultery (her father's numerous affairs with peasant women), but veiled in insinuation, suggestion, and implication.

Despite the strong attraction between Asya and the narrator, their relationship is never consummated and they part in the end. The narrator, though inwardly critical of the social stigma attached to illegitimacy, proves incapable of opposing it. Similar to many of the weak Turgenevian heroes, he resigns himself to his fate and does not commit to Asya for fear of societal disapproval.

### *First Love*

This 1860 novella recounts the story of Turgenev's sexual awakening at sixteen: his infatuation with the seductive nineteen-year-old Zinaida. Another autobiographical story informed by Freudian pre-Oedipal impulses, it reveals intimate details of Turgenev's own dysfunctional family: the sadistic and overbearing mother and the distant and philandering father. His lifelong pathological relationships with domineering women—his mother and then his mistress Viardot—left him irresolute and passive, often regretting his romantic decisions. Feminist readings of this work have interpreted it as misogynistic, challenging traditional views of Turgenev as a "lyrical" and "gentle" portraitist of the human heart.

It is a story within a story, as an old man, Valdemar, relives the pain and disillusionment of his first love. Zinaida, initially cast as a kind of high priestess with a strong sexual hold over men, finally emerges as a tragic seductress who dies young in childbirth. The obsessed and frustrated Valdemar, too young to be of any interest to her, can only fantasize about Zinaida as he

watches her from afar. With voyeuristic precision he records every movement, every gesture of Zinaida and her various suitors, deriving what vicarious fulfillment he can. His constant shadowing of Zinaida ends in a devastating discovery which will scar him for life. Realizing she has been secretly meeting a lover, Valdemar is determined to discover the man's identity and to kill him. Following her into a forest, Valdemar witnesses a sadomasochistic encounter between Zinaida and her mysterious lover, who whips her with a riding crop, drawing her blood; she responds by kissing him passionately. After this ritualism of dominance and submission, Valdemar recognizes the secret lover: it is his father.

### *Torrents of Spring*

This story, from 1872, like so much of Turgenev's short fiction, juxtaposes sexual love (or *eros*) with the spiritual love of *agape*: the hero Sanin, modeled after the author himself, is torn between the two. Like his prototype, Sanin chooses the erotic excitement of the *femme fatale* over the quiet, wifely love, so highly prized in the sentimental novel of the nineteenth century, of an ordinary woman.

Following his engagement to a naive young girl, Jemma, Sanin finds himself under the spell of a dominatrix, whose strong sexual appeal (like that of Viardot) draws him into a relationship of bondage and enslavement, a lifelong *ménage à trois*. Her impotent and ridiculous husband acts as her procurer, recruiting new lovers and buying provocative lingerie, his only reward being the erotic gratification of watching her with her partners. At the end of the story Sanin laments having lost Jemma, whom he now sees as the "true love" of his life. This story may have been something of a catharsis for the author. In 1854 Turgenev was engaged to a much younger woman, Olga, but unable to break free from Viardot (whom he called a "Circe"), he called off the engagement, a decision he was later to regret.

At the core of Turgenev's erotic works lies his preoccupation with the destructive power of sexual desire and its unshakable hold over people. Though not a moralist in outlook, Turgenev often portrays *eros* as a dark, irrational drive, in opposition to *agape*, which is portrayed as

“pure” but elusive and unattainable. Turgenev’s women tend to come in two types: some, like his domineering mother, are depicted as sexual predators who ruin their inexperienced lovers, while others are portrayed as noble and self-sacrificing heroines, paragons of virtue, and models of Russian womanhood. His male characters are sensitive but weak, faltering under the spell of strong women caused by deep-rooted neurosis. Their inability to act leaves them dissatisfied and regretful in the end.

### Biography

Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev was born in the province of Oriol, Ukraine, into a serf-owning aristocratic family. His collection of short stories depicting the injustice of serfdom, *A Hunter’s Sketches* (1852), influenced Tsar Aleksandr II’s decision to emancipate the serfs in 1861. Called “the novelist’s novelist” by Henry James, and befriended by Gustave Flaubert and Emile Zola, in the West Turgenev was considered to be the foremost Russian novelist of his time.

TRINA R. MAMOON

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- Rudin*. 1856
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- Nakanune* [On the Eve]. 1860
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## TUSQUETS, ESTHER

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1936–  
Spanish novelist

**Trilogy (*El mismo mar de todos los veranos, El amor es un juego solitario, Varada tras el último naufragio*)**

A stylistic tour de force in the “new novel” mode (Servodidio: 160), Tusquets’s trilogy (1978–80) made literary headlines no less for the powerful erotic charge that drives it. The subject matter—the first substantial account of lesbianism in Spanish narrative (Smith: 91)—explores a range of crisscrossing heterosexual and lesbian relationships among the upper middle class of Barcelona who traditionally decamp to their residences on the Costa Brava for the summer. Its publication coincided with and spearheaded a boom in erotic literature in Spain following the abolition of censorship at the end of the Franco regime. This cleared the way in Spanish literature for the particular prominence of writing by and for women.

Although the majority of critical writing on Tusquets has focused on this trilogy, she has produced other fiction of an equally high standard, in which she has maintained the importance of the erotic element but developed new contexts, angles, and characters to rearticulate her recurrent preoccupations with the search for sexual satisfaction and true love, as well as the obsessive concern with the impact of her characters’ past on their present selves (Molinero: 15), always in the world of the Catalan elite, which she knows well, as she herself belongs to it. *Para no volver* [*Never to Return*] (1985) is about Elena, who in late middle age is struggling to come to terms with the disappointments of her marriage, her husband’s philandering with younger women, and the end of her own youthfulness, by recourse to a psychoanalyst and an extramarital heterosexual affair of her own; *Con la miel en los labios* [*With Honey on Her Lips*] (1997) deals with a passionate lesbian love affair between two students at Barcelona University that ends with both partners capitulating to

societal expectations and getting married. Two collections of short fiction, *Siete miradas en un mismo paisaje* [*Seven Looks at the Same Landscape*] (1981) and *La niña lunática y otros cuentos* [*The Odd Girl and Other Stories*] (1996), allow Tusquets to sketch out and experiment with different amorous conflicts and combinations, but all the stories bear her hallmark of an atmosphere imbued with eroticism, woven into the searching psychological exploration of her female protagonists. In a different vein altogether, Tusquets has also published some children’s fiction.

One of the distinctive features of Tusquets’s literature for adults is her habit of reusing certain first names for characters in different stories. In this way is created a certain continuity, as the people bearing the same name often have much in common with one another, yet are not reappearances of a single character in the realist mode. Tusquets’s world is therefore not like that of Balzac in *La Comédie humaine*, for example, where one meets the same characters in successive novels at different stages in their lives; rather, the impression is analogous to musical variations on a theme, and this writer’s theme is undoubtedly the quest for love expressed as physical passion and how relationships wax and wane, the euphoria followed by the misery of the end of an affair that seemed perfect and eternal, and the intense pathos generated when there is a lack of total reciprocity: when one partner’s trajectory of falling in or out of love fails to synchronize with the other’s. Coupled with the stream-of-consciousness style, in which characters’ abiding preoccupations and experiences that have marked them keep coming back in their thoughts, an air of circularity—of endlessly repeated mirrorings and echoes—pervades Tusquets’s oeuvre as a whole and ironically undercuts her internal characters’ impressions that they are living through a unique and life-changing experience.

One element typical of Tusquets’s fiction, which enhances and intensifies the reading experience, is linked to her richly metaphorical

use of other narratives: *Peter Pan* is utilized to develop ideas around the meaning of growing up, for example; classical mythology provides a rich source of topoi too, as do the Hollywood films watched by her characters. But the key aspect of her consummate technique in creating the erotic charge that marks out her distinctive style is probably her integration of these intertextual references into the stream-of-consciousness discourse, which delves into her narrators' deepest consciousness and keeps the reader's eye running on for page after page, with few paragraph divisions or full stops to offer the usual breaks. Amongst the effects this creates is an urgency, a breathlessness in the reading experience which echoes well the characters' own yearnings. Some critics (e.g., Servodidio) find that the tortured syntax and uninterrupted flow slow down the reading process, but there does seem to be agreement that this style "fortifies" the thematic concerns of the author. The two examples which follow contrast two sex scenes. The first, a short extract from a much longer account in *El mismo mar de todos los veranos*, is an emotionally powerful one between the protagonist and her young lover, Clara, which takes place in a box at the Barcelona opera house during a performance; the second is an excerpt from a portrayal of a meaningless and mechanical experience for Elena with a man she hardly knows in *Para no volver*; in both cases the stream-of-consciousness discourse evokes with almost painful accuracy the precise feelings of the narrator during the lovemaking.

Siento que la herida que el gemido [de Clara] ha abierto en mí se hace honda y lacerante, la punzada feroz de un hierro al rojo vivo, . . . y cojo a la ninfa entre mis brazos, y la oprimo, la mezo, le acaricio una y mil veces el pelo largo, sedoso, lacio, las mejillas mojadas, los hombros estremecidos, y entre beso y beso, en los breves momentos en que mis labios se separan un poco de sus labios, la arrullo con palabras increíbles, tan extrañas, palabras que no he dicho nunca a ningún hombre, . . . palabras que ignoraba yo misma que estuvieran en mí, en algún oscuro rincón de mi conciencia, agazapadas, quietas y a la espera de ser un día pronunciadas, ni siquiera pronunciadas, sino salmodiadas, cantadas, vertidas espesas y dulcísimas en una voz que tampoco reconozco aunque debe forzosamente ser la mía, tantos años oculta esta voz y estas palabras. (137–38)

[I feel that the wound which [Clara's] moan opened up in me is growing deep and lacerating, the

ferocious jab of a red-hot iron, . . . and I take the nymph into my arms, and I press her to me, I rock her, one and a thousand times I stroke her long, silky, smooth hair, her wet cheeks, her trembling shoulders, and between one kiss and the next, in the brief moments when my lips are slightly parted from her lips, I soothe her with incredible words, so strange, words I have never said to any man, . . . words I myself didn't know were inside me, in some dark corner of my consciousness, crouching quietly and waiting to be one day uttered, not even uttered but chanted, sung, poured thickly and oh so sweetly in a voice which I don't recognize either, although it must necessarily be mine, this voice and these words for so many years concealed.]

Había permitido . . . que . . . la empezara a besar en el sofá, y luego la llevara al dormitorio y la desnudara y la acostara — . . . ¿habría dejado de ser una mujer que se acuesta, para pasar a convertirse en una muñeca grande, de goma o de porcelana, a la que se quita la ropita y se mete en la cama? — y comenzara a acariciarla, sin dejar ni por un instante — mientras le daba la vuelta, la manipulaba, le separaba las piernas de trazo, las flexionaba, le colocaba en una posición o en otra los brazos perfectamente articulados, la tocaba por todas partes, la lamía, la chupaba, le conducía con su mano de ella, la incitaba la golpeaba, la penetraba — ni por un solo instante de hablar. . . . De modo que no le parecía a Elena-robot, Elena-muñeca-de-porcelana que estuvieran haciendo de veras el amor, no se asemejaba aquello casi en nada a una escena vivida y real, parecía, por el contrario, la escena retransmitida de una serial radiofónica. (114–15)

[She had allowed him . . . to start kissing her on the sofa, and then to take her to the bedroom and undress her and put her to bed—had she stopped being a woman who goes to bed, to become a large doll, made of rubber or china, whose little clothes you take off and you put to bed?—and to start caressing her, without for a single moment—while he turned her over, manipulated her, opened her cloth legs, flexed them, positioned one way or another her perfectly jointed arms, touched her everywhere, licked her, sucked her, guided her hand, incited her, hit her, penetrated her—not for a single moment stopping talking. . . . So that robot-Elena, china-doll-Elena did not feel as though she was making love for real, that bore virtually no resemblance to a real, lived scene, it seemed, on the contrary, like a broadcast scene from a radio serial.]

## Biography

Esther Tusquets was born in Barcelona, placing her in the same age-group as the so-called

## TWAIN, MARK

Midcentury Group, who launched themselves on the Spanish literary scene in the 1950s, when they were in their twenties. However, unlike these contemporaries, Tusquets did not embark on her career as an author until after Franco's death; she was forty-two and running a successful publishing business when her debut novel was published in 1978. The first of her trilogy, *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* [*The Same Sea as Every Summer*], created a critical sensation, which Tusquets sustained with its sequels, *El amor es un juego solitario* [*Love Is a Solitary Game*] and *Varada tras el último naufragio* [*Stranded After the Last Shipwreck*].

ABIGAIL LEE SIX

### Selected Works

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## TWAIN, MARK

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1835–1910

American novelist, journalist, and lecturer

### [Date, 1601.] *Conversation, as it was by the Social Fireside in the Time of the Tudors*

Mark Twain's *1601* embeds scatological banter and sexual anecdotes in a comic contrast between the elevated reputation of Queen

Elizabeth's court and its vulgar behavior. Written in 1876 between revisions of *Tom Sawyer* and plans for *Huckleberry Finn*, *1601* circulated only in manuscript and private editions until published in the *Oxford Mark Twain* (1996). Twain first sent the manuscript in a letter to his friend the Reverend Joseph Twichell, but it found its way into print through unwitting support from the US government. John Hay wrote

to Alexander Gunn of Cleveland on U.S. Department of State stationery in June 1880 offering to share a “masterpiece”; veiled requests thereafter led to 4 printed copies (Meine: 12–16). In 1882 Lieutenant Charles Erskine Scott Wood printed 50 copies—the first authorized edition—at the U.S. Military Academy (West Point) to spare Twain hand-copying. Apparently with Twain’s permission, Wood used archaic fonts and coffee-stained paper to represent *1601* as “a species of forgery.” Franklin J. Meine identified 42 other editions by 1938, when he collected the first two printings (the 1882 edition in facsimile) into an elaborately annotated volume.

Twain’s 2,400-word narrative in Elizabethan eye-dialect (mock-Shakespearean spellings that may not correspond to variant pronunciations) strings together witticisms on flatulence and sexual availability purportedly witnessed by “the Pepys of that day,” a cupbearer to Queen Elizabeth who witnessed her conversations with [William] Shaxpur, Lord [Francis] Bacon, Ben Jonson, Francis Beaumont, Sir Walter Ralef[i]gh, the Duchess of Bilgewater, the Countess of Granby, and the Ladies Alice Dilberry, Helen of Granby, and Margery Boothy. As snobbish as Pepys, *1601*’s narrator objects to the “righte straunge mixing trully of mighty blode with mean” (33) and resents having to remain on duty until dismissed. The tale begins when a member of the party “did breake wind, yielding an exceding mightie and distressful stink.” When the Queen tries to identify “ye author,” her visitors’ elegant and eupemistic disclaimers turn the conversation from flatulence to genitalia, sexual maturity, and potency. Characters’ comments reveal individual traits as well as collective vulgarity—to the dismay of the cupbearer over “the foul and deadly stink” (34) and the Queen’s company, which becomes a comic sufferer’s chorus. When Bacon ends his denial with flattery (“haply shall ye finde yt ’tis not from mediocrity this miracle hath issued”), the cupbearer rails against “this tedious sink of learning” (34). When Raleigh admits to the fart, but dismisses it as “so poor and frail a note, compared with such as I am wont to furnish,” and then delivers another, the narrator bemoans “this swaggering braggart” [35]. The cupbearer judges Shaxpur’s *Henry IV* “not of ye value of an arsefull of ashes” (38). The narrator is haughty, not prudish. He condemns those who feign offense at “a little harmless debauching,

when pricks were stiff and cunts not loathe to take ye stiffness out of them,” asking, “who of this company was sinless?” (certainly not the Duchess Bilgewater, “roger’d by four lords before she had a husband,” nor Lady Alice or Lady Margery, both “whores from ye cradle” [38]). And he enjoys Elizabeth’s end to Lady Alice’s “grandiose speeche”: “*O shit!*” (39). The themes of *1601* culminate in a narrative and sexual anticlimax—a joke equating sexual failure, bodily waste, debunked status, and verbal success—as Raleigh tells how a witty maiden escaped an archbishop’s rape: “*First, my lord, I prithee, take out thy holy tool and piss before me; which doing, lo his member felle, and would not rise again*” (39).

*1601* draws on Twain’s stock comic contrasts between characters’ high status and low manners, between Elizabethan culture’s elevated reputation and this tale’s topics, between British and American literary traditions. A key joke—a pun conflating intestinal gas and speech—debunks great literature: eloquent Elizabethans are full of hot air. (Hence Raleigh, the “windy ruffian” (38), authors the initial fart and the last joke.) Reversing the literary principle of decorum, the noblest figures speak most vulgarly. Elizabeth jokes, “widows in England doe weare prickes . . . betwixt the thighs, and not wilted neither, till coition hath done that office for them” (36). Like the teller of an American tall tale, Lady Margery elevates life experience over book learning to end Bacon and Jonson’s dispute over the spelling of *bollocks* (testicles): “*Before . . . my fourteenth year I had learnt that them that would explore a cunt stop’d not to consider the spelling o’r*” (37, italics in original).

Unlike some other instances of eroticism and scatology, *1601* occupies an honored place in Twain’s career as an experiment in language, setting, and point of view, well timed to assist his creativity as a writer and cultural critic. *1601* is the first of Twain’s works, including *The Prince and the Pauper* and *A Connecticut Yankee*, to draw on European literary and historical sources (such as Rabelais and Pepys) that fired his imagination long after. The model of Pepys’s *Diary* attracted Twain as late as 1905, when his *Eve’s Diary* followed *Adam’s Diary*. *1601*’s critique of British laureates and royalty recurs in *Huckleberry Finn*, with the sunken *Walter Scott* and the con man Duke. Twain considered the cupbearer’s point of view the most important element of *1601*’s humor, Walter Blair has pointed

## TWAIN, MARK

out, putting this narrator—like Huck—in the “long procession of figures . . . in American humor . . . who were lacking in humor and some sorts of perception but who nevertheless communicated important insights of their creators” (Blair: 97). Equally important, Twain’s ridicule of Elizabethan English in *1601* not only exploited American fondness for eye-dialect and comic misspellings, but also built upon his recent forays into black dialect in “Sociable Jimmy” and “A True Story”—key elements in his decision to turn away from conventional literary diction in favor of the vernacular voice that made *Huckleberry Finn* a masterpiece and landmark of American fiction.

### Biography

Born Samuel Langhorne Clemens, November 30 in Florida, Missouri, though primarily associated with nearby Hannibal, to which his family moved in 1839. Following stints in Missouri, Nevada, and California as a typesetter, riverboat pilot, and journalist, Clemens came to national attention as Mark Twain, author of “Jim Smiley and His Jumping Frog” (1865) and *The Innocents Abroad* (1869), the latter based on his humorous newspaper reports of a cruise to the Holy Land and nearby countries. Married Olivia Langdon, 1870; lived in Hartford, Connecticut, 1871–1891, when Clemens supplemented his writing career with several others, most notably publisher (*Buffalo Express*, American Publishing Company), inventor (scrapbook), and comic lecturer. His lecturing career, which began in 1867 at Cooper Union in New York City, eventually took him across the nation and around the world. He read from *Life on the Mississippi* (1883), *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884), and other writings on an American tour with G. W. Cable in 1884–85. Spent long periods in Europe in 1873, 1878, 1891–95; charted his 1895–96 tour of Australia, New Zealand, India, and southern Africa in in *Following the Equator* (1897). But even in tales set abroad, his great theme was the promise of American culture, and his great technique the language spoken by Americans of different regions, races, and classes. His complete works fill 29 volumes and have been translated into dozens of languages. At age eighty-four, having outlived his wife Olivia

(1845–1904) and three of their four children, Clemens died of angina pectoris at his Redding, Connecticut, home, “Stormfield,” on April 21.

JUDITH YAROSS LEE

### Editions

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# TYNAN, KENNETH

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1927–1980

British drama critic and theatrical producer

## *Oh! Calcutta*

During his tenure as literary manager of the British National Theater, Kenneth Peacock Tynan also struck out on his own as a theatrical producer in the United States, staging a series of sex farces he solicited from such well-known writers as Jules Feiffer, John Lennon, Edna O'Brien, Sam Shepard, and most notoriously Samuel Beckett. Called *Oh! Calcutta* and subtitled "An Entertainment with Music," it was "devised" by Tynan and directed by Jacques Levy, and was less a species of Marxist political commitment than a good-natured sexual romp. As he said to the *Village Voice*, "[T]here was no place for a civilized man to take a civilized woman to spend an evening of civilized erotic entertainment. . . . We're trying to fill that gap" (so to speak). After an unprecedented 39 cautious previews off-Broadway (to which New York City officials were repeatedly invited to ensure that no civil action be taken against the production), it finally opened on June 17, 1969, at the Eden Theater in New York City, moved to Broadway on February 26, 1971, and ran until August 6, 1989, that is, for a full nine years after Tynan's death. An astonishing 85 million people saw 1,314 performances over a twenty-year period. The play took its title from a surrealist painting by Clovis Trouille called "Oh! Calcutta! Calcutta!" which suggested the French surrealist pun, "Oh quel cul t'as" [Oh what a lovely ass you have!]. The image of a posterior odalisque whose *fesse* was framed by a drape, each cheek decorated by a variety of *fleur-de-lys*, was simultaneously innocent and erotic, as was the show itself. The Trouille painting was exploited in publicity posters for the show and for the cover of the subsequent book (Grove Press, 1969), which made the wildly exaggerated boast that the sketches dealt "with every conceivable erotic fantasy and sexual reality that Western man has dreamt up or experienced."

The most unlikely of the "sex farces" was Samuel Beckett's unwitting contribution called *Breath*, but renamed "Prologue" by Tynan. Although the text had nothing to do with his theme, Tynan made it fit, and in the process infuriated Beckett. To Beckett's "Miscellaneous rubbish," for example, Tynan added, "including naked people." And Beckett's two cries, one of birth and one of death (the entire text of the play), were turned into erotic groans in production. To add to the folly, the altered text of *Breath* was published by Beckett's American publisher, Grove Press, under Tynan's title (although still attributed to Beckett), "Prologue," the text facing a production photo of naked bodies protruding from a heap of rubbish. A furious and surprisingly prudish Beckett scurried to stop the performance but found that his American contract forbade his intervention. He did succeed in forbidding use of the "Prologue" in all subsequent countries where the play was produced, including the United Kingdom. The final irony may have been, however, that the "Prologue" became Samuel Beckett's most viewed play—ever.

Much of Tynan's decline as a theater critic and his failing health are detailed in a series of journals covering the years 1971–1980. They were kept from publication by Tynan's second wife, Kathleen, a novelist, Tynan's biographer, and the editor of his letters. The journals were finally released by his daughter Tracy, edited by John Lahr, in 2001. Writing in *The Observer* (October 7, 2001), playwright David Hare concludes his review of the journals, which he called "All Passion Spent," with Tynan's own measure of his decline: "One reason I cannot write nowadays is because I no longer have a stance, an attitude, what [T.S.] Eliot called 'the core of it, the tone.'"

## Biography

Born in Birmingham, England, April 2 to an unwed, middle-class couple. Tynan was something of a "terrible child prodigy," according

## TYNAN, KENNETH

to Harold Clurman. At the age of 16, two years before he entered Oxford University on scholarship, he wrote his first theater review and grew to become what some have called “the greatest theater critic since Shaw.” At Oxford he was drama critic for *Isis*, the university literary magazine, secretary of the debating society, and president of the Experimental Theatre Club. After an aborted attempt at acting (in Alec Guinness’s *Hamlet*) in 1951, he was hired first by the *London Evening Standard*, then three years later as the theater critic of *The Observer*, where he had made his reputation as a pugnacious, stylistically elegant drama critic from 1954 to 1963. Beginning in 1956, he championed the new British theater, that realistically gritty art that focused on the underclasses and was dubbed “Kitchen Sink” drama, since it broke with the tradition of setting British drama in Mayfair drawing rooms or in elegant country houses. He became spokesman for a new generation of upstart, left-wing dramatists, particularly John Osborne, Arnold Wesker, and Shelagh Delaney. In 1958 he went to the United States to be drama critic for the *New Yorker* magazine, and those early reviews were collected under the title *Curtains: Selections from the Drama Criticism and Related Writings*. By 1963 he had been lured away from drama criticism by Laurence Olivier to become literary manager of the nascent British National Theater, at the time little more than an idea, a position that he held until his forced withdrawal in 1973. A champion of the “Angry Young Men” movement in the United Kingdom (a fine essay on which appears in *Curtains*), he also championed Arthur Miller and Lorraine Hansberry in the United States and Bertolt Brecht and Samuel Beckett from abroad, although he tended to lose patience with the

latter’s aesthetic preoccupations. Of Beckett’s *Endgame*, Tynan wrote in 1957: “Last weekend’s production, portentously stylized, piled on the agony until I thought my skull would split. . . . For a short time, I am prepared to listen in any theatre to any message, however antipathetic. But when it is not only disagreeable but forced down my throat, I demur.” Tynan would grow from an advocate of “the theatre of fantasy and shock” to a more Marxist-oriented perspective where “art, ethics, politics, and economics were inseparable from each other.” Among experimental theater artists he preferred the ideology of Bertolt Brecht to Beckett’s modernist formalism and would also have his revenge on the Irish dramatist in 1969 with *Oh! Calcutta*. He died in Santa Monica, California, from pulmonary emphysema.

S.E. GONTARSKI

### Editions

*Oh! Calcutta! An Entertainment with Music*. Devised by Kenneth Tynan, directed by Jacques Levy. New York: Grove Press, 1969. (Video version by VidAmerica, directed by Guillaume Martin Aucain, 1980.)

### Selected Works

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## UEDA AKINARI

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1734–1809

Japanese poet, scholar, and writer of fiction

Ueda Akinari was the most important Japanese writer of fiction in the eighteenth century, a formidable scholar of ancient Japanese literature, and perhaps the finest *waka* poet of his generation. A sober, reclusive man who strove in his best work to approach the refinement of court literature, he thought of himself primarily as a scholar and poet, and certainly not as a writer of erotica in a society that was unabashed in its eroticism. Akinari's elegant masterpiece, *Ugetsu monogatari* [*Tales of Moonlight and Rain*], is one of the classics of Japanese fiction and the work for which he is remembered today. It has had a strong influence on subsequent Japanese writers, including Tanizaki and Mishima, and inspired Mizoguchi's 1953 film classic, *Ugetsu*.

Akinari's first ventures into fiction are now considered to have been the last significant *ukiyo zōshi* [floating-world books], a genre pioneered by Ihara Saikaku. Often lighthearted, they typically satirize the foibles of townspeople. His first collection, *Shodō kikimimi sekenzaru* [*A Worldly Monkey Who Hears About Everything*],

purports to repeat gossip from the streets. Examples will suggest the flavor. In the seventh story (the titles are too long to include), a samurai tries to seduce a beautiful Buddhist nun, only to be challenged to a contest in martial arts; he flees when she proves to be the more accomplished. In the ninth, the promising, handsome son of a retired dancing girl ends up as a male prostitute who caters to men. Akinari's next collection, *Seken tekake katagi* [*Characters of Worldly Mistresses*], focuses on relations between men and women, but with more emphasis on wives than on mistresses. In the second story, an eternally youthful woman outlives three husbands and a male concubine until finally, when age catches up with her, her fourth husband abandons her for a mistress. Buddhism is satirized in the fifth, when six monks lust after a beautiful woman who leads them on, pretending to be a widow; after accepting their gifts, she and her husband drive the monks away. In the story some critics consider the best (the seventh), Fujino, a former prostitute, returns to the brothel when her lover falls on hard times. He uses her advance to start a new enterprise, but it fails and he commits suicide. Fujino then honors not only her contract with



the brothel-keeper but also her vows to her lover and remains single after her indenture is complete. The seriousness of this story anticipates the solemn beauty of Akinari's masterpiece.

*Ugetsu monogatari* consists of nine tales about revenants and other anomalies. Gone are the playfulness and satire of Akinari's earlier work; the *Ugetsu* tales are neoclassical gems of high artistry, reflecting the author's studies in Japanese and Chinese literature. Four of the stories contain erotic elements. The title of "Kikka no chigiri" [The Chrysanthemum Vow], hints at its subject, because the supposed resemblance of the chrysanthemum flower (*kikka*) to an anus made the blossom a common symbol of male homosexual intercourse. In this story, the bond between a scholar and a samurai is tested when the latter finds himself unable to meet his younger friend on the date he has promised to return. He fulfills his vow by committing suicide, knowing that his spirit will be able to traverse the distance in time. The scholar, overjoyed by his friend's loyalty until he learns the truth, faithfully avenges the suicide by killing the man who had unjustly detained his friend. The commitment demonstrated by these men contrasts with the fecklessness of a farmer in "Asaji ga yado" [The Reed-Choked House]. Leaving his wife behind, he goes to the capital to make his fortune, but procrastinates six years before returning home. He finds his wife waiting there for him faithfully and they go to bed; in the morning, he realizes that he has slept with her ghost, which had come back to welcome him home. In "Jasei no in" [A Serpent's Lust], a naïve young scholar is seduced by a murderous serpent that has assumed the form of a woman in order to satisfy her lust for him. Though he soon becomes aware of the deceit, the youth cannot resist her charms. Both of these stories—the two on which Mizoguchi based his film—subtly demonstrate the affinities among danger, death, and sexual attraction. These themes achieve their most passionate statement in "Aozukin" [The Blue Hood], in which an esteemed Buddhist abbot falls in love with a servant boy, then goes mad with grief when the boy dies. His despair, longing, and loneliness, which culminate in his playing with the boy's corpse, then eating it, are presented in such powerful language that the reader is moved to sympathy for the abbot, even when the priest-turned-demon begins to devour bodies

from the cemetery. Few stories of necrophilia and cannibalism have been more compelling. The abbot's homosexual behavior is not stigmatized; the problem is that his attachment to something ephemeral deters him from progress toward enlightenment. The story's ideology is summarized by another priest, who says that one who loses control of his mind turns into a demon, while one who governs his mind achieves enlightenment.

Akinari's other major work of fiction, *Harusame monogatari* [*Tales of the Spring Rain*], avoids the erotic altogether, even when it tells the life story of a courtesan in "Miyagi ga tsuka" ["The Grave of Miyagi"].

### Biography

Born in Osaka, 1734, to a prostitute; his father's identity is unknown. Adopted in 1737 by Ueda Mosuke, a prosperous merchant. Received a good Confucian education, possibly at the Kaitokudō Academy; later studied ancient Japanese literature, especially *waka*. Married Ueyama Tama in 1760; they had a happy marriage but no children. Mosuke died in 1761, leaving the family business to Akinari, who ran it until it burned in 1771. Practiced medicine until 1787; retired and devoted himself to scholarship, teaching, and writing. Moved to Kyoto in 1793, lived in poverty; his wife died in 1797. Akinari died August 8, 1809, in Kyoto.

ANTHONY H. CHAMBERS

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- See also Japanese: Medieval to Nineteenth Century; waka; Ihara Saikaku; Tanizaki Jun'ichirō; Mishima Yukio**



# V

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## VAILLAND, ROGER FRANÇOIS

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1907–1965

French journalist, novelist, dramatist, and film scriptwriter

Vailland was the author of nine novels, two of which earned him major literary awards. He also wrote travel books, plays, and film scripts, most notably the adaptation with Roger Vadim of Laclos's *Dangerous Liaisons* (1959). Except for a few "notes for an erotic narrative" published posthumously, Vailland did not write erotic or "libertine" fiction: In his novels, sexuality and the relationships between men and women serve essentially as means of characterization and illustrate his emotional and intellectual development. It is in his essays, his book on Laclos (*Laclos par lui-même*), and his notebooks, diaries, and correspondence published posthumously (*Écrits intimes*) that his interest in and practice of libertinism are at their most explicit.

Some critics have emphasized the tension, or even contradiction, between Vailland's intense individualism, manifest in his fascination for eroticism and the aristocratic figure of the eighteenth-century libertine, and his left-wing convictions, his desire to participate in collective

action in order to fight against oppression. Others have attempted to show that the two are not as irreconcilable as may first appear: Both stem from an atheistic, materialistic stance, and sex and political activism are both areas in which the individual can strive for and exercise freedom. Vailland defines libertinism as the "art of pleasure practiced by a free mind." There is something fundamentally austere in the uncompromising rationality of Vailland's "true libertine." Far from being a self-indulgent figure without morals, his libertine bravely rejects reactionary morals and emotional dependency. Hence, the rejection of passionate love in favor of pleasurable love, an opposition likened to that between servitude and liberty, passivity and action.

### *Esquisses pour un portrait du vrai libertin*

*Sketches for a Portrait of the True Libertine* was first published in 1946 together with *Les Entretiens de Madame Merveille avec Lucrece, Octave et Zephyr* [*Dialogues Between Mrs. Marvel, Lucrecia, Octavio, and Zephyr*]. Vailland begins

by stressing that libertine thinking differs from both romantic notions of love and the Schopenhauerian view of sexual attraction as serving the reproductive interests of the species. He then praises the sacrilegious audacity of the early libertines who dared equate love with pleasure alone, before discussing de Sade as a precursor to Freud and the true founder of erotology. In these *Esquisses*, which essentially rehearse the points made in *Les Entretiens avec Madame Merveille*, Vailland insists on the key role of prostitutes, the “professionals,” in the systematic pursuance of pleasure, and most notably that of the madam. For Vailland, the brothel is essentially a theatre, and the madam the stage director who selects the members of the cast, creates the appropriate setting, and defines the rules. Combining the tact of the confessor with the imagination of the poet, she is the one who makes up for the shortcomings of her clients’s fantasies. To the sentimental souls who cry: “But what about tenderness?” Vailland replies that it is reserved for the woman who has proved herself to be a worthy adversary, thus becoming his equal, his accomplice. This is exemplified in the relationship between Valmont and Mme de Merteuil (in *Dangerous Liaisons*), who, having loved and hurt one another, eventually support one another in their quest for pleasure. This feeling of tenderness, born out of mutual respect and akin to the pity one feels for those who have devoted the whole of their existence to a purely gratuitous pursuit, might eventually become, Vailland concludes, the purest form of love.

***Les Entretiens de Madame Merveille avec  
Lucrece, Octave et Zephyr. Notes à l’usage  
d’un essai sur le plaisir***

Meeting by chance at Mme Merveille’s brothel, three libertines (a woman and two men, one of whom is a homosexual) agree to devote the following twelve evenings to a systematic exploration of the nature of sexual pleasure: Each evening will start with a discussion on a particular theme, supported by the recounting of personal stories and followed by sexual activities related to the given theme. Having drawn a parallel between his chosen structure and that of de Sade’s *120 Days of Sodom*, Vailland points out that the dialogic form was used long before by Plato in *The Banquet* and Lucian in *Dialogues of*

*the Dead* and that the madam as a Socratic figure in matters sexual was not invented by de Sade. The first evening begins with the assertion that pleasure and the satisfaction of the reproductive instinct are unrelated and that so-called vice cannot therefore be a perversion of the latter; this is evidenced by the fact that the erotic experiences of children are not linked to the representation or enactment of reproductive acts. The second evening is a further theoretical and practical investigation of the initial topic: Erogenous zones coincide only occasionally with reproductive organs. The following evening is spent recapitulating on previous discussions and deploring the social consequences of a “finalist” conception of sexuality with references to Gide’s *Corydon*. Having refuted the notion of perversion, the libertines come to the conclusion that de Sade’s classification of pleasures from the “natural” to the increasingly “perverted” is inappropriate and that there is a need for a new type of classification, which is simultaneously “genetic, evolutionary, and dialectic.” The first two phases outlined on the fourth evening are pre-puberty chaos (which foreshadows all future developments) and solitary onanism (when primarily the self appears as a source of pleasure). Then comes the time when the individuals become beings of pleasure, subjects able to satisfy their desire through conquest. In the course of the fifth evening, the libertines profess the utmost scorn for those individuals (the woman chaser or the man hunter) who do not develop beyond the conquest stage and remain, as far as pleasure is concerned, eternal adolescents. The sixth evening focuses on infatuation: By making the fulfillment of desire dependent on one person, and one person only (a choice often based on diverse or contradictory factors, if not mere chance), the lover becomes the victim of passion, and thus condemned to a life of suffering. True, passion may give way to love, but then physical pleasure is merely a by-product and, as such, devoid of value; hence the need to call on the services of professionals once the mature, austere, and truly libertine phase is reached. The eighth discussion stresses that the sexual makeup of the individuals (their degree of femininity, masculinity, or homosexuality) has no bearing on their development: All go through the five successive phases. The following evening, Octave talks about his need for particular rituals, and Mme Merveille explains that virtue does not

consist in combating one's tendencies but in containing them within a wider erotic framework. In the course of the tenth and eleventh evenings, Lucrèce and Zéphyr confirm that for them too, pleasure has become increasingly ritualized: While Octave can be described as a masochist, Lucrèce is a sadist and Zéphyr a fetishist. They do not elaborate on the matter by documenting their practices, however, their ambition being merely to provide a definition of pleasure and examine the laws governing it. And this is where *Les Entretien*s departs from its de Sadean model: Although the meetings are meant to combine theory and practice, the practical activities are never described in any great detail, not even those staged on the last evening to show that "the tragic grandeur of eroticism lies in the conflict between the infinity of possible variations and the formal narrowness of its themes."

### *Les Quatre figures du libertinage*

In this short essay, *The Four Figures of Libertinage*, published in 1950, Vailland sets out to define what he sees as the four basic "patterns" of eighteenth-century *libertinage*: the choice of an appropriate victim, the ensuing seduction, the fall, and the breaking off. As there is no merit in choosing an easy prey, the person to be seduced must be virtuous and of a blameless character. The seduction process itself is likened to hunting, but it is not enough to possess the hitherto virtuous; there must be a willing surrender. This surrender, or fall, is the equivalent of the clean kill in bullfighting: It allows neither lingering nor ambiguity. The same applies to breaking off the relationship, which constitutes the "moral" of the libertine story: It must follow the fall as quickly as possible so that the seducer cannot be suspected of having in turn been seduced, and moreover must be executed with a flourish of impudence. In all this, Vailland's point of reference is obviously Laclos's *Dangerous Liaisons*, whose heroes, Vailland explains, have little in common with Casanova, Don Juan, or de Sade's characters. Unlike Casanova, who was motivated by love and the appreciation of female beauty, and for whom seduction was a last resort, Valmont's interest lay not in the object of his attentions but first and foremost in the chase: He was emotionally detached. Unlike Molière's Don Juan, whose behavior

was a negation of the existence of God, a metaphysical gamble, Valmont belonged to the age of Enlightenment, and played an essentially social game. Finally, in terms of the risks incurred, Valmont's highly codified and flamboyant love games had little in common with de Sade's extreme variations on the theme of freedom.

### *Laclos par lui-même*

*Dangerous Liaisons* is again at the core of the book on Laclos—*Laclos by Himself*—that Vailland published in 1953. It focuses on the social and economic conditions that prevailed in eighteenth-century France, just before the Revolution, and proposes a detailed analysis of the internal workings of Laclos's novel. Vailland begins by dispelling the idea that Laclos was an aristocrat like the vicomte de Valmont: Laclos, he explains, was a bourgeois whose military career as an artillery officer suffered from the fact that he had neither title nor money; hence his idea of making his mark on the world by writing a novel. By doing so, he not only made a name for himself but provided the middle classes who aspired to power with useful ammunition against the ruling aristocracy. If Valmont is the epitome of the aristocracy, the Présidente de Tourvel, the wife of a magistrate and the only sincere character in the book, represents the bourgeoisie; she is the "ideal" woman described by Laclos in his treaty *De l'éducation des femmes* [On Women's Education]. This treaty is presented as key to a proper understanding of *Dangerous Liaisons*: Although socially and economically oppressed, woman is, by nature, equal to man, and it is up to her to bring about the revolution that will secure her freedom, Laclos said, thus anticipating Marxist analyses of female oppression quoted at length by Vailland. His close analysis of the epistolary novel develops the points made in *Les Quatre figures du libertinage*. Although he gives a detailed account of Laclos's commitment to and active participation in the French Revolution, responsible for the downfall of the likes of Valmont and Mme de Merteuil, Vailland does not comment on the tragic fate of the libertines at the end of the novel. In fact, he concludes his book with quotations from twentieth-century French writers praising the "eroticization of will" in the character of Mme de Merteuil (André Malraux), and the beauty and sophistication of the evil,

## VAILLAND, ROGER FRANÇOIS

shocking, yet “perfect” libertine couple (Jean Giraudoux).

*Esquisses pour un portrait du vrai libertin*, *Les Entretiens de Madame Merveille*, and *Les Quatre figures du libertinage* were reprinted in 1963 in *Le Regard froid* [*The Cold Look*], a collection of essays which also includes *Eloge du cardinal de Bernis* [*Eulogy of Cardinal De Bernis*], another libertine greatly admired by Vailland and presented here through the eyes of Casanova, who shared a mistress with De Bernis. Vailland describes the Cardinal as a man whose words, however cruel, and whose affability, however perfidious, are “the most exquisite signs of the distance that someone endowed with reason can put between himself and the rest of humanity in order to have a clear vision of the world and of his own position within it.” This eulogy was written in 1956, only months after Stalin’s crimes were made public. Vailland did not leave the Communist Party immediately but withdrew from political activism, opting for the detached stance epitomized in the *regard froid* that de Sade attributed to the libertine.

### Biography

Born in Acy-en-Multien (Oise), October 16. Secondary education in Paris, 1918–19, and Rheims, 1919–25. Higher education in Paris at Lycée Louis-Légrand and then at the Sorbonne, 1925–28. In 1928, fell out with his Catholic family, graduated in philosophy, and became a reporter at *Paris-Midi*. Having cofounded a literary journal (*Le Grand Jeu*) inspired by the Surrealists in 1927, was accused of political complacency in his reporting and excluded from the group, 1929. Traveled extensively for *Paris-Midi* and *Paris-Soir*, and frequented the hottest Paris night spots, 1930–39. Underwent treatment for drug addiction in 1938 (again in 1942 and finally in 1947). During the German occupation of northern France in World War II, moved to

Lyon with his paper, 1940, and joined the Resistance movement, late 1942. War correspondent, 1944–45; freelance journalist, 1945–65. Joined the Communist Party in 1952 but failed to renew his membership after 1958. Married Andrée Blavette in 1936 (separated, 1946); met Elisabeth Naldi in 1949 (married 1954). Left Paris in 1951 and lived near Bourg-en-Bresse (Ain) until his death on May 12.

MIREILLE RIBIÈRE

### Selected Works

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# VALDÉS, ZOÉ

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1959–  
Cuban novelist

Valdés began her writing career as a poet, and her first collection, *Respuestas para vivir* (1986), won the Roque Dalton prize in 1982. Her volumes of poetry include *Todo para una sombra* (1986), *Vagón para fumadores* (1996), *Cuerdas para el lince* (1999), and *Breve beso de espera* (2002).

Her international fame, however, rests with her novels, which draw sometimes polarized responses from critics and readers. Admirers praise the unabashed eroticism, sardonic humor, and candor of her prose. Detractors find her work repetitive, crude, and bordering on the pornographic, and charge that her productivity has a negative impact on the quality of her writing.

Valdés's first novel, *Sangre azul*, was published in Cuba in 1993. Its protagonist, Attys, a beautiful adolescent girl, moves from Cuba to Paris in pursuit of Gnossis, a painter who had offered his love only to withdraw it later, initiating her in the search for an impossibility, that of an absolute blue which can be gleaned only from the most intimate connection to the senses but is invisible on the surface. A finalist for the Sonrisa Vertical prize for erotic fiction, it already gave evidence of Valdés' daring imagery and the vitality of her expression of the erotic.

Valdés first came to international notice as a writer in 1995 with the publication of *La nada cotidiana*, translated immediately into a dozen languages. "She was born on an island that sought to build paradise"—the opening and closing line of the novel—frames the story of Patria, born in 1959 with the Cuban revolution, and like the revolution, mired in the frustration of the collapse of what began as endless promise. Patria, street-smart and irreverent, narrates a tale that seeks to capture the urgency and dependency of life in Cuba after the collapse of the Soviet Union, the "período especial" that has reduced everyday life in Cuba to a new level of despair. Patria's openness to sexual

experimentation—depicted graphically in the novel—opens a possibility of asserting an identity through her body. It in turn allows her to escape from the sordidness of her surroundings and counteract the politicized identity imposed on her by her father's choice of name, Patria. Patria's frank appropriation of erotic discourse accounted in great part for the novel's critical and popular success. *La nada cotidiana* was praised by critics for its humor and biting critique of Cuban reality. Many critics found it style—built on an inventive use of language that is both highly poetic and deeply earthy—dazzling and bold.

Valdés followed this success with a third novel, *La hija del embajador* (1995), for which she won the Premio Novela Breve Juan March Cencillo. In this novel Valdés draws upon her experiences in the Cuban embassy in France to tell the tale of Daniela, the daughter of the Cuban ambassador to Paris, as she struggles between her identity as a Cuban, marked by its exuberant sensuality, and the studied eroticism and inner coldness she finds in Europe. The furious eroticism of the tale becomes an act of defiance against the stifling oppression of diplomatic mores.

In *Te di la vida entera* (1996), a finalist for the Planeta Literary Prize, Valdés returns to the topic of desire, hope, and disillusionment, this time through sixty years in the life of her heroine, Cuva, who comes to prerevolutionary Havana shortly after her sixteenth birthday. Exploring the flavor and rhythms of Havana night life in the 1950s with two voluptuous older prostitutes who befriend her, she encounters a mysterious man who after a frenzied dance and a passionate kiss disappears without a trace, leaving her hopelessly in love and holding on to a one-dollar bill he has entrusted to her care. When they reunite eight years later, they embark on a fiery love story. Left alone again, Cuva's life mirrors the story of the revolution, moving from elation and passion through degradation, want, misery, and absurdity. The novel takes the



## VALDÉS, ZOÉ

reader along this path to the rhythm of Cuban music, chiefly *boleros*, that seem to control Cuva's life.

In *Café Nostalgia* (1999), Valdés returns to the *bolero* as the evocative backdrop to her tale of a Cuban woman living in Paris who seeks to hold on to her memories of Havana through her readings. As she reads, she writes letter to the people who have been important to her in her life; the letters, which remain unsent, become her text. Here, the elements familiar to readers of Valdés's work—eroticism, the plight of women in unrequited love, separation from the homeland—lack the freshness and vitality of earlier work. But the musical evocation, as an element that Valdés incorporates fully and organically into the text, offers enough of the new to account for the interest of this recent work.

Valdés's *Querido primer novio*, published in 2000, also explores the problems of memory and of living in the past. Dánae, living in frustrated claustrophobia in the city, pursuing her domestic chores as if they were battles against fierce foes, finds refuge in the memories of childhood, in particular those of a first boyfriend through whom she had discovered the vital power of eroticism to fulfill a woman's life.

Valdés's other novels include *El pie de mi padre* (2000), *Milagro de Miami* (2001), *Lobas de mar* (2003), and *La eternidad del instante* (2005), all of which continue to explore the erotic as a path to self-fulfillment for her female characters.

### Biography

Zoé Valdés, a Cuban writer of Chinese descent, was born in Havana in 1959. She worked toward a degree in Spanish philology before leaving Cuba in 1984 to work at the Cuban delegation to UNESCO. She also worked as a scriptwriter at the Cuban embassy in Paris before returning

to Havana in 1988 to become the assistant director of the *Revista de Cine Cubano*. Disenchanted with Castro's regime, she returned to France in 1995. Valdés has been a Spanish citizen since 1997 and lives in Paris with her daughter and second husband, filmmaker Ricardo Vega.

LIZABETH PARAVISINI-GEBERT

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## VALENZUELA, LUISA

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1938–

Argentine novelist and short story writer

Luisa Valenzuela is the author of many novels and short story collections. As a part of the “post-boom” generation of women writers in Latin America, she has consistently used her writing as a locus for searching out a female voice, which for her is inextricably linked with the body. The erotic infuses much of Valenzuela’s work. Sometimes it serves as a glance into the personal, which reveals links to both the public and the political. At other times, female eroticism is expressed overtly through a subversive use of the word, challenging patriarchal authority and language. Finally, in many of Valenzuela’s later works, the erotic link between the personal and the political evolves into an exposure of the link between sexual perversion and the perversion of power, particularly in the form of torture and oppression in the writer’s native Argentina during the “Dirty War.”

Valenzuela’s first short novel, *Hay que sonreír* [Clara], details the story of a young prostitute who, despite abuse by men, continues to search for a “true love,” a man who will treat her lovingly. A link between the personal and the public is clear through sex in the novel—Clara is a prostitute, selling the private act of lovemaking to the public. In addition, despite her personal experience of sex as an act of exploitation and abuse (men continually mold her to their desires, ignoring her own needs), she still believes the popular societal rhetoric of romantic love. In the end, however, this conflict is resolved not through Clara finding this love. Instead, she marries a man who continually dominates her mentally and physically, telling her, “Hay que sonreír” [one must keep smiling], despite the acts of degradation performed on her. Finally, this husband kills Clara in a last act of domination, slitting her throat in order to silence her and assure her complete submission.

Valenzuela’s next novel, *El gato eficaz*, expresses its theme of eroticism through a much

more experimental language than any of her previous work. Written shortly after her involvement with the *Tel Quel* group in Paris, this text bears the imprint of its positions and ideologies. Language is central to the anti-realist *El gato eficaz*, a novel without a plot, which contains characters only as rudimentary figures. In addition, language is employed for its own destruction, as Valenzuela uses such devices as wordplay and free association to undermine any notion of a fixed referent. Eroticism is intimately linked with language in the novel, and it too is under erasure. Valenzuela attempts to express a new form of female sexuality which undermines traditional sex/gender dichotomies. Thus, the main narrator, although primarily female, is constantly in flux, sometimes becoming male (or even an animal or plant). Sex is also portrayed with the same playful enthusiasm with which Valenzuela approaches language in the novel. In one chapter, entitled “El juego de fornicon” [The Fornication Game], Valenzuela writes of the sexual act in the language of game rules, stating, “Es este un juego inventado por mí para pasar bien el rato en compañía. Cualquiera puede aprenderlo; es sencillo, no se desordena demasiado la casa, y distrae de las cotidianas preocupaciones” [This is a game I invented to pass the time with company. Anyone can learn it: it is simple, does not mess up the house, and distracts one from daily preoccupations] (*El gato*, 70). In *El gato eficaz*, Valenzuela expresses a sexuality from the unconscious, an eroticism that falls outside the rigidity of traditional linguistic rules and patterns.

Luisa Valenzuela’s later novels and short stories depart from the linguistic experimentalism of *El gato eficaz* while nevertheless retaining eroticism as a central theme. These works, rather than presenting female desire, instead focus on the links between sex and power, often looking at the links between sexual perversion and the abuse of power. In her 1983 novel *La cola de lagartija* [The Lizard’s Tail], she comments on the political situation in Argentina in the 1970s and early 1980s, once more using the personal as

## VALENZUELA, LUISA

a gateway to the political. The novel focuses on the character of “El Brujo” [The Sorcerer], a fictionalized version of Isabel Peron’s Minister of Social Welfare (an infamous torturer). In this novel, El Brujo is a megalomaniacal, fantastic creature with three testicles, bent on world domination. His unwavering quest for power is mixed with his sexual perversion, as he believes that he will procreate with himself (since his third testicle is female) and is obsessed with his own bodily fluids.

Valenzuela’s short stories from this time period onward are not quite as fantastically lyrical as *La cola de lagartija* but they do reflect the same preoccupation with the relationship between sex and power. *Cambio de Armas* [Other Weapons] deals with this relationship from the female perspective (all of the narrators are women) as it criticizes women’s plight by evoking the tension between political and erotic relations. In the title story, the female protagonist is heavily drugged and locked in her house. She suffers from severe amnesia and at first cannot even remember her husband’s name. As the story progresses, however, she slowly regains her memory, and the reader begins to realize that her husband (a high military official) had killed her leftist lover and tortured her brutally before marrying her. Their intense and often violent sexual encounters become an extension of the torture that was committed on her in the political context. In addition, her story becomes a metaphor for masculine control over and cruelty toward women. The protagonist cannot remember her husband’s name and thus calls him all sorts of different men’s names, making him into an Everyman. The story directly intermingles the personal and political, the private and public, in such a way that issues of eroticism cannot be separated from issues of power and politics.

Although Luisa Valenzuela’s works span different styles and genres, all are concerned with eroticism, specifically as it relates to female subjectivity. Her works explore the relationship between language, eroticism, and politics/power through various lenses, commenting on both specific political realities and universal issues. For Valenzuela, eroticism and the realm of the personal are not only keys to the “outer” public world, they are inseparable themes. By

juxtaposing these themes, she questions and problematizes both the dichotomy of the public/private and the relationship between eroticism and power.

### Biography

Born in Buenos Aires, Argentina. She began work in Argentina as a journalist, writing for the newspaper *La nación* and the magazine *Crisis*. She moved to France, where she wrote her first novel *Hay que sonreír* in 1966. In 1979, she moved to the United States, where she lived for ten years, leading writing workshops at Columbia and New York Universities. She has written 12 books, and received a Guggenheim fellowship, as well as being a fellow at the Institute for the Humanities in New York.

TRACY FERRELL

### Selected Works

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*El gato eficaz*. 1972  
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# VALLEJO, FERNANDO

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1942–

Colombian novelist

Fernando Vallejo's purpose is to unmask human misdeeds. His novellas expose them in humorous, beautiful, and sometimes cruel prose. Colombia dominates his work, as does his birthplace, Medellín. Historical memory is central to his task. In his fiction he uses imaginative memory to blur distinctions between the real and the fantastic. By depicting reality on a continuum Vallejo invites readers to reflect on its veracity, a technique which encourages them to consider their own role in humanity's failings.

The narrator describes his erotic desires at greatest length in *La Virgen de los Sicarios*, *El fuego secreto* [*The Secret Fire*] and *Mi hermano el alcalde* [*My Brother the Mayor*]. He portrays his attraction to adolescent males economically but powerfully, as in this passage from *La Virgen* about his lover Alexis, a *sicario* (teenage contract killer):

Si por lo menos Alexis leyera. ... Pero esta criatura en eso era tan drástico como el gran presidente Reagan, que en su larga vida un solo libro no leyó. Esta pureza incontaminada de letra impresa, además, era de lo que más me gustaba de mi niño. ¡Para libros los que yo he leído! y mírenme, véanme. ¿Pero sabía acaso firmar el niño? Claro que sí sabía. Tenía la letra más excitante y arrevesada que he conocido: alucinante que es como en última

instancia escriben los ángeles que son demonios. Aquí guardo una foto suya dedicada a mí por el reverso. Me dice simplemente así: "Tuyo, para toda la vida", y basta. ¿Para qué quería más? Mi vida entera se agota en eso. (64)

[If at least Alexis read. ... But in that this child was as extreme as the great President Reagan who, in his long life, read not a single book. This purity uncontaminated by print, moreover, was that which I most liked about my lad. As for the books I have read! and look, look at me. But did, perhaps, the boy know how to write? Yes of course he knew. He had the most exciting, ornate writing I've known: mind-blowing like that of the demon angels in the end times. Here I keep his photo, dedicated to me on the back. It says simply: "Yours, for life," and that's it. Why would I want more? My entire life ends there.]

*El fuego secreto* depicts the narrator's coming of age in Medellín's homosexual netherworld and recounts, from the tragic to the comic, his attempted sexual relationships, all of which founder. At one point, after the narrator stands up a potential boyfriend, he describes his inability to love:

Y acúsome padre de haberle dado la espalda al amor. Tras de buscarlo tanto, cuando lo encontré di media vuelta y me fui corriendo. Y ni supe cómo se llamaba. Le decían por apodo, por cariño, Joselito. ... Vive Dios y es testigo, no había otro como él. Dueño de lo que buscaba en todos y no encontraba en ninguno: la inocencia esencial. (293–4)

[Father, I accuse myself of having turned my back on love. After looking so hard for it, when I found it, I did an about-face and went running away. And I never knew his name. They called him, affectionately, by the nickname Joselito. ... As God lives and is witness, there was no other like him. Owner of that sought in all and found in none: essential innocence.]

In *Los caminos a Roma* [*The Roads to Rome*], the narrator, now in his early 20s, recounts trysts in hidden public places, such as on the Aventino and under the Seine's bridges in Paris. The novella depicts two longed-for romantic relationships that fail, one with an Italian boy, the other, in an exquisitely written dreamlike sequence, with a Sephardic girl. *Años de indulgencia* [*Years of Indulgence*] shows him as a man cruising the docks and trucks of Manhattan's lower west side seeking anonymous sex; relationships are no longer mentioned.

Death eclipses sex in the three following novellas. His one successful bond, that with Alexis, is truncated. Sex is only a memory in *El desbarrancadero*, about the narrator's return to Medellín to help his terminally ill father and brother die, and *La Rambla paralela* [*The Parallel Rambla*], where he is an old man facing his death.

*Mi hermano el alcalde* breaks with this arc and its presentation of male-male sexuality. The narrator's brother Carlos wins the mayoralty of the Colombian mountain town Támesis. Homoeroticism is as public as the administration's

accomplishments: Carlos and his two male lovers adopt a child, preside over civic events, and pursue their erotic desires across the story's landscape, usually to humorous effect. During the campaign, Carlos sends his friends Ritiña and Lucho to survey the municipality's *veredas* (districts):

Con el pretexto del informe iban el par de maricas de vereda en vereda a conseguir muchachos y a pelearse entre sí por ellos delante de niños, mujeres y viejos, dando un espectáculo bochornoso con el consiguiente desprestigio de mi hermano y caída en la intención de voto. Para Ritiña y Lucho la política era el homoarte de pichar. (40)

[From *vereda* to *vereda* went the pair of fairies, using the pretext of the survey to find boys and to fight among themselves over them in front of children, women, and the old, presenting a degrading spectacle with the consequent discrediting of my brother and drop in his poll numbers. For Ritiña and Lucho, politics was the homo art of screwing.]

The narrator's signification *homoarte* reveals a concept heretofore unnamed in Vallejo's fiction: an ethos of male-male love. To signify a thing implies its apprehension, and hence a degree of ownership. *Mi hermano's* narrator elaborates on *homoarte*, as in this summation of his brother's most notable contribution as mayor:

Que piche cada quien con quien quiera y que el niño aprenda. ... Támesis hoy en día gracias a él es un pueblo alegre y pichanguero, sin remordimientos sexuales que le corroan la conciencia y que son tan inútiles y feos y que tanto mal les hacen a los niños. (23-4)

[May each do it with whomever may want to and let the child learn. ... Thanks to him, today Támesis is a festive and doing-it kind of town, without the sexual guilt which corrodes the conscience, and which is so unproductive and nasty and which harms children so much.]

Vallejo's biographies and accompanying volumes of poems and letters illuminate unrecorded facets of Latin American history. He brings a novelist's voice to his meticulously researched accounts of the Colombian poets José Asunción Silva (1865-1896) and Porfirio Barba Jacob (1883-1942). Each gained a reputation in Latin America as much for the erotic ambiguities of his life as for his work. Silva was a modernist whose poems pointed the way to the twentieth century. Barba Jacob was a brilliant newspaper editorialist and bohemian who expressed his homoerotic desires openly in poetry and prose; his verses remain at the summit of Colombian letters.

## Biography

Born in Medellín, Colombia, October 24. Studied philosophy and arts in Medellín and Bogotá and film at Rome's Cinecittà. Lived in New York City before moving to Mexico City in 1971. Vallejo is best known for the novella *La Virgen de los Sicarios* [*Our Lady of the Assassins*], translated into six languages and made into a movie for which he wrote the script. The novella followed a five-volume autobiographical cycle compiled in *El río del tiempo* [*The River of Time*]. Since then he has published four novellas. All nine are told by a first-person narrator, unnamed except in *La Virgen*, where he is called Fernando. Vallejo has also written a pair of biographies, a book on grammar, and a book on biology. Early in his career, he directed two short movies in Colombia and three feature-length movies in Mexico. In 2003 he won one of the most prestigious prizes in Spanish literature, the Premio Rómulo Gallegos, for *El desbarrancadero* [*The Precipice*].

MARK MCHARRY

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## VARGAS VILA, JOSÉ MARÍA

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1860–1933

Colombian novelist

Vargas Vila was the first Latin American author to make eroticism a centerpiece of his work, and his erotic imagination took many forms. He was the first to feature prostitutes as heroines,

excelling in the description of the seduction of female innocence leading to prostitution, as in *Flor de fango* (1895). He was also very adept at the depiction of how corrupted female innocence can turn very quickly into unprincipled depravity. In many of his fictional works, women, as repositories of animalistic instinct,

represent sexuality in its most elemental essence, becoming in turn vehicles for the devil. In *Ibis* (1900), an avowedly erotic novel that he considered his first fully realized literary text, he portrays a heroine—a novice at a convent who is the victim of a sexual attack—whose voracious sexual appetite and depravity acknowledge no religious or ethical concerns. In some of his later work he would turn to irreverent portraits of biblical female characters as hedonistic destroyers of men, as temptresses leading them to their destruction, which added to his already established reputation as a misogynist who actually saw women that way.

In *Magdalena* (1916) and *Salomé* (1920), for example, the protagonists' demand for an independent sexual life leads directly to men's corruption. *María Magdalena* caused a scandal due to the author's portrayal of Jesus as a man who has lost his physical and intellectual powers after allowing himself to be seduced by a prostitute. In *El huerto del silencio* (1921), the protagonist is an apostate priest whose desire for his young cousin leads to murder at his hands when he learns of her pregnancy.

Vargas Vila's eroticism, as these examples illustrate, is closely linked to death and damnation, often embodied in incestuous relationships that break religious and societal taboos. His approach to sexuality owed much to contemporary social and psychological theories about illness (particularly venereal) and sexuality, and his sensibilities were those of the Naturalistic movement so much in vogue during a seminal period in his literary career. Although his work continues to receive scant critical attention, it remains popular with readers, many of whom know his work through illustrated novels and film melodramas.

### Biography

José María Vargas Vila was born in Bogotá, Colombia, the son of a general who died when he was four, leaving the family penniless. A self-taught young man, Vargas Vila tried his hand at teaching in the provinces before returning to Bogotá to work at a prestigious school, from which he would be dismissed following accusations of pedophilia. When his accuser was later found to have embezzled funds from his army battalion and to have prowled the

streets of Bogotá dressed as a woman, Vargas Vila turned the incident into a novel, *Alba roja* (1901).

After his failure at teaching, Vargas Vila became involved in political life as a newspaper reporter, political activist, and orator. His participation in an uprising against the government led to his fleeing to Venezuela. His first of more than a hundred books, *Pinceladas sobre la última revolución de Colombia*, was so scathing in its grotesque caricatures of Colombia's political leaders that it led to a price being put on his head.

Vargas Vila established himself in Venezuela, where he turned his attention to the writing of novels, sold as pamphlets in installments. In New York City, where he settled in 1891, he developed close friendships with many exiled Latin American intellectuals and politicians, among them Cuban patriot José Martí. He also published *Los Providenciales*, a furious diatribe against the arrogance of Latin American dictators. In the late 1890s Vargas Vila joined the Latin American exiles in Paris, where he continued to publish articles, essays, novels, and political pamphlets at a feverish pace. In 1902, he wrote *Ante los bárbaros*, a passionate denunciation of the United States' incipient expansionism.

Following this publication, he became prey to neuroses caused by intense loneliness, a feeling of persecution, and the rejection of his work in intellectual circles. Having grown aggressive and intolerant with friends, he left for a restorative sojourn in Venice, returning to Paris in 1904 not fully recovered. The breakdown intensified the black legend growing around Vargas Vila. Gossip had it that he was immensely rich and lived like a prince in luxurious decadence. He was reputed to hate women, clerics, and nuns, a hatred stemming from being the child of a priest and a depraved nun. It was said that he was an anarchist who supported Errico Malatesta's assassinations and bombings against Italian aristocrats. It was generally reported that he was a homosexual who presided over Satan-worship ceremonies and that he was an impotent hermaphrodite who hated everything living.

In 1905 Vargas Vila settled in Madrid and in 1912 moved to Barcelona. The period of his greatest productivity and widespread fame followed, and he became the best known and most

widely read writer in Spanish. His 1923 tour of Latin America, when he lectured to huge crowds in Buenos Aires, Montevideo, Rio de Janeiro, Mexico City, and Havana, among other cities, was the event of the year in the continent. Loudly vilified by priests everywhere, his books were banned by the Church. During this tour he contracted a rare disease that would ultimately leave him blind.

Vargas Vila's prolific work was invariably greeted with scandal, controversy, and critical repudiation, but these seemed to have only encouraged his readers. His work appealed to the masses, among whom he found an enthusiastic following. His rejection of literary canons, his virulent anticlericalism, and his eroticism, coupled with the melodrama and rhetorical excesses of his prose, brought to his writing and public persona much notoriety. He was in turn persecuted, barred from returning to Colombia, and excommunicated by the Catholic Church. Nevertheless, he was a master at producing works for popular consumption; and as such, a precursor or twentieth-century mass culture. His winning formula was a controversial mixture of anti-imperialistic, leftist, pro-worker political diatribe, sentimental melodrama, and eroticism. He died in Barcelona.

LIZABETH PARAVISINI-GEBERT

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## VASSI, MARCO

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1937–1989

American novelist and essayist

An intellectual adventurer in the real and fictional realms of Eros, Marco Vassi brought a keen and wry intelligence to bear on the turbulent times of the 1960s and 1970s in America. He was on the barricades of the sexual revolution, personally involved and yet viewing it with Jesuitical acuity and detachment. His first novel, *Mind Blower* (1970), was published by the legendary Maurice Girodias, who proclaimed him the new Henry Miller.

*Mind Blower* is an awkward novel, suffering from woodenness of plot, characterization, and dialogue, more interesting for its ideas and erotic scenes than for the story it tells. A young man named Michael, desiring to "get in touch with people who were playing serious sexual games," answers an ad in the *New York Times* for an assistant to a master of arcane studies. When he interviews for the position, he meets an extraordinary fat man named Dr. Tocco, who heads the Institute for Sexual Metatheater. Tocco shocks him by insisting that he make love to a young girl even before they talk.



Michael is a familiar figure in erotic fiction: the seeker of erotic knowledge. What follows in *Mind Blower* is the narrative of Michael's progress to sexual enlightenment. Tocco calls Michael's various sexual experiments "role actualization." By acting out every fantasy, subtle or monstrous, Michael is able to shed his individuality like old skin. For Vassi, ego transcendence is achieved only by people strong enough to discard conventional sexual morality, who recognize that "in our society, everything is a lie."

In *Mind Blower* the protagonist learns the necessity of denying love itself, of seeing that tenderness is an emotion no better or worse than others; emotional attachments inhibit his progress to erotic enlightenment. *Mind Blower* introduces Vassi's idea of metasexuality—a concept central to his thought—which he elaborates on in his essay "The Metasexual Manifesto," included in the book *Metasex, Mirth and Madness* (1975). Metasexuality requires that its adepts give no more weight to one emotion than to another. This Zen-like attitude is adopted by the protagonists in Vassi's second and third erotic novels, *The Gentle Degenerates* (1970) and *Saline Solution* (1971). Metasexuality is a concept that does away with categories like homosexuality, heterosexuality, bisexuality, and perversions, replacing them with sexual modes: theatrical, masturbatory, romantic, therapeutic, and procreative. Vassi is one of the few writers since Georges Bataille to express his perceptions about eros along philosophical lines.

Vassi bothers very little with plot or characterization in his fiction. He is a didactic artist, an explorer with findings to present. Like such writers from de Sade onward, his narratives are vehicles for the exposition of his ideas. In *The Gentle Degenerates*, the breakup of a marriage is his subject; in *The Saline Solution*, it is abortion. Vassi once said that the conflict in all his novels is that of approach/avoidance, between the desire to live in a relationship and an even stronger desire to be free of it. Vassi's intimate knowledge

of the subtle interplay of power between men and women and his honesty with himself (for all his work is autobiographical) help to ameliorate an unattractive narcissism that manifests itself in the attitude that others exist only insofar as they help him learn how to live.

His fourth novel, *Contours of Darkness* (1972), is his longest and most ambitious. It has more than one major protagonist, is told in the third person, and possesses a skeletal plot. In it he attempts a broader scope than in previous novels. Its theme is once again relationship, but without the sharp, ruthless focus of the more openly autobiographical novels. In *Contours of Darkness* Aaron is a school teacher in Berkeley, California, involved in a threesome with his wife, Cynthia, and a younger student, Conrad. They explore homosexuality and lesbianism in the context of radical politics of the late sixties.

*Metasex, Mirth and Madness* is Vassi's most important book because it is a good introduction to his thought. In it he presents in essays and fables the thinking of a unique, courageous intelligence about a sexual philosophy derived from personal experience. The seven essays in the book are pungent with the smell of erotic experience.

Just as Vassi's concept of metasexuality encompasses all the forms of eroticism, so his books exhibit the range possible within erotic literature, from genre entertainment to philosophy.

### Biography

Born Ferdinand William Vasquez-D'Acugno in New York City, 1937. He took his BA at Brooklyn College, with further studies at The New School For Social Research and Yale University's Institute of Far Eastern Languages. His first novel, *Mind Blower*, was published by Olympia Press in 1970. Simon & Schuster published his autobiography, *The Stoned Apocalypse*, in 1972. Many novels and essays followed. He died of AIDS-related complications.

MICHAEL PERKINS

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## VEGA, ANA LYDIA

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1946–

Puerto Rican short story writer

Vega emerged as a writer with the publication of her first collection of short stories, *Virgenes y mártires* [*Virgins and Martyrs*] (written with Carmen Lugo Filippi, 1982). This collection, and the two books of short fiction that followed—*Encancaranublado y otros cuentos de naufragio* (1983) and *Pasión de historia y otras historias de pasión* (1987)—set the tone for Puerto Rican feminist literature in the 1980s and early 1990s. Her books were greeted with critical acclaim. *Encancaranublado y otros cuentos de naufragio* won the Casa de las Américas short story prize in 1982. Her story “Pasión de historia,” in which she parodies detective fiction, won the 1984 Juan Rulfo International Short Story Contest. In 1989 she received a Guggenheim Fellowship for the completion of *Falsas crónicas del Sur* (1991). Vega co-wrote the script for the Puerto Rican feature film *La gran fiesta*, with director Marcos Zurinaga, which was nominated for an Academy Award for Best Foreign Film.

From the beginning, Vega’s style was characterized by her command of colloquial Puerto Rican Spanish and street jargon, her parodic approach to sexuality, and her subversion of linguistic and literary structures. As an avowedly feminist author, one of Vega’s principal parodic targets was the Puerto Rican version of machismo, which she ridiculed in stories such as “Letra para salsa y tres soneos por encargo” [Lyrics for a Salsa] and “Pollito Chicken.” In these and other stories, Vega subverted male sexual aggressiveness through humor, depicting it as turning impotent the moment it is matched by outspoken female desire. In “Letra para salsa,” her best-known short story, she tells of a young woman determined to lose her virginity who carries off the first man who yells a compliment to her on the street to a motel room, with hilarious consequences. Their attempt at a sexual encounter is given three possible endings, each tied to a particular ideological position. The bold and

irreverent depictions of sexual encounters in this and other stories, coupled with the irrepressible humor with which she addresses sexuality made Vega an icon of comic erotic literature internationally. Her short stories have appeared in magazines and anthologies internationally and have been translated into many languages. Part of the appeal of her comic-erotic fiction comes from Vega’s ability to use the sexual conflicts between men and women to voice larger political and social concerns. Her erotic clashes are always rooted in the class and gender struggles, racial oppression, and political strife of her native Puerto Rico and the broader Caribbean region. This erotic component of her fiction, which was usually drawn from situations familiar to readers from sensationalist newspapers and publicity campaigns, when coupled with her command of street jargon and popular culture, has gained Vega a broad readership and critical acceptance.

In 1991, with the publication of *Falsas crónicas del sur*, which gathers eight tales inspired by Puerto Rican history, Vega broke with the comic eroticism of her earlier collection. As she did with detective fiction in *Pasión de historia*, where she parodied that popular genre as the basis for her exploration of a wife’s puzzling disappearance (à la *Rear Window*), here Vega calls upon a number of genres—the Romantic novel, the tale of adventure, social satire, the political chronicle—to turn history inside out, helping us to look at familiar incidents from the individual’s perspective, bringing history (and the folkloric interpretation of history in the process) into the realm of everyday occurrence and personal drama. In her preface to the book, Vega speaks of her commitment to extensive research for this project, which involved visits to libraries and archives as well as countless interviews with Puerto Ricans of the southern coastal towns, as a tribute to the world of her mother. The resulting stories are testimonies to the Puerto Rican collective imagination and its distinctive take on history, and although critics

## VEGA, ANA LYDIA

considered them to represent her best and more mature work, they did not have the success with the general public of her earlier comic-erotic work.

Vega has not published any additional books of fiction since *Falsas crónicas del sur*, although she has completed a book of essays: *El tramo ancla: ensayos puertorriqueños de hoy* (1988), which Vega edited with fellow columnist Kalman Barsy, gathering the essays published in "Relevo," the column appearing throughout 1985 in the leftist weekly *Claridad*, by Vega, Barsy, Mayra Montero, and Carmen Lugo Filippi. A second collection, *Esperando a Loló y otros delirios generacionales*, published in 1996, gathers an assortment of Vega's satiric essays on Puerto Rican society, politics, and mores. The texts, autobiographical and feminist as we have come to expect from Vega, expand on the critique of Puerto Rico's abortive bilingualism and ambivalent nationalism that has been deemed responsible for the island's continued identity crisis. They also expose, as did Vega's fiction throughout the 1980s, the problematic role of women writers in a society such as that of Puerto Rico, where patriarchal role models and rampant machismo continue to relegate them to the periphery of the literary tradition. In 1998 Vega published two books for children, *Celita y el mangle zapatero* [*Celita and the Shoemaker Mangrove*] and *En la bahía de Jobos* [*In the Bay of Jobos*], with illustrations by Yolanda Pastrana Fuentes, about the preservation of Puerto Rico's rich mangrove environments.

### Biography

Ana Lydia Vega was born in Santurce, Puerto Rico, the vibrant working-class sector of San Juan, whose characters she brings to life in her fiction. She studied French at the University of Puerto Rico and received a master's degree in French literature from the Université Paul

Valéry in Montpellier and a doctorate in comparative literature from the Université de Provence. She joined the faculty of the University of Puerto Rico in 1971 and retired after a thirty-year teaching career. As a scholar, Vega was a pioneering figure in pan-Caribbean cultural studies, helping train several generations of students in the comparative study of Caribbean societies across languages and cultures.

LIZABETH PARAVISINI-GEBERT

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# VENEREAL DISEASE

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The emergence of syphilis in Europe struck like a thunderbolt, dating from Charles VIII's campaign in Italy in 1495 and the return to the Continent of the sailors and soldiers who had accompanied Columbus to America. It was a *coup de foudre* because of its surprise and the extent of its violent harm to the body, and also because of its resonance within the bosom of the *social* body—its inscription in collective fantasies and the intensity of its bond, over the next several centuries, with literature.

It spread like an epidemic, borne across Europe by mercenaries and prostitutes, and characterized as a leper's leprosy, the plague of God, and divine punishment upon sexual intercourse. Those who were contaminated were rejected from social circles and marked as accursed. The writers of the Renaissance presented this *grosse vérole* as a major face of the carnival of exorbitance and disorder constituting the world. Rabelais dedicates his oeuvre to the "most precious poxed." The disease makes one of its first appearances in a novel in 1528, in the picaresque *La Gentille Andalouse* by Francisco Delicado. Two years later, Fracastor coined its name in his poem *Syphilis sive morbus gallicus* (1530). One finds it throughout all the tales of Boccaccio. In Elizabethan theater, it is omnipresent in the characters of the prostitute and the libertine seducer, in Shakespeare, Ben Jonson, and John Ford. The anonymous author in 1539 thus celebrated *Le triomphe de haute et puissante dame vérole, reine du puy d'amour* [*The Triumph of the High and Mighty Poxed Woman, Queen of the Country of Love*]. In the next century, it inspired comic tales and satirical poems, which sarcastically juxtaposed mutilated genitalia and ruined bodies to the gallantry and dreamy love of preciousity.

The 17th century conceived of syphilis as a test of or challenge to civilization. Newspapers and other forms of public correspondence had never before given so much advertising to physicians—or to charlatans—who claimed to have an anti-syphilitic remedy. In "girl stories" and libertine

novels are painted the experience of going to "the pool" at a general hospital, where, in scenes from the banks of the Ganges, mercury baths were taken. These libertine texts (e.g., Diderot and Rousseau) were frank about the circumstances under which they had contracted the disease.

Voltaire above all took the measure of the threat of syphilis in his fight to defend European civilization. To those, like Diderot in his *Supplément au voyage de Bougainville* (1777), who denounced the colonizers who were purportedly carrying syphilis to the New World and corrupting the innocence of noble primitive societies, Voltaire responded with the reminder that the disease had first seen the light of day in America, that nature alone was guilty, and that the intelligent person had to resist the temptation to conceive of either natural utopias or divine reigns of terror condemning sexuality. On the contrary, society should be about reviving the precautions against the disease, in terms of themes of pleasure and of the exchange and circulation of commodities, ideas, and men.

However, it was in the 19th century that writers had their most significant encounters with the subject syphilis—mainly because most of them (Stendhal, Flaubert, Heine, Baudelaire, Jules de Goncourt, Daudet, Maupassant, Lorrain) had contracted it. Although syphilis was a collective disease, bourgeois society made those infected face up to it in shame and secret. Writers were thus brought face to face with painful questions of identity. Rejected by society, whose values he was no longer able to share, the artist (e.g., Baudelaire) tended to find in prostitution a condition analogous to his own. Syphilis may even have attested to a certain "malediction" of genius. It is the melancholy "venom" of the *Fleurs du mal*. It is the muse of literature. It was synonymous with modernity for the Decadent writers, who, from Jules de Goncourt to Joris-Karl Huysmans, claimed—again, in juxtaposition to the beautiful form—an aesthetics of rags, of paraging, of poxed decomposition. Modernity thus found its favored expression in

## VÉNUS DANS LE CLOÎTRE [VENUS IN THE CLOISTER]

the image of the prostitute excessively made up—to hide venereal sores. The exorbitance of this makeup designates an extravagance where life and death, desire and morbidity (eros and thanatos?) meet and exchange their essences, in a sort of desperate baroque (e.g., Barbey d'Aurevilly).

*Bubu de Montparnasse* by Charles-Louis Philippe (1901) was no doubt one of the last chants to syphilis. The identification of the bacterium *treponema pallidum* in 1905 demystified it, the discovery of penicillin effectively cured it, literature went in a new direction (e.g., Gide, Claudel, Valéry), viz., back to classicism, and the disaster of the First World War finally put an end to the fantastic influences of the disease.

It popped up again, here and there, in literature, as in Thomas Mann's *Doctor Faustus* (1947), which echoes the ethos of the tormented relationship of disease (cholera, tuberculosis, syphilis) with the artist and the genius, negotiated once again by the figure of the prostitute. The outbreak of AIDS, toward the end of the 20th century, tended to have the same effect, but now with the potency of years of sexual liberation and the recognition of diversity and homosexuality as acceptable alternatives in society. Initially identified with the gay scene, then with the contaminated syringes of drug addicts, AIDS revives some of the archaisms of the

collective syphilitic fantasy. Again emerge a “terror” mindset and an ethos of divine punishment, the labeling of minority groups as vectors, and phobias of spatial contamination and infection by mere proximity. And literature, again, looked to reconcile the terrifying, impossible relation of a subject with a virulent disease, that a subject maintains with the disease (e.g., *As is* by W. H. Hoffmann [1984], *A l'ami qui ne m'a pas sauvé la vie* [1990] and *Le Protocole compassionnel* [1991] by Hervé Guibert, *Les Quartiers d'Olliver* by Jean Noel Pancrazi [1990]). All the more urgent, all the more intense is the impetus of the writer who faces the imminence of physical disease.

PATRICK WALD LASOWSKI

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## VÉNUS DANS LE CLOÎTRE [VENUS IN THE CLOISTER]

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Whereas most so-called pornographic novels of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were unsigned and published anonymously, *Vénus dans le cloître* [*Venus in the Cloister*] begins with an introductory letter, addressed to “Madame D.L.R., très digne abbesse de Beaulieu” and signed by one abbé Duprat, in which he proclaims, in the opening sentence: “As I would find it difficult not to execute what you acknowledge to desire, I have not deliberated a

single moment about the request which you have addressed to me to reduce in writing at the earliest possible time the gentle interviews in which your Community has taken such a creditable part” (313). He never explains precisely how he has been informed of those interviews nor what amount of “reduction,” or editing, he has been forced to do. At the same time, he wishes his text to be read by this abbess only and fears what would happen to their likes if

“such secret conferences were to become public” (314); in other words, he does not wish the interviews to be published. This is the typical kind of double-talk to be found in editor’s notes of typical eighteenth-century novels, the editor himself being a hybrid subject halfway between the publisher or the real author and the fictional characters present in the text. The real author who signed this dedication “abbé Duprat” to protect his anonymity and his good name was probably, as most specialists seem now to agree, l’abbé Barrin (1640–1718), the translator of Ovid’s *Oeuvres galantes et amoureuses*.

The date of first publication of this novel has not been established with certainty. Many bibliographers still consider it to be an eighteenth-century novel if only because the only extant copies date from that period; but Alexandre Cioranescu claims that the first edition came out in 1672, and Jules Gay mentions many seventeenth-century editions, the first one having apparently been published around 1682 (*L’Enfer*, vol. 7: 291). How many interviews did the first edition contain—three, five, or six? Nobody knows for sure, but the editor of *L’Enfer de la Bibliothèque Nationale* thinks that there were only three (the ones that will be analyzed below) and that the fourth and fifth, though they may have been written by the same author as the first three, came out later; as to the sixth, which involves new characters, Séraphique et Virginie, it was probably written much later by a different author, as its style seems to suggest. Paradoxically, such uncertainties about the name of the author, the date of first publication, and the number of interviews are largely due to the fact that this novel, contrary to *L’Ecole des filles*, was not censored at the time; it would have received a great deal more publicity otherwise.

These three dialogues between two young nuns, sixteen-year-old Agnès and twenty-year-old Angélique, do not contain a single obscene word, the only coarse one being *pisser* [to piss]. Whereas, in *L’Ecole des filles*, the author clearly sought to excite “l’homme moyen sensuel” [the man of sensual ways], to borrow Judge Woolsey’s expression in his decision concerning *Ulysses*, and used every trick possible to achieve this goal, the author of *Vénus dans le cloître* soon became as preoccupied with moral and political issues as with creating an erotic text. The novel contains comparatively few erotic scenes like the opening one, in which Angélique comes upon

half-naked Agnès, who is masturbating, and starts kissing her and caressing her inflamed bottom and later her genitals, modestly called her “Nature.” This scene is described with decorous metaphors; here is, for instance, Agnès’s reaction to Angélique’s most intimate caresses:

I beseech you, take off your hand from that spot if you don’t want to kindle a conflagration there which it might be difficult to extinguish. I must confess my weakness to you: I am the most sensitive girl that can be found, and what would not cause the least emotion in others is often the source of confusion for me. (329)

When Agnès starts flogging Angélique’s buttocks (*maison de derrière*), there is hardly any suggestion that she does it for sadistic purposes: “Do you realize that this spot only becomes more beautiful as a result? The very special fire which animates it lends it a vermilion which is more pure and brilliant than any coming from Spain” (331). She does not so much take pleasure in hurting her companion as in enhancing the voluptuousness of her sexual parts.

Gradually, there develops something akin to a love relationship between the two girls, Angélique acting the part of the monitor of pleasure as well as confessor and teacher because of her higher rank in the community’s hierarchy, and Agnès that of the compliant and highly voluptuous pupil. Angélique opens her moral argument with the following introduction:

For me, I must say that I have been instructed by a learned man as to how I was supposed to behave myself in order to live happily all my life without doing anything, however, which might offend the eyes of a regular Community or could be unequivocally opposed to God’s commandments. (320)

She then goes on to quote the learned man, a Jesuit and therefore a casuist, who held that religion was composed of two bodies, one political, liable to change from country to country and from century to century, and the other mystical, which, coming directly from God, is universal and eternal. The religious orders were not founded basically for mystical reasons but for political ones, to dispose of the younger children of the aristocratic families. Whatever the nuns do within their community cannot affect public tranquillity, since they do not belong to society anymore, as Agnès is prompt to understand. The first interview ends with a long evocation of

the said Jesuit's affair with one of the nuns, Virginie. The learned man, whose name, Father Raucourt, Angélique finally discloses to Agnès, who knows him, has the ability "to convince you of what he desires" (335). When he had fallen in love with Virginie, he had cast aside another nun who had so far been his favorite and who, out of jealousy, now vows to bring about his downfall: she spies on the lovers with another nun as a witness, sees how the Jesuit "manipulates the spots consecrated to chastity and continence" (339) through a small opening in the grille, and then tells Virginie that she has seen everything and wants her to terminate her affair with the Jesuit. Virginie feigns to comply but, a few weeks later, sends her lover a letter in a cap she has made for him; he uses the same trick to communicate with her, claiming that the cap does not fit. The trick is finally exposed and the Jesuit is expelled to another province. This cap, which goes back and forth between the lovers, gradually becomes the potent signifier of their passion.

The second interview takes place immediately after Angélique's retreat. In the meantime, Agnès has been instructed by the priests recommended by Angélique, especially by the community's abbot, who told her that "there was nobody more dissolute than all the recluses and bigots when they find occasion to enjoy themselves" (347) and showed her an opening in the grille through which they could get together and to make love. Here again, the language is never crude but highly metaphorical:

Then after many protests from both of us, the abbot easily got through the straits and reached port, where he was ushered in; but it was a little painful and was effected only after he had assured me that his entrance would have no bad consequences. (348)

Then she proceeds to tell about her sexual games with the Capuchin and with the Cistercian who had a reliquary full of pubic hairs lifted from his many mistresses. Angélique, pleased with what she has heard, quotes a Benedictine who told her about the various orders' sexual habits, especially masturbation. She also narrates the amorous adventure of sister Cécile, an Augustinian, and Father Raymond, the provincial of the Jacobins, and shows how the nun's superiors punished her when they discovered her attachment to a member of another order. After Agnès, who takes great pleasure in such narra-

tives, has provided a list of the pornographic books that she has received from her lovers, Angélique embarks upon another indecent story, that of sister Scolastique, who every evening availed herself of the perfumed bath prepared for the abbess's morning ablutions and, through a clever stratagem devised by the abbess, was exposed and severely flogged. At the end of the second interview, after a reading of some of the letters exchanged between Virginie and Father Raucourt, some comments on their respective styles and the evocation of the Jesuit's eventual escape to England, Angélique discourses on the vanity of the religious vows and the difference between freedom and licentiousness, pursuing her pliant pupil's instruction.

At the beginning of the third interview, Angélique explains why their abbess, who has had many lovers, is presently indisposed and won't disturb them: she likes to feed many different kinds of animals, among them a crawfish, which, because its water had not been changed, got out of its tank and took refuge in the abbess's chamber pot, and when "it felt sprayed by a rain a little too hot, jumped towards the spot whence it seemed to flow" (373); as it refused to relax its grip, one had to cut its paw. The two friends having retired into an alley in the garden, Angélique undertakes to discuss the subject of confession and instructs Agnès on how to deal with their present confessor, who is a particularly austere man, giving her a sample of a confession in which she withheld two thirds of what she should have said regarding her sexual transgressions. Intent as she is to show her pupil how aggravating it can be to repress one's sexual instincts, she narrates the story of sister Dosithee, a young nun endowed with a particularly amorous nature, who fell under the authority of an old and vicious confessor and, following his exhortations, fought too hard to repress her natural inclinations and succeeded only in getting more sexually aroused; finally, experiencing an orgasm after a flogging session, she decided henceforth to follow her nature. Through this example, Angélique wishes to show Agnès the vanity of many values and the necessity "always to preserve one's mind free and unobstructed by silly thoughts and stupid maxims" (385). She illustrates this principle during a kissing session with Agnès and begins to discuss the comparative merits of various pornographic books, especially *L'Ecole des filles*, which is too insipid and silly to

her taste, and *L'Académie des Dames*, which is as dangerous, though “the purity of its style and its placid eloquence have something pleasant about them” (389). Free-spirited as she is, Angélique refuses to condone debauchery and libertinage, for, as she says, “the pleasures we propose must be curbed by the laws, as well as by nature and prudence” (390). Like Horace, who promoted “proper measure in all things,” she favors a refined economy of pleasure, concluding:

Let us live for ourselves only and without making ourselves ill with alien infirmities; let us establish within ourselves such spiritual peace and tranquillity as are the very principle of joy and the beginning of such happiness as we can reasonably desire. (392)

*Vénus dans le cloître* is neither a sexual manual nor a crude pornographic novel. The erotic scenes, as in de Sade's works, are always a pretext for promoting moral, political, and philosophical principles. The author clearly inveighs against church and nobility, which together conspire to imprison helpless girls for political and economic reasons and hinder them from enjoying a normal sexual life. As the refined style of the novel and Angélique's measured principles testify, the author does not plead in favor of a slackening of morals. The authors of *L'Ecole des filles* and *Thérèse philosophe* can be accused of bad faith, holding as they do two contradictory discourses; here, the text has a great discursive coherence and consistently pleads in favor of those poor creatures who, behind their grilles, are deprived of their natural right to know sexual desire and to indulge it, and who develop harmful frustrations as a result.

*Vénus dans le cloître* was translated into English and published in 1724 by Edmund Curll, and, along with *A Treatise of the Use of Flogging in Venereal Affairs* (1718), caused his arrest. It is this edition, obviously, that Fielding's heroine

must be reading in *Shamela*. The case was difficult to try because there existed no previous case of the kind in English jurisprudence, only strict moral principles laid out by religion, as a judge had to admit: “Whatever tends to corrupt the morals of the people ought to be censured in the Spiritual Court, to which properly all such cases belong” (proceedings of the trial quoted in Hunter et al.: 50) The court had to devise a way to convert religious principles, which had little or no legal force in public life, into a legal jurisprudence, which was done by the judge, who considered that the government was responsible for public order when the latter was threatened by immorality. The court took into consideration the fact that since *Venus dans le cloître* was published in an English translation, it was now accessible to a much larger public and therefore deserved to be banned. Eventually, Curll was convicted, sentenced to pay a fine of 25 marks for each of the books, and pilloried, a comparatively light sentence.

MAURICE COUTURIER

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“Vénus dans le cloître.” In *L'Enfer de la Bibliothèque Nationale*. Vol. 7, ed. by Michel Camus. Paris: Librairie Arthème Fayard, 1988. The quotations were translated by the author of this article.

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## VERLAINE, PAUL

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1844–1896

French poet

If critics often speak of the real life of Paul-Marie Verlaine in discussing his poetry, it is because of the inextricable link between the two. Generally speaking, the poems of Verlaine's that have received the greatest critical reception are those that were clearly inspired by strong emotional influences: his adolescent yearnings in *Poèmes saturniens*; his courtship of Mathilde in *La Bonne chanson* [*The Good Song*] (1870); his tumultuous affair with Rimbaud in *Romances sans paroles* [*Songs Without Words*] (1873); and his imprisonment in the poems intended for a collection originally entitled *Cellulairement* [*In Confinement*] and later included in *Sagesse* [*Wisdom*] (1881) and *Amour* (1888). While Verlaine's indecision—notably his inability to choose between the respectable heterosexual existence of his marriage to Mathilde and the drunken, tormented savagery of his homosexual relationship with Rimbaud—is the juicy recurrent theme that has proven most fertile for critics, the poet's other collections have been largely ignored. In addition to the poems inspired by Verlaine's religious conversion in his jail cell, he contributed to the collaborative *Album Zutique*, a product of informal dinner meetings attended by Verlaine, Rimbaud, and a host of other poets, composers, and artists. Best known in this collection is the "Sonnet of an Asshole" (reproduced in *Hombres*), written by Verlaine and Rimbaud together. The poem's first line ("Dark and wrinkled like a deep pink") begins with the word *Obscur*, the capital letter *O* emphasizing the poem's subject matter.

The first collection of Verlaine's that is filled with erotic themes is *Parallèlement* (1890), which, as its title indicates, was written alongside Verlaine's other collections, *Sagesse* and *Amour* (the latter indicating a sacred, rather than erotic, love). In a letter in August 1887 to Charles Morice, Verlaine said that "*Parallèlement* is the

overflow, the dumping ground of all the 'bad' feelings that I am susceptible to express." Its first section, "Les Amies," first stood alone when it was published clandestinely in 1867 under the pseudonym Pablo de Herlagnez. "Les Amies" is composed of six poems that evoke a lesbian love. In part, Verlaine reproduces themes found in the lesbian poems of Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal* [*Flowers of Evil*] (1857). The language ranges from the delicate, in "Per amica silentia" or in "Spring": "Swelling sap and growing flour, / Your childhood is an arbour: / Let my fingers wander in the moss / Where the rosebud glistens," to the more crude, as in "Pensionnaires." *Parallèlement*'s next section, "Filles," takes its themes from love scenes in bordellos. Later in the collection, Verlaine praises homosexual love in the poem "These passions that only they still call loves ..." and recalls his relationship with Rimbaud in the aptly titled "Læti et Errabundi" [Joyful Vagabonds].

Most recently, more attention has been paid to two companion volumes of erotic poetry: *Femmes* and *Hombres*. The two collections were finally recognized as part of Verlaine's poetic work when they were included in the "Oeuvres libres" [Free Works] supplement to the highly respected Pléiade edition in 1989, and the first critical edition of *Femmes* and *Hombres* was published the following year. *Femmes* was first published in Brussels in 1890, again under the pseudonym Pablo de Herlagnez, and this time with the description: "printed clandestinely and not for sale anywhere"; and *Hombres* first appeared posthumously in 1903. While they appeared separately at first, they are—and should be—treated as two parts of a larger, erotic work. In fact, there is a marked intertextuality between the two collections: for example, between "Childishness" from *Femmes*:

Since it suits me better  
To fuck you from below, I love  
This position ...

and the seventh poem from *Hombres*:

Climb up on me like a woman  
 So that I can fuck you from below  
 There. That's it. Are you well in hand?  
 While my cock enters you, a blade  
 In butter ...

Whether in the heterosexuality of *Femmes* or the homosexuality of *Hombres*, debauchery is one of the poet's attempts at redemption. Unlike the undercurrent of prostitution in parts of *Parallèlement*, there is a sheer and free pleasure taken in both *Femmes* and *Hombres*.

### Biography

Born in Metz, March 30, raised in Paris, where, after brief university studies amid periods of heavy drinking, worked at the Hôtel de Ville. After *Poèmes saturniens* [*Poems Under Saturn*], (1866), married Mathilde Mauté, nine years his junior. Having taken the side of the rebel Communards after the end of the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, he fled Paris until August, when he returned to the capital to live with Mathilde's parents. Received Arthur Rimbaud in 1871 and restarted his drinking, creating arguments with then-pregnant Mathilde. Left Paris with Rimbaud in 1872 for Belgium, and then London. Ever conflicted, Verlaine missed Mathilde, and ultimately left Rimbaud and London to be reunited with her in Brussels, only to rejoin Rimbaud and, in the same hotel in which Mathilde and Verlaine's mother were staying, to shoot him twice in the wrist in July 1873. While Rimbaud tried to have the charges dropped, Verlaine was condemned to two years in prison. After his return to Catholicism, Verlaine lived in England and France, teaching; relationship with his pupil Lucien Létynois (to whom was dedicated a section of *Amour*) lasted until 1883. Published the series "Les Poètes maudits" [The Damned Poets] in revues *Lutèce* and *La Vogue*, 1883–1886, and the last ten years of his life were divided between Parisian hospitals and drinking binges in cafés. Died in Paris, January 8.

SETH WHIDDEN

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# VERVILLE, BÉROALDE DE

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1556–c. 1629  
French novelist

## Primary Work: *Le Moyen de parvenir*

In spite of the various works he published during his lifetime, Béroalde is perhaps most recognized for his novel *Le Moyen de parvenir* [*The Way to Success*]. Arguably, it is one of the greatest and most influential works of seventeenth-century French literature. Appearing after the French Renaissance and predating the literature of the Enlightenment, the novel was possibly written around the year 1558 and published between 1610 and 1620. Much controversy surrounds the work. In addition to the confusion regarding its year of publication, the authenticity of the novel as an original work has been long contested. It has been suggested that de Verville may not have been its true author, while some academics and critics have even proposed that the novel is either a reworking or an exact copy of an earlier text. However, the style of *Le Moyen de parvenir* suggests otherwise. Like many of de Verville's works, it is rich in imagery and contains countless examples of French dialect, jargon, and argot.

*Le Moyen de parvenir* is a substantial piece of writing. As a work professing to explain “all that was, is, and shall be,” it sets out to debate countless philosophical and moral subjects. Béroalde described it thus: “[J]’ai fait un oeuvre, lequel est une satire universelle, où je reprends les vices de chascun” [I have created a work that is a world satire, where I capture the vices of each and everyone] (quoted by Monnoye: viii). Situated in a limbo-like setting, the focus of the novel is a grand banquet, attended by an assembled crowd of the most revered historical figures, presided over by Socrates as the master of ceremonies. The worthies (*gens d’honneur*) in attendance include philosophers, religious figures, royalty, and writers, all of different nationalities.

In short, *Le Moyen de parvenir* is a collection of thoughts and observations of life, told as

anecdotes by the novel’s various personages. Among the many themes discussed, religion is one subject that occurs at regular intervals throughout the course of the novel. De Verville’s own experiences of Protestantism and Catholicism may have influenced his views of the clergy (all quotations are from the 1900 edition):

Vous estes bien trompé d’autant qu’il n’y a gens qui soient plus sur le cul que moines et gens benis, ministres et sçavans qui estudient assi, et qui au lieu de conserver les saincts ordres qui leur ont esté conferez, les quittent et, abandonnant l’ordre de Dieu, se rangent aux ordres du diable, qui leur confere grace d’estre plus ribauds que jamais, et plus putains que les autres gens. (192)

[You are all the more mistaken that there are no people more obsessed by sex than monks and clergymen, ministers and scholars who study diligently, and who, instead of keeping the holy orders, which have been conferred upon them, part from them, and abandoning God’s holy orders, place themselves at the Devil’s command, who awards them the honor to act more like a strumpet than ever, and more like a whore than other people.]

Similarly, de Verville writes at great length about women. He examines the emotional and sexual relationship between men and women, while analyzing the differences between the female and male character. A conversation between “the King of Egypt” and a Mme “le seigneur de Danois” elicits perhaps his true view:

Nous estions sur le sujet des dames. —Vroiment, madame, le sujet est unique en perfection. —Mais qu’en dites-vous? —Tout bien, madame. —Et encore? Dites-nous-en, à bon escient, vostre opinion. —Puis qu’il vous plaist, madame, par la mordong, toutes les femmes sont putains. (47)

[We were discussing the subject of ladies. —Really, Madame, there is no other subject like it. —But what do you have to say about it? —Very well, Madame. —Well? Give us your wisdom. —If it should please you, Madame. God’s death, all women are whores].

There are several examples of violence toward women in the text:

Cest officer avoit une femme assez fascheuse, et qui tourmentoit. Il la battit plusieurs fois, et à dur, don't elle se contrista, et menaça son mary du consistoire, qui est le purgatoire des Huguenots. Remis qu'il fut au consistoire, il y alla; et on luy remonstra que cela n'estoit pas beau de batter sa femme. "Elle estoit battable," dit-il. —Allez, allez, luy dit le diseur, sçachant la pensée de nostre seigneur le consistoire, retirez-vous; et qu'il y ait de la mesure en vos actions, et qu'on n'oye plus parler de vous. (372).

[This officer had a wife, who was quite irritating and who tormented him. He beat her several times, and hard; she was grieved and threatened her husband with the consistory, which is the purgatory for Huguenots. Sent to the consistory, he went there and was taught that it wasn't nice to beat his wife. "It was so easy to beat her," he said. —Go now, said a voice, knowing the thought of our lord the consistory, leave us; Be sure to behave with more moderation in future, and don't let us hear about you again.]

Béroalde intended *Le Moyen de parvenir* to be a satire, a criticism of human weakness and vice. In numerous ways, it is reminiscent of Rabelais, with moments of cruelty and sadism given a comedic treatment. Kritzman notes: "The rabelaisian text ... transcribes a sadistic tendency to destroy an aggressor through the enactment of a comic allegory in which latent hostility is sublimated and yet unconsciously adheres to the ideological imperatives that dictate the power of repression" (201). Many passages in *Le Moyen de parvenir* are obscene, and some contain examples of scatological violence. Béroalde's decisions regarding use of language and certain words has also contributed to its notoriety; for example: "[J]e vous demande, Lipsius, pourquoy les femmes qui ayment le desduit hantent les gens de cloister? ... C'est pource qu'elles ont le feu d'enfer au cul; il faut des c..... benites pour l'esteindre" (103) [I ask you, Lipsius, why women who love pleasure regularly visit men of the cloister? It's because they're in heat and only blessed balls can put out the fire].

Subsequently, *Le Moyen de parvenir* was long classed as pornographic, relegated to the "l'enfer" [inferno] of libraries ( i.e., access was closed to the general public).

## Biography

Born François Brouard in Paris. His father was the renowned Protestant minister and

humanitarian Mathieu Béroalde, who had been closely involved with Agrippa d'Aubigné and Pierre de l'Estoile. In 1562, his mother died of the plague in Orléans, when de Verville was very young. After the death of his father, he converted to Catholicism, although he converted back again to Protestantism during the later years of his life. His education and subsequent career were a conflict of science, medicine, and religion. He was not only a preacher, but also was characterized as "a poet, chemist, physician, philosopher, grammarian, [and] mathematician" (Monnoye: xiii). His writings, consequently, were varied with regard to style and genre. As a poet, he composed several works, including romantic poetry (*Soupirs Amoureux*), philosophical poetry (*Connaissances Nécessaires*), and religious poetry (*Muse Céleste*). In addition to his works of fiction and prose, Béroalde wrote the political work *L'Idée de la République* and produced various scientific pieces of research, primarily on alchemy. The date of de Verville's death is uncertain, and to this day he remains an author about whom little is actually known.

SARAH BERRY

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## VIAN, BORIS

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1920–1959

French writer

Eroticism figures quite naturally in the bizarre and hyperbolic universe of Vian's texts, as an integral part of the human condition. As such, it is at odds with society's hypocritical anti-erotic stance, in particular that of the clergy, which Vian denounces and mocks vigorously. Yet love is always twofold. Physical attraction to beauty and youth is presented as life affirming and playful (oftentimes in a tongue-in-cheek manner), and sensual details such as colors, dress, songs, and scents are the joyful anticipation of lovemaking. However, once consummated, the sexual relationship, and those living it, begin to wear and decay, all too often resulting in the death of the initial object of desire. The women portrayed are clichés. Sexually assertive women (and/or lesbians) are frowned on or ridiculed. Despite Vian's notoriety, his few downright erotic texts (*Écrits pornographiques*) were not published until 1980, featuring among other things the conference *Utility of Erotic Literature* from 1948, and a Dracula parody of deadly sex. In the works he penned under the pseudonym of Vernon Sullivan, sex is both a sales strategy and a way to expose the voyeuristic desires of the general public.

Boris Vian was many things: novelist, poet, playwright, screenwriter, actor, translator, singer/songwriter, jazz trumpeter, critic, essayist, and member of the Collège de Pataphysique, and "prince" of the St. Germain-de-Prés district of Paris. His first novel, *L'Écume des jours* [*Foam of the Days*], was nominated for the 1946 Prix de la Pléiade. In that same year, the noir racial thriller *J'Irai cracher sur vos tombes* [*I'll Spit on Your Graves*] became the first of four novels written by Vian under the pseudonym "Vernon Sullivan." The *succès de scandale* of 1947, the book earned Vian a reputation as a "master pornographer," thwarting his aspirations to join the literary establishment and denying his subsequent works the critical

attention they deserved. These included the novels *L'Automne à Pékin* (1947), *L'Herbe Rouge* (1950), and *L'Arrache-coeur* (1953), along with novellas (e.g., *Les fourmis*), plays (*L'Équarissage pour tous*, *Les Bâtisseurs d'empire*), and poetry (*Cantilènes en gelée*). His anti-war song *Le Déserteur* (1955) and the iconoclastic character of his versatile work has assured him postmortem cult status.

### *J'Irai cracher sur vos tombes*

Vian is said to have written *J'Irai cracher sur vos tombes* in ten days in August 1946 on a wager with publisher Jean d'Halluin. Vian posed as the supposed French translator of an African American writer who was unable to find a publisher in the United States, a ploy that both excused and allowed for the over-the-top eroticism and violence of the novel. When in real life in 1947 the body of a young woman strangled by her lover was found in a Montparnasse hotel with the novel next to her opened to the page where the protagonist kills his mistress in a similar fashion, a scandal erupted and Vian was labeled an "assassin by proxy." Charges and lawsuits led to the book's being banned in France from 1949 to 1953; Vian was convicted of affronting public morals and was sentenced to pay a 100,000-franc fine.

In the novel, Lee Anderson, a black man passing for white, seeks revenge for the death of his younger brother, who was lynched for having dated a white girl. Befriending a gang of adolescents, Lee acts as the indefatigable, ever-ready "sex machine" and supplier of alcohol. He pursues and promises marriage to two daughters of a plantation owner. As he attempts to implicate the younger one in the murder of her pregnant sister, she attacks him to prevent the crime. He massacres her and proceeds to rape and kill the other sister. The police apprehend and kill him, leaving the body for the townspeople to hang.

In this violent plot Lee's numerous sexual encounters serve to confirm that he is white (as when he has sex with a 13-year-old black girl) and to prove his overall prowess, or as "fore-play" to the eventual killings. Sex is a way of dominating and humiliating women, of manipulating them and their sexual pleasure, which is ultimately used against them. Hence the "colonized becomes the colonizer," but at the same time this white impostor sexually behaves like the racial stereotype of a "black man," lusting for and seeking to violate white women. Some few episodes are truly erotic, as when Lee tries to seduce the contrary younger sister, who employs the classic apparatus of female seduction and demands that he act out the respective male part. The restless pace of sexual acts rouses and strings along the reader, but seduction always and inevitably ends in violence. If there is *jouissance* in this novel, it comes with a bitter after-taste, with the reader feeling as manipulated and abased as the female characters. A pastiche of hard-boiled as well as black American protest literature, which makes for some well-meaning racism, this hoax of a novel is also an allegory of the workings of literature and of the French literary establishment. It also satirizes male-female relations, and with Vian's ideas on erotic literature in mind, it might be read as a deliberate challenge to female writers to voice their own erotic or violent fantasies involving men.

### *Utilité de la littérature érotique*

In the form of a talk or seminar, *The Utility of Erotic Literature* explains some of the principles according to which the Vernon Sullivan novels (in particular *J'Irai cracher sur vos tombes*) were composed and advertised. The erotic content of these novels, announced and implicit in the supposed censorship (and partly the cause of the actual censorship following its publication) was meant to be a "weapon of subversion." Yet, it was probably less the "revolutionary quality" of his erotic writing than the forbidden touch and the potential for transgression that enticed people to buy the book. As it engages the reader by provoking a visceral response, erotic literature is one way to "sell" such an urgent message.

Rather than propounding a coherent argument, the author concludes in his own implicit defense by proposing that literature does not create eroticism or violence but evokes something

already existing in the reader's mind. But while eroticism rouses the reader as much as do matters of death, the two are diametrically opposed, violence is the worst enemy of sexual pleasure, and Vian underhandedly admits that his Sullivan novels are not erotic but pseudo-erotic at best.

### Biography

Born in Ville d'Avray near Paris, March 10. Civil engineering degree from the École Central Paris in 1942; worked with AFNOR (L'Association française de Normalisation) and the Office du Papier until 1946. Having suffered from heart and lung conditions since adolescence, Boris Vian died June 23 at the age of 39.

INA PFITZNER

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## VIAU, THÉOPHILE DE

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# VIAU, THÉOPHILE DE

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1590–1626

French libertine writer

Théophile de Viau was the author of a large body of poetry and a play and was known in his lifetime as the “prince of libertines.” The fact that posterity has come to refer to him simply as “Théophile” is a legacy of a contemporary strategy of depriving libertine authors of their surnames in order to undermine the identity of and infantilize individuals who found themselves outside of the literary establishment. He undoubtedly owed some of his later heterodox opinions to the influence of Marc Duncan, a liberal Scottish professor at Samur who became his mentor in 1611. Duncan rejected mysticism and superstition, and for Viau this deconstructed a Counter-Reformation theology firmly rooted in expressions of mystical spirituality. As early as 1612, Viau’s verse questions the concept of a personal, provident God. After his return from Spain in 1612, the young writer became a wandering troubadour around several chateaux throughout France and acquired a certain celebrity. The writer was among the best-known and most successful members of those associated with the libertine group of authors: his collected poetry (*Les Oeuvres poetiques*) of 166 poems went through 93 editions during the seventeenth century alone. His poetry is characterized by an undercurrent of sensuality that can best be described as bawdy; moreover, it was as much for

his heterodox opinions as for the content of his works that Viau attracted censure.

Viau was nonconformist not only in matters of religion, but also in his choice of sexual partners, and several poems contain overt homoerotic elements, a feature of some other libertine writers such as Des Barreaux and Boisrobert. When he was imprisoned on suspicion of sodomy and freethinking, he penned the poem “A un sien ami” [To His Own Friend], probably addressed to his former lover, Des Barreaux, who renounced him at the time of his imprisonment. The poem is notable for its unambiguous treatment of same-sex love, as well as for its stark representation of betrayal. The theme of homosexuality is a leitmotif in Viau’s work, though the positive image it is given, unlike its portrayal in Petronius or Martial, marks a radical departure from the Christian tradition. It was this factor, together with the increasing boldness with which libertines were attacking sections of the clergy, that guaranteed natural enemies. A Jesuit preacher, François Garasse, was determined to ensure Viau’s downfall and published his *Doctrine curieuse des beaux esprits de ce temps ou prétendus tels* [Curious Beliefs of the So-Called Freethinkers of This Age] (1623) as a riposte to Viau and his immediate circle, and criticizes their blasphemy and obscenity. When the cleric examined the *Parnasse satyrique* and saw the name Théophile on the first page, he immediately assumed that this denoted Viau

(although this attribution has never been proved one way or another), and the author was duly arrested in September 1622. Another Jesuit, André Voisin, was obsessed with seeing Viau perish at the stake “to defend Our Lady and the saints.” While the Jesuits at this time enjoyed the favor of the queen mother, Louis XIII was more sympathetic to the libertines’ cause, and on the very day that Viau was banished (a sentence that was never enforced thanks to royal protection and the assistance of the duke of Montmorency), the monarch sent Voisin into exile. Viau had become acquainted with the Duke of Buckingham during his early exile in England, and the duke’s arrival in Paris on May 14, 1625, to collect the king’s sister, Henriette-Marie, to marry Charles I, strengthened the writer’s position with the French court and helped him gain a relatively light sentence.

Viau’s most influential work is the tragedy *Pyrame et Thisbé* (performed c. 1617; printed 1623), based on a story appearing in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. This deals with two young lovers whose neighboring families are at war and forbid the couple from courting. The pair continue seeing each other by the means of a gap in the wall separating their estates, and they make plans to elope. They fix a date for their escape and arrange to meet at the tomb of Ninus, located by a fruit tree and a fountain. Thisbé arrives first but is chased by a wild lion. Pyrame arrives a little later and discovers her blood-splattered veil lying on the ground. He commits suicide and his blood mingles with Thisbé’s blood on the garment. She initially believes him to be asleep, then commits suicide on realizing the truth. In Viau’s hands, this tale becomes an erotically charged love story, but a passion proscribed by society. In act II, scene 2, Pyrame invokes immortality of the soul and the prospect of an afterlife as merely one hypothesis amongst others. This play inspired Pierre Corneille’s *Clitandre* (1632)—a drama with an obvious homoerotic subtext—and Viau’s work is recognized as influencing Jean de La Fontaine, and, much later, the nineteenth-century poets Théophile Gautier and Stéphane Mallarmé. In his lifetime and the subsequent decades, Viau was the visible figurehead of the libertine movement and would be remembered as its honorary founder. His condemnation was a landmark in

the history of French literature, for it effectively meant that from that point, erotic works could be printed only clandestinely.

### Biography

Born near Agen in Clairac to a noble Protestant family. Educated at Samur (1610–11); completed his studies at Leiden, 1613. Obligated to leave France for suspect poetry, 1619; returned from Spain and England, 1621. Converted to Catholicism, 1621. Arrested for suspected debauched writing, September 1622; condemned and burned in effigy, August 1623. Capital sentence commuted to banishment by Parlement of Paris, July 1625. After a period of imprisonment in the Conciergerie, he spent the rest of his life in four French residences thanks to Louis XIII’s protection. Died aged 36 years, September 25.

PAUL SCOTT

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# VIGNALI, ANTONIO

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1501–1559

Italian satirist

**Primary Work: *La Cazzaria***

This 16th-century dialogue (written c. 1525, published clandestinely c. 1530) is one of the earliest European texts to explore the “infinite ways of fucking” (*infiniti modi di fottere*) (Stoppelli: 134; all citations from Stoppelli’s edition). Whereas his contemporary Pietro Aretino wrote for mass publication, demonic and literally pornographic, Vignali wrote for manuscript circulation among the members of his private academy, and his dialogue promotes elite homosexuality in a mock-erudite tone, alternating between crude vocabulary and lofty philosophical discourse.

The word *cazzaria* seems to mean a shop that manufactures and sells *cazzi*, or penises, hence a penis, or phallus, factory (153). Like *coglioneria*, it could mean no more than “a load of cock” or rubbish, but in Vignali’s dialogue it suggests the visual motif of the *testa de’ cazzi*, the human head made up of writhing penises. Vignali’s preface invents a scene in which another member of the intellectual elite, waiting for an assignation in a state of phallic arousal (“a cazzo dritto” [with a stiff prick]), discovers a manuscript of this work and declares it “il maggiore viluppo di cazzi che vi fusse” [the greatest tangle of pricks there ever was]. The reader then loses interest in his date, much preferring “the excessively great pleasure of finding all the reasons and circumstances of fucking” in this book (38). Nicolò Franco claimed, in a sonnet supposedly spoken by Vignali himself, that “to stock the Cazzaria properly, here are millions of pricks, the number that Pietro Aretino has tried in his lifetime” (153).

*La Cazzaria* itself takes the form of a Socratic dialogue between two members of the elite Academy of the Intronati, Arsiccio (Vignali) and Sodo, the youthful Marcantonio Piccolomini. In contrast to Aretino’s *Ragionamenti*,

the speakers are privileged males rather than plebeian courtesans, and it emerges that the whole dialogue takes place in bed: “Sodo, see that you don’t interrupt when I have my prick inside your arse” (94). The discourse proceeds through a series of pseudo-Aristotelian scientific questions about the shape, origin, and function of the genitalia, as discussed in the Academy; Arsiccio is collecting material for his scholarly *Lumen Pudendorum*, or *The Light of the Pudenda*, in three volumes corresponding to the three erogenous zones (82). Vignali’s purpose is as much political as sexological, since his main narrative—the war between Cunts, Pricks, Arses, and Balls that resulted in their current disastrous state—allegorizes the factions and conflicts that led to the collapse of Siense autonomy. But half the dialogue pursues sexo-philosophical questions for their own sake: “why humans are unwilling to be seen while fucking” (134); why nature placed pubic hair in certain places and not others (58); why lovers’ tongues interlace when they kiss (134); “why pricks are depicted with wings and feet” on university walls (125–6); why sodomy is said to be “against nature” (67); whether the phallus was originally made by women (70); what the true meanings of paradise, nectar, and ambrosia are (61).

Arsiccio’s ostensible goal is to train Sodo in libertine heterosexuality: only by becoming a “scholar,” able to “find out the modes and secret ways,” will he appeal to the discriminating lady, who values “intellectual sublimity” [*sublimità d’ingegno*] and “acute and subtle inventions,” not to mention contraceptive advice (44–6). As the question-and-answer dialogue develops, however, its “inventions” become increasingly misogynist, dwelling on the grotesque anatomy of the vagina. Vignali frequently laments the fall from happier “ancient” days, when *potta* and *culo* [cunt and arse] coexisted in a “pact” of amity, when the genitalia could speak properly and “do their deeds” openly and honorably in public view. Now, in the fallen world, we are cursed with shame, repulsion,

secrecy, and an “insatiable appetite” for “forced and disastrous” new postures (134–5). Homoeroticism is conceived of not as a rehearsal for “sublime” heterosexuality but as a preferable alternative: “Paradise” means the *dolcezza* [sweetness] experienced “with your prick up a soft, white, boyish arse”; nectar and ambrosia refer to the “exclusive pleasure” [*chiuso piacere*] of sodomizing a handsome youth (60–1).

Two later works should be considered here. An unknown author (“C.M.”) borrowed the *Cazzaria* title to celebrate in verse “the trophies of prick in arse,” and Vignali’s original prose dialogue prompted an apocryphal “Second Part” that brings “academic” homosexuality back to the street. In this continuation Sodo abandons his legal and philosophical studies to become a common prostitute, while the mentor-figure Arsiccio becomes a crude feeder of questions. Except in its final pages, this second *Cazzaria* emphasizes the similarities between homo- and heterosexuality and the interchangeability of the male and the female whore. Sodo sets up business with his pimp, or *ruffiano*, just like his female counterpart and performs all the same postures: “grazing sheep,” “legs-around-the-neck,” etc. (Vatican MS Capponiano 140, ff. 78–9, 81, 92v, 101v; all citations from this manuscript). While he proceeds from keeper to keeper, he also sleeps with a “puttana” [whore], and often “I, he, and my whore made three happy at once” (f. 92v).

Notable episodes, related in the matter-of-fact tone of the case-hardened professional, include being “well fucked” in rapid succession by 19 monks (ff. 82–v) and being invited by the sacristan to see his etchings, a prelude to rapturous fellatio (ff. 85v–86). In contrast to the expressionless Sodo, these ecclesiastical clients pour out their adoration and frustration in poetic language, adorned with echoes of classical mythology and religious worship, as in the friar’s litany for the youth’s “culo di zuccaro” [sugar arse] (f. 101v). As in the original *Cazzaria*, however, pleasure comes before a fall. Sodo suddenly realizes that he has outgrown the “Land of Cockaigne” or “Golden Age.” His youthful beauty vanishes: “I found myself 20 years old, I was getting completely covered in hair, ... and a Coach with 6 Horses could drive through my Arse-hole” (ff. 84, 93–v).

Though Sodo’s survival narrative dwells more and more on his criminality, the author does

make a final effort to simulate Vignali’s lofty academic dialogue. The rent-boy turns philosopher, giving a lecture on the history and etymology of buggery and citing a string of homosexual lovers that includes Cain and Abel, Plato and Alcibiades, Jupiter and Argus, and Apollo and Hyacinth (ff. 106v–109). These arguments—from geometry, anatomy, mythology, and history—circulated widely in the academies and show up in the most sophisticated homoerotic text of the 17th century, Antonio Rocco’s *L’Alcibiade fanciullo a scola* [*Alcibiades the Schoolboy*]. After establishing this prestigious genealogy, Sodo concludes by equating his kind of transgression with courtly privilege: “[J]ust as only the Eagle, Queen of Birds, is permitted to fix her gaze on the Sun, so the Arse, the similitude of that Planet, is permitted to fix its gaze on Princes” (f. 109v, numbered “110”).

*La Cazzaria del C.M.* is a virtuoso poem in which every line ends with *cazzo* or *culo*. With its companion poem, an “Effective Persuasion” to sodomy, it launches ingenious arguments similar to those of Vignali and Rocco: the *cazzo* desires the *culo* because nature has made them both round; heterosexual vaginal intercourse is fit only for animals (and Germans), but “I want to do it as *persons* do it”; nature has created us to “fuck and refuck,” which makes it quite natural to seek new ways and abandon the old ones forever (ff. A2v, A4v). Man-and-boy coupling is described in some detail, and this union is given an aesthetic and symbolic property: “Il cul possi chiamar, specchio del cazzo, / Può dirsi il cazzo l’anima del culo” [The arse can be called the mirror of the prick, and the prick the soul of the arse] (f. A2). In fact, the ultimate happiness would be a state of blissful self-fusion. “If only Man could bugger himself in his own arse,” how peaceful the world would become; no “clamors on earth and sea” would disturb this new Golden Age, no frenzy, no weapons of hunting or warfare, no yearning for the other (f. A4v).

Vignali’s *Cazzaria* was never well known, but it influenced several later writings as well as the homoerotic texts mentioned above. Its question-and-answer format reappears in the French *L’Escole des filles* [*The Girl’s School*] (1655), the English *Practical Part of Love* (1660), and most directly in the 18th-century Italian poem *Il Libro del perché* [*The Book of Why*]. A copy of this work, combined into an anthology with

other libertine classics, graced the library of King George III of England. Vignali's original has been translated into English at least twice, and the recent version by Ian Moulton is widely available.

### Biography

Born in Siena, Antonio Vignali (or Vignale) di Buonagiunta came from the most powerful oligarchy in that city. He attended classes in law at the University of Pisa, though under suspicion for murdering a cousin, and went on to found the Sienese Accademia degli Intronati [Academy of the Thunderstruck], a circle of educated humanists and aristocrats devoted to cultural patronage and playful intellectual inquiry. Vignali was involved in the Sienese coup d'état (1524) and the subsequent fall of the republic to imperial encroachment. He fled his native city in 1530 and exiled himself in various courts in Seville, Madrid, and Milan. As well as the comic-erotic dialogue *La Cazzaria*, he wrote a variety of letters, translations, poetry, and drama, much of it never published. Vignali died in Milan.

JAMES GRANTHAM TURNER

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*Dialogo intitolato la Cazzaria* [Dialogue Entitled The Prick Factory]. Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana (Vatican City), MS Capponiano 140; ff. 78–110 contain the unique “Second Part.” In his edition of Vignali's original, Stoppelli notes that the author of this spurious continuation is “not Sienese” but apparently still 16th-century (156).

*La Cazzaria del C. M.* [The Prick Factory, by Sir M.] N. p., n.d. Bibliothèque nationale de France shelfmark Enfer 562; ff. A4–v are a separate poem entitled “Persuasiva efficace, per coloro, che schifano la delicatezza del tondo” [Effective Persuasion for Those Who Despise the Deliciousness of the Round Part]. This printed poem, with a woodcut portrait of a cleric, is evidently too early to be by “il Cavaliere Marino [C.M.],” as Pascal Pia claimed in *Les Livres de l'Enfer*, 116.

*Il Libro del perché*. Place and date of publication: “Nullibi et Ubique, nel XVIII secolo” [Nowhere and everywhere, in the 18th century]. British Library

shelfmark P.C. 22.c.1; as *The Why and the Wherefore, or The Lady's Two Questions Resolved*. London: J. Lamb, 1765, shelfmark P.C. 27.b.10 [see *Private Case*].

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# VILLENNA, LUIS ANTONIO DE

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1951–

Spanish poet, novelist, and journalist

A prolific writer, Villena has published poetry, prose fiction, essays, and anthologies of poetry. Two of his main characteristics are dissidence and a search for pleasure. Life cannot be understood as a mere acceptance of reality, with its moral and cultural codes. Literature becomes then the appropriate field for an exploration of the meaning of life and its diverse aspects.

Symbolism, aestheticism, and a passion for beauty are the basic features of his early work. Life may not be perfect, but literary and cultural masks can hide its dark side. Dissidence is another feature. Villena does not accept either a poetics of realism or a poetics of the majority. As a consequence, he claims to be a literary inheritor of unknown, extravagant, or marginal authors such as Strato of Sardes, Bertran de Born, Luis de Góngora, Don Juan de Tassis, Bocángel Unzueta, Quasimodo, Sandro Penna, Porfirio Barba-Jacob, August von Platen, César Moro, Lord Dunsanny, and Oscar Wilde. For Villena, literature is pleasure and artifice. It is a representation that mixes life and fiction, experience and desire, memory and reality. Villena experiences reality as a brief moment of intense pleasure that is followed by a long period of dullness. Consequently, he is a skeptic who feels the impossibility of sustaining beauty, pleasure, or love for long periods of time. What is more, he knows that the fusion of life and literature does not lead him to a sort of paradise on Earth. This is the reason why literature is identified with masks; as a writer he can create a literary reality in which a different and better life is fulfilled; a life in which the moral codes of contemporary puritan society are not present.

For Villena, love means homoerotic love. This adds another important feature to his poetry and his life, since he grew up during the last phase of the Francoist dictatorship and the beginnings of the Spanish democratic system.

Homosexuality was then a taboo that took time to be socially accepted. An early literary vocation and late adolescent maturity have to be added to his literary characteristics. The nostalgia in his works cannot be properly understood if the reader does not know these two simple facts. He was a precocious reader but did not have a firsthand experience of those readings and of his innermost desires till an advanced stage in his life.

His first book of poems, *Sublime Solarium*, is set in exotic places and past times and shows a variety of prestigious characters surrounded by luxury, decadence, and death. It is the poetry of an unexperienced young boy. This was one of the works that signaled the departure from the previous dominant poetics of social realism in literature. Language was regarded as autonomous and nonutilitarian or committed to society and politics. Impersonality was predominant in the poems, in the sense that there was not a direct reference to his experience and his self. *El viaje a Bizancio* is the next step. Experience makes its presence, although shyly, in his poetry. Young boys and nature are the prevalent characteristics of the book. The work is an apology for desire through either imagination or contemplation. In the first case, the result is painful awareness and melancholy; in the latter, an access to desire via the pleasant contemplation of a male body. Nature is thus depicted in its lushness and corresponds to the mapping of the male body. Love and desire act as a cosmic force of union. The experience of bodily pleasure is also paralleled by the experience of the pleasure of language. The reader perceives the same intensity in the erotic relationship as in the use of language. *Hymnica* and *Huir del invierno* represent the summit of his early phase. *Hymnica* is a passionate chant to youthful beauty. The poet feels and writes on those young bodies with whom he can experience sexuality. It goes beyond mere contemplation, to an immediate living experience. Pagan themes are present throughout *Hymnica*, since Villena views

## VILLON, FRANÇOIS

homoerotic love under the species of ancient Greek homoeroticism. Thus Villena creates a world in which the concepts of sin, guilt, and condemnation are completely absent. His is not a mere hedonistic eroticism; it contains an ethics and a metaphysics, both of them directly taken from ancient Greek philosophy, i.e., from a civilization in which the destructive concepts of Christianity were not present.

*La muerte únicamente* represents a shift in his poetry. Villena moves from Decadence toward a more pessimistic and realistic account of life. *La muerte únicamente* thematizes the symbols, myths, and reality of death. Villena moves away from his paradise to enter a more somber terrain. From then onward, and leaving aside the Decadent and aesthetic features I have mentioned, which means that to a certain extent he has moved away from Luis Cernuda—his former model—he writes a more socially committed poetry.

This does not mean that he avoids or dismisses sexuality as a suitable topic for his writings, since he has written several novels in which this can be found playing a central role, as for example, *Chicos* [Boys] or *El burdel de Lord Byron* [*Lord Byron's brothel*]. However, his passionate account and contemplation of beautiful young male bodies is not so present and has been replaced by a more pessimistic view of life.

As a journalist Villena has defended gay and lesbian rights in his articles. He has also reviewed gay and lesbian literature for daily journals and has always maintained an active stance in favor of equality.

## Biography

Luis Antonio Villena was born in 1951 in Madrid; BA, 1974; worked as a journalist for *El Mundo*, *El País*, *ABC*, and for the Spanish radio networks SER and RNE.

DR. HONORIS CAUSA

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*Huir del invierno* [Escape from Winter]. 1981  
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*En el invierno romano* [In the Roman Winter]. 1986  
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# VILLON, FRANÇOIS

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1431–c. 1463  
French poet, criminal

Written within the context of his imprisonment, Villon's semi-autobiographical and mostly first-person poem *Le Grand Testament* is presented as

a last will and testament. Characterized by social satire, this lyric text of just over 2,000 Middle French verses is often colored by cynicism, bitterness, and irony. Villon calls into question religious and social conventions through the humorous advice he gives to those he leaves

behind. In his mock bequests to friends and foes, he expresses many regrets and is nostalgic for his youth, health, virility, bitter love affairs, and lack of sexual satisfaction. Much Villon criticism has been biographical.

Stylistically, Villon's *Poésies diverses*—comprising *lais*, ballads, *rondeaux*, and *virelais*—have been considered a formidable antithesis to France's *Grands Rhétoriciens*, with his playful and subversive language. Villon is no stranger to scatological scenes, sexual humor, and obscenity. From flatulence to erections, from growling bellies to drunken lovemaking, Villon uses corporeal language and images of bodily functions to parody literary conventions. One well-known example is his use of the Latin prayer *Ave salus tibi decus*, in which the French *d'escus* [coins] is interchangeable with *des culs* [anus]. Villon makes similar veiled references to male and female genitalia, sodomy, flatulence, intercourse, and prostitution throughout.

The human body and its hungers, suffering, and sexual appetites are frequent themes, as are poverty and material goods. The conception of love is associated with the passionate and often destructive desires of *fol amour*, as exemplified in the sarcastic *Double Ballade*, in which "passion turns people into animals." Love and sexual desire are one and the same for Villon, both associated with death and decay as well as madness. He "swears on his testicle" that he "dies a martyr to love." In *Le Testament*, it is love that "pricks him" and "spurs" him on and love that has "abused" him.

Not wholly misogynistic, Villon's treatment of women may be characterized by desire and fear, disdain and disappointment, but can be ambiguous at times. Villon writes of his mistresses and prostitutes, of his own mother and the Virgin Mary. Women are most often sexual objects, portrayed as sanctuary for his body and soul; Villon seeks sexual release but is often left frustrated by his intimate relationships with women. He considers women "danger" and writes of his own failed relationships with such women as Marthe or Katherine de Vausselles, whom he blames for his own downfall; Jehanneton is an everywoman figure: a beautiful, tempting, and dangerous sexual partner; in contrast, Ambroise de Loré becomes his ideal woman. *La Ballade des dames du temps jadis* treats legendary women (Heloise, courtesans of antiquity) and their reputations as

intelligent women, good companions and lovers, or unfaithful temptresses.

The negative image of women and the female body is evident in ballads such as *Les Regrets de la belle Heaulmière*, an unfavorable graphic portrait of aging, female sexuality, and desire. Her once attractive body is reduced to deflated sexual organs; her breasts, thighs, and vagina are "shriveled up" and she laments that her thighs are nothing but sticks, "spotted like sausages." Elsewhere, Villon evaluates the female body and its appearance in positive sexual terms, as "so tender, smooth, gentle, and precious," but conversely as dangerous in youth and hideous in old age. Other acquaintances are evaluated according to sexual abilities, such as the "le bon fouterre."

Prostitution is a central image in Villon and was widespread on the streets of Paris during his lifetime; he even suggests comically that a school for prostitutes be established in Meung Prison. *La Ballade de la Grosse Margot* mocks the highly idealized contemporary medieval motifs of the devoted knight and his ladylove and the enamored troubadour and his unattainable *domna* as Villon describes the affectionate, erotic, abusive, and financial relationship between pimp (the narrator Villon) and prostitute (Margot). Parodying a knight of courtly romance defending his lady, he vows to "love and serve" his lady and her refined desires, pledging that he would gladly arm himself with shield and dagger for her. But their love is equated with lust, violence, and commerce, far from the idealized or Platonic *fin' amour* of the troubadours. Moreover, their home is not the court but rather a bordello. He becomes irritated if she comes to their bed with no profits, making her pay with her body. Sexual intercourse and monetary exchange are often related in Villon. He expresses his love for Margot, seeing her as an equal and a good match because they both "enjoy filth." Together they are "bad rat, bad cat." Comically, Margot shows her affection through flatulence, laughter, manual stimulation, and drunken intercourse. Her large, pregnant body crushes him beneath her and their union "wipes out all lust" in him. The lustful pair are equally immoral and lecherous [*paillard*], and Villon's affection for her grows from this shared depravity.

*Le jargon*, printed posthumously in 1489, is a short work composed of lyric ballads. *Le jargon*, like *Le Testament*, is rich in witty wordplay,

## VIRGINITY

acrostics, puns, slang, sarcasm, and sexual double entendres. *Le jargon* and *Le Testament* also center on images of excessive sexual activity, the immoderate consumption of wine and food, and anti-matrimonial themes. Villon was published in the mid-sixteenth century by poet Clément Marot.

### Biography

Born in Paris into a family of modest means, orphaned, and educated at the University of Paris. Arrested following a fatal street fight in 1455 and pardoned in 1456, François Villon left Paris accused of robbing a religious institution in 1457. It has been suggested that Villon became an outlaw for several years. At the age of thirty, he was imprisoned in 1461 in Meung. He was imprisoned again in 1462 for theft and found guilty of assault in 1463. His death sentence was repealed and he was banished, disappearing from record in 1463. The self-described miserable, impoverished “*povre Villon*” suffered from hunger and illness, from the poverty of student life, from the torments of passionate

love affairs and cruel rejections, and from the tortures of prison.

SARAH GORDON

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# VIRGINITY

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Virginité has been a major theme in erotica throughout history. The reason for the prominence of virginité as subject matter lies, to a large extent, in its importance within society. As far back as ancient Greece, respectable women were expected to be virgins until they married, and therefore within texts, the loss of virginité was given high prominence. Portrayals of loss of virginité, or the deflowering of innocent young girls, were depicted in a wide variety of scenes: husbands’ first marriage nights with their wives, priests molesting naive nuns, masters corrupting their female servants, guardians depraving their innocent charges, and bosses seducing their young workers. Examples of these scenes appear

in all sorts of erotica from ancient Greece to the wall paintings of Pompeii to modern-day features in *Playboy*.

Virginité and its loss in erotica pinpoints the time when a girl becomes a woman, opening the door on the heroine’s sexual awareness. The reluctant virgins invariably turn into nymphomaniacs in their desire for sex once they have been initiated. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, French erotica concentrated on lost virginité tales in *L’Ecole des filles* (1655), *Académie des dames* (1680), *Venus dans la cloître* (1683), *Histoire de Dom B* (1741–2), *Thérèse Philosophe* (1748), and the works of the Marquis de Sade. Extant signs of virginité were

considered important, as reflected in the proliferation of scenes which describe the loss of virginity in detail and at some length. Examination of a woman for an intact hymen, bleeding on intercourse, and depictions of pain are all motifs within the virginity scenarios. In *Dialogue Between a Married Lady and a Maid* (1740), Tullia relates the tale of her wedding night, when her husband checked for an intact hymen by inserting his fingers inside her. He “thrust it a little way up, till he met with a stop, and I complained he hurt me: This he did on Purpose, to be satisfied whether I was a Maid or not as afterwards he himself confessed.” For Tullia, intercourse is described as a painful experience. She cries out to her husband, “I never can endure it, it will split me in two, you’ll kill me, if all this must go into my Body.”

In England, John Cleland’s *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1749) introduced a series of tales narrated by prostitutes on how they lost their virginity. Gentlemen’s magazines took up the theme—the *Bon Ton* for March 1793 showed manliness as gained through “breaking in” virgins. The qualifications of becoming a member of the Adam and Eve Club was “that every member must produce a similar certificate of having deflowered his virgin, or debauched his married woman, and the more of those feats he has achieved, the greater is his station in the assembly.”

Nineteenth-century narratives followed much the same pattern, with beys initiating harem members in *The Lustful Turk* (1828); the eager, young, virginal Bella being introduced to sex in *Autobiography of a Flea* (1885); nuns being corrupted in convents in *Nunnery Tales* (c. 1888); virginal Indian girls being bought in *The Ups and Down of Life* (1867); and young servant girls being seduced in *My Secret Life* (1890). Since the late twentieth century, porno videos, magazines, and websites devoted to young girls being introduced into sex have created virtually their own genre of “nude teen virgins,” “free tight virgin pussies,” and the like.

Male virginity was also explored in erotic texts. In *My Secret Life*, Walter not only relates his taking of virgins but recalls how he lost his own virginity at sixteen years old, and describes the pleasure he felt: “The next instant a delirium of my senses came, my prick throbbing and as if hot lead was jetting from it, at each throb; pleasure mingled with light pain in it, and my whole

frame quivering with emotion.” *The Romance of Lust* (1870) explores the sexual education of Charles Roberts, including his sexual initiation by one of his mother’s friends.

Throughout the nineteenth century, female initiation scenes became increasingly more stylized and formulaic. By the end of the century, homosexual initiations were being included in erotica such as *Teleny, or The Reverse of the Medal* (1893). The tried and trusted flagellation of virgins included pederasty in *Frank and I* (1902); incest was added in *Sweet Seventeen: The True Story of a Daughter’s Awful Whipping and Its Delightful Consequences* (1910), when Mr. Sanderson delights in his daughter’s budding sexuality.

In erotica overall, there is less interest in the loss of male virginity, and a double standard of sexual mores has existed for men and women. Narratives generally attach a greater importance to female virginity. Although some erotica explores tales of young men’s initiation into sex, these adventures do not affix the same qualities to the loss of male virginity.

JULIE PEAKMAN

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## VIVIEN, RENÉE

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# VIVIEN, RENÉE

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1877–1909

French Symbolist poet, novelist, and short story writer

Renée Vivien was a prolific writer who published over a dozen volumes of verse, two short novels, two collections of short stories, and the first major translation of the works of Sappho in French—all in less than eight years, from 1901 to 1909. Her early works appeared under a male nom de plume, Renée or R. Vivien, but with the 1903 publication of *Evocations*, she revealed that a woman was the author of passionate poems to women. She may also have written or collaborated on other novels under the name of Paule Riversdale.

Today, Vivien's literary achievements have been eclipsed by her torrid affair with Natalie Clifford Barney—American salon hostess, writer, and seductress of women—and by her romantic longing for death, which she finally embraced at the age of thirty-two. Most of her books are out of print, though a few poems have been anthologized in collections of women writers.

Yet, despite the possible ebbing of her literary fame, Vivien remains a pivotal figure in the history of erotic literature. Her work is not sexual in and of itself, but her sonnets were addressed to other women in a way that boldly and unapologetically announced Vivien's lesboerotic predilections. Her lesbian sexuality was complex and often tortured; orgasm connoted both rapture and death; pure happiness was compromised by guilt and sorrow over the death of her first romantic attachment, Violet Shiletto, in 1901. In *Etudes et préludes* (1901) and much of

her subsequent poetry, Vivien created a cult of death—her ultimate lover:

She exults, strange lover of death. ...

Her desire, fainting over some pale mouth  
From which she knows how to tear an unrequited  
kiss,

Fervently turns her attention to the supreme spasm,  
More terrible and more beautiful than love's spasm.

Vivien's most important contribution to the history of erotic literature was her reconstruction of the life and legacy of Sappho, the ancient Greek poet. Though most today associate Sappho with lesbianism, prior to the discovery of additional Sapphic fragments in Egypt in 1897, the poet was generally lauded as a wife and mother who eventually leapt to her death over the Leucadian cliffs after Phaon, a ferryman, rejected her. For poets such as Swinburne and Baudelaire, Sappho was "lesbian," but this designation connoted someone who was both decadent and perverse. For Vivien, Sappho was a goddess.

Vivien studied classical Greek from circa 1900 to 1902, after which she obsessively returned to Sappho's fragments. She wrote four plays about the life of Sappho, including two which appear in *Evocations* (1903); in addition, *La Vénus des aveugles* appeared in 1903 and "Dans un verger" appeared in *Sillages* (1908). In *Les Kitharèdes* (1904), Vivien focused on several minor Greek poets, who were possibly disciples of Sappho. Finally, in 1909, she produced the first major translation of the more complete, post-1897 fragments into modern French.

Her mission was to reconstruct Sappho's life and fragments in order to create a new lesbian

whole. In doing so, she established a literary ancestor, to whom all lesbian poets could trace their work, and at the same time, placed her own work in this Sapphic canon. One of the most interesting aspects of her work was that Vivien used Sappho and her school of poetry on Lesbos to demarcate lesbianism as markedly different from the Socratic model of male homosexuality. This model was very much on the minds of Vivien and her contemporaries in the wake of the trials, imprisonment, and exile of Oscar Wilde, whose sexual tastes ran to those who were younger and lower class. In the minds of the public, homosexuality was often equated with pederasty.

Since the figurative Sappho's life is, as Monique Wittig and Sande Zeig skillfully put it in their *Lesbian Peoples: Material for a Dictionary*, a blank page onto which anyone might inscribe her idea of the poet's life, Vivien re-created her idol against the Socratic mold. Vivien reconfigures the traditional teacher/student relationship to give the power to the disciples instead of the master. Vivien's Sappho finds herself in thrall to this idea. "And I cry for Atthis whom I once loved" becomes Sappho's refrain in several of Vivien's poems and plays. Thus, in Sappho's school, the power, if there is any, has shifted to the disciples. As the older woman, Sappho offers her followers wisdom and friendship, admiration and encouragement. The concept of erotic initiation by the leader is downplayed, yet the Edenesque circle of attractive and seductive women is sexually charged. In an unpublished journal, Natalie Barney called it "a divinely honest era when modesty was immodesty, when perverse things, far from being calumnious, were joyous and simple."

Vivien and Barney attempted to re-create the Sapphic circle they so much admired. After they were reunited in 1904, they traveled to Lesbos, where they purchased some houses in the hopes of creating a colony for lesbian writers. But they were unable to emulate the calm and collaborative atmosphere of their idol, and Vivien quickly abandoned Barney to return to the Baroness de Zuylen de Nyevelt.

Though Vivien continued to write after her return from Lesbos, her poetry began to spin inward, the themes and tropes slightly diminishing with each repetition. She spent much time traveling to Asia and the Middle East, but when she was in Paris, she tended to enclose herself in

her apartment and consume too much alcohol. Finally, in 1909, she attained the early death she had so longed for, one that would join her forever with her idol, Sappho.

Vivien's readers admired the Symbolist purity of her poetry and ignored its lesboerotic implications. As a foreigner and a Protestant woman of means, she, like others in her expatriate circle, were immune to the scorn heaped on "aberrant" French women like Colette, Vivien's neighbor and friend.

Vivien is remembered more for her sexual liaisons and untimely death than for her writing, yet she created a very modern Sappho and erotic lesbian poetry. By doing so, she created a canon for aspiring lesbian writers and a permanent place for herself within it.

### Biography

Born Pauline Mary Tarn in London, June 11. Moved to France as an infant; received little formal education from governesses and Parisian schools. Returned to London in 1886 after father's death. Became a ward of the court in London after her mother tried unsuccessfully to commit Vivien to an asylum. Upon reaching her majority, she returned to Paris in 1898. Became companion of Natalie Clifford Barney 1899–1901 and 1904 and companion of the Baroness Hélène de Zuylen de Nyevelt from 1901 on. Studied ancient Greek 1900–2. Traveled to Lesbos with Barney, 1904; traveled widely but was also reclusive in Paris, 1905–9. Possible conversion to Catholicism, 1909. Death from alcoholism and anorexia, November 18.

KARLA JAY

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# VOISENON, L'ABBÉ DE

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1708–1775

French novelist, poet, and playwright

"Always dying, always charming," with an asthma attack continually looming, Voisenon began by writing fashionable comedies. A penpal of Voltaire, intimate with Mme de Pompadour, the Duchess of Maine, and the Duke of Orléans (the Regent's grandson), Voisenon is the perfect incarnation of the society abbot, who shoots out witticisms and circumstantial verses. He was one of the most active members of the society of the Bout-du-Banc, collaborating on its collective compendia made up of licentious tales, burlesque farces, and parodies which did not allow the possibility of determining each author's contribution (see *Caylus*). Voisenon thus contributes his libertine tales within this context of effervescent sociability, where one has to trick and outwit the other. His most famous tale is *Le Sultan Misapouf et la princesse Grisemine, ou les Métamorphoses* [The Sultan Misapouf and the Princess Grisemine, or the Metamorphoses], published in 1746.

Misapouf, the Sultan, tells his wife, the Sultana, how, while under the curse of the Fée Ténébreuse [Dark Fairy], he was turned into a tub (and had to endure the sight of the "fat and oily dark ass" of the mean fairy and her black eunuch), then had to break the spell cast upon a princess, strangle his parents, friends, and mistresses, and devour an entire family in one single day. The Sultan's "little finger" fits the "ring" of the princess Trop-est-trop [Too-much-is-too-much], whom he frees from a spell with the help of

Cerasin, a Buddhist priest, while the ring of her sister, the princess Ne-vous-y-fiez-pas [Do-not-trust-it] swallows Misapouf's two cousins and closes shut on the nose of a knight "caught as in a trap." Turned successively into a hare, a hound, and a fox, he eats his former acquaintances and Grisemine's six young rabbits (she had been metamorphosed into a rabbit). The prediction is fulfilled. It is then the turn of the Sultana to tell of her travels, during which she was metamorphosed into a brill, a rabbit, and a chamber pot.

The entire appeal of the text rests on this unbridled imagination, this ease that Voisenon drives all the way to obscenity. Of course, the "licentious" tale opposes to the usage of the term itself the metaphors of the veiled language. Yet, never has the veil been so sheer. Sexual intercourse besets the tale so much that the "decency" of the veil is canceled by the "filth" of the scenes and situations.

Indeed, it is only a question of "rings" and "little fingers," of all sizes and for every taste. The giantess is endowed with too small vagina, while the midget lady reveals an immense one. Mouths turn into rings. A real mouth can be found where the vagina should be, showing all its teeth. A temple is entirely decorated with rings that knights try to catch at the end of their lances. Voisenon develops the theme to saturation. Disproportionate or tiny, the female vagina is a trap for simpletons into which the heroes of the tale rush at full speed. The male sex is constantly threatened: nothing could be easier to cut off.

Voisenon is having fun. His stories parody folktales, greatly popular since the end of the 17th century, as well as the oriental tale, popularized by the *Thousand and One Nights* (1704). Fairies, genies, and oracles are made fun of. The heroic quest is that of a hero who seeks a vagina measuring up to him. Blasé and skeptical, but playful, Voisenon unleashes a profusion of wit at the expense of his too naive readers, who marvel at the tales. Such is the lesson from the *Sultan Misapouf*: sexual cues are everywhere.

However, be it with the oralization of the vagina (and the vaginization of the mouth), the teathed vagina and the cut penis, the forms of personification of both genitalia, the magic tooth turned into a phallus, or the devouring mother, Voisenon re-creates a mythological scene (such as the adventures of Uranos, Gaia, or Cronos) through which archaic anxieties and desires are expressed. This is the secret strength and power of the story, beyond the obscene and flighty parody.

Voisenon's other important erotic work is *Tant mieux pour elle, conte plaisant* [*Good for Her: A Pleasant Tale*]. According to Grimm (from his *Correspondance littéraire* of February 1763), this work is "filled with obscenities and filth." Published in 1760, it contains the satirical spirit and the obsessions that so characterize Voisenon's tales. The ugly and deformed prince Potiron ("Pumpkin"), son of the fairy Rancune ("Grudge"), wants to marry the fairy Tricolore ("Tricolor"), daughter of the Queen of the Patagons. The young princess, however, is in love with Prince Discret ("Discreet"), son of the fairy Rusée ("Wily"). Numerous misadventures ensue that, once again, must fulfill an absurd and incomprehensible prediction. The two fairies compete with each other, each favoring her own child. Discret is turned into a partridge and a firefly with "a spark of fire on its tail." Tricolore, who owes her name to her mother's three lovers at the time of her conception (one was a blond, another brunette, and the third auburn haired), puts up a peculiar resistance to Prince Potiron once he becomes her husband. When he comes to claim his due, the Princess's bewitched vagina shows a rose bordered with thorns and two big fingers making the sign of the cuckold's horns. The Grand-Instituteur (a character similar to Cesarin in *Sultan Misapouf*) must intervene to lift Tricolore's curse before Discret can become her lover.

*Tant mieux pour elle* shows the same obsession for the obstacles to sexual intercourse. They are not only due to the acts of malevolent fairies and genies, but, so to speak, to the female sex itself that renders possession impossible. Burlesque, scatological, and obscene, *Tant mieux pour elle* also harks back to ancient myths, through one of the most accomplished sections of the tale. To recover her virginity (as did Hera), the Patagonian fairy dives into an enchanted spring. The result is not what she expected: as she steps out of her bath, the queen finds the portraits of all her lovers, pages, servants, and members of her entourage drawn on her body. The pictures are true to life, with the lovers shown in pose. The king, with bonhomie, cannot but admire the finesse of the drawings. Once again, the sexual secret is revealed to all, indelible, engraved on the skin itself.

### Biography

Born in Paris, Claude-Henri de Fusée de Voisenon was the vicar-general of the cathedral of Boulogne before becoming the abbot of Jard. His abundant and light work consists of comedies for the theater, libertine novels and tales, songs and epigrams, and sacred poems. In the theater, he was known as the "archbishop of Italian comedy," while at the Academy his nickname was "the Harlequin of the French Academy."

PATRICK WALD LASOWSKI

### Selected Works

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*Le Sultan Misapouf, et la Princesse Grisemine*. "London" [Paris]. 1746  
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# VOLTAIRE

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1694–1778

French satirist, historian, and dramatist

***La Pucelle***

Voltaire's *La Pucelle* (1762) is a mock-heroic narrative poem in 21 cantos. It recounts in rhyming decasyllables an irreverent account of the story of Joan of Arc, and, along the lines of Pope's *Rape of the Lock*, makes use of the techniques familiar from the burlesque genre. Besides its use of "mock-solemnity"—underscored by Voltaire's tongue-in-check allusions to the Bible, Homer, Virgil, and Arioste—the poem juxtaposes the sublime and the trivial. *La Pucelle* revolves around the notion that Joan of Arc's virginity was essential to her role as the savior of France—an idea which Voltaire thought a huge joke and presented with great ribaldry. (In a letter, Voltaire suggested, as a piece of hilarity, that Joan of Arc might one day be canonized!) Beginning in the 1730s, Voltaire worked on this poem on and off for over 30 years, and from 1736 onward manuscript copies of *La Pucelle* (or parts thereof) were in circulation. Numerous pirated editions were published until Voltaire's first authorized edition finally appeared in 1762.

The themes of *La Pucelle* are familiar from his other writings: denunciation of superstition, ignorance, and the intervention of providence in human affairs. The poem also inveighs against the perils of religious sectarianism. Its chief protagonists are, on the French side, Joan of Arc; King Charles VII and his mistress, Agnès Sorel; La Trimouille and his lover Dorothy; the monk Grisbourdon; the King's confessor, Père Bonifoux; and, finally, Joan's admirer, Count Dunois. Voltaire's portrait of the English noblemen and soldiery (Chandos, Bedford, Tirconel, Arondel) is one-dimensional, and only the characters of Talbot and Monrose come to life. There are no women on the English side, and so, for the sake of love interest, Voltaire confers the role of amorous cavalier to the King's

mistress, Agnès Sorel, on the young and charming Monrose. The English do, however, act as an essential foil to the French, for they serve to represent the rationality and pragmatism the poet clearly favors. Another character in the poem is the fantastic Hermaphrodix, a necromancer who, as his name suggests, is male in the day and female at night, ("Je veux aimer comme homme et comme femme, / Être la nuit de sexe féminin, et tout le jour du sexe masculin," 4: 277–79).

Written along the lines of classical epic poetry, the story of *La Pucelle* is fairly convoluted. A summary of its action can, nevertheless, be attempted. Canto 1—in which the King is described as a "hero in bed"—recounts the love affair of Charles VII with the beautiful Agnès Sorel. So obsessed is Charles with Agnès that, under his rule, the authority of the French crown has been undermined and the kingdom completely overrun by the English. To remedy this state of affairs, Saint Denis, patron saint of France, appears before Joan of Arc, arms her, and, having verified her status as a "virgin," accompanies her to Tours (Joan flying on her trusty mule Pegasus). Once at Tours, Joan inspires the King to take up arms against the English: in Canto 3, the "Palace of Silliness." Meantime, Agnès dresses up in Joan's armor (including codpiece) and is captured by the English. Now without armor, Joan and Dunois are captured by the magician Hermaphrodix and are about to be impaled when, tied up and completely naked, the couple fall in love. Rescued by the monk Grisbourdon, Joan begins to fear for her virginity, but not because she loves Dunois. Rather, the lecherous Grisbourdon tries to take advantage of her vulnerability: a crime for which he is sent to hell (Canto 5). Canto 6, the Temple of Fame sequence, is devoted to the love affair of the English page "the fair" Monrose and the King's mistress, Agnès Sorel. We also learn that the beautiful Dorothy, hitherto unmentioned, is about to be burned at the stake in Milan for her amorous peccadilloes. Flying

on his mule, the gallant Dunois learns of Dorothy's plight and saves her from the Inquisition. The two fall in love, but in the interim Dorothy's lover, La Trimouille, sets off for Milan to recover his mistress. Needless to say, he finds her with Dunois, who suddenly vows to return to France, to Joan, and to the wars. Inspired by Dunois's patriotism, La Trimouille vows to return to France as well. At the same time, Dorothy resolves to wait for her lover in a convent at Lorette. Thus the two lovers undertake a journey, during the course of which they meet the Englishman Arondel and his mistress Judith. The two ladies are kidnapped (Canto 8) and then found (Canto 9). Meanwhile, in another part of the kingdom, the King bewails the loss of his beloved Agnès. In love with the King, yet infatuated with the youthful Monrose, Agnès takes refuge in a convent, where, once in bed with the mother superior, she discovers that "mother Besogne" is in fact "a young bachelor" (Canto 10). Still, rather than cause a fuss, she allows nature to take its course. The young bachelor's plans fall apart, however, when, in Canto 11, the English attack the convent and rape all the nuns. Agnès happily escapes this ordeal. In the same canto, Saint Denis and Saint George engage in one-on-one combat. Agnès then finds Monrose, and the two take refuge in the Castle of Cutendre [Tender Bottom], where Charles finally recovers his mistress (Canto 12).

Leaving the chateau, Joan is challenged by the Englishman Chandos, who, discovering that she is a virgin, tries to deflower her. As is always the case, Joan is saved by Saint Denis, who casts a spell on Chandos and renders him unable to "enjoy the laws of conquest." Enraged, Chandos turns his libidinous attention to Dorothy (Canto 14) and is immediately struck down by Dunois. Following this symbolic victory, the King is feted at the town hall of Orléans. Canto 17 sees Charles, Agnès, Joan, Dunois, La Trimouille, and Dorothy imprisoned in Hermaphrodix's palace. Under their host's malevolent spell, the protagonists take leave of their senses. Agnès falls in love with Père Bonifoux, Dorothy thinks that La Trimouille is the Englishman Triconel, King Charles mistakes the monk Boneau for his belle Agnès, and so on. Finally Bonifoux recognizes the work of the Devil and exorcises his malevolent influence. Free from Hermaphrodix, Charles and his suite head for Rheims.

As the poem concludes, Triconel kills Dorothy and La Trimouille in Canto 19 and, overcome with guilt, becomes a hermit. Dunois longs for Joan, who, protected by Saint Denis, still clings to her virginity. At this point the Devil takes on the form of Joan's flying mule and tries to seduce the heroine, who, in spite of that animal's singular attraction, remembers her divine mission and saves her virginity. Finally, in Canto 21 Pegasus repents his "sin" and together he and Joan, flying through the night, destroy the English armies. Charles is victorious; Joan and Dunois consummate their love when it is revealed to the entire world that indeed Joan was a virgin.

Voltaire clearly thought highly of *La Pucelle*, and it was immensely popular in its day. And yet, like much of Voltaire's poetic output, it is largely ignored today. *La Pucelle* is nevertheless a stunning example of Voltaire's wit. Never vulgar, Voltaire was unrivaled in the use of periphrasis, allowing obscene allusions with a lightness of touch rarely equaled. In short, *La Pucelle* is a genuine example of the "lurid refinement" that was such an important part of eighteenth-century civilization.

### Biography

François-Marie Arouet was born on November 21 in Paris into a middle-class family. His godfather was Abbé de Châteauneuf, who was the first to recognize the boy's talent and oversaw his education at the Jesuit Collège Louis-le-Grand (1704–11). In due course, Châteauneuf presented François-Marie to the famous and dissipated coterie of the Temple. Alarmed by the company his son was keeping, Arouet *père* pressed François-Marie to study the law, and then, in order to remove him from Paris, arranged that he serve as a secretary to the French ambassador to Holland. Here François-Marie fell in love with a penniless girl and, because of the resulting scandal, was sent home. His father promptly put him to work in a lawyer's office, but François-Marie's talent for getting into trouble, this time by writing libelous poems, convinced the elder Arouet that his turbulent son should go the country (1714–15). A year later François-Marie was back in Paris and back in trouble with the authorities. Accused of lampooning the Regent, Philippe d'Orléans, he was imprisoned in the Bastille for eleven months, from May 1717 to April 1718.

## VOLTAIRE

It was there that he recast the tragedy *Oedipe*, on which he had been working for some time. Performed to great acclaim in November 1718 under the author's name of Voltaire—an anagram of Arouet l(e) j(eune)—*Oedipe* established the young man's reputation as a playwright and poet. Other tragedies followed, but during the 1720s Voltaire enjoyed the admiration of Parisian society and the court. A humiliating altercation with the Chevalier de Rohan in 1726, however, exposed Voltaire's vulnerability. Abandoned by his titled friends, he was imprisoned after unsuccessfully challenging Rohan to a duel. Hurt and out of favor, Voltaire left for England, where he spent the years 1726–29.

Once there, he wasted little time establishing his reputation as one of the foremost literary men in Europe. The Walpoles, Dodington, Bolingbroke, Congreve, Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, and Pope became his English friends, and within a year he published—in English—his first critical and historical works. The *Essay upon Epic Poetry* and *The Essay upon the Civil Wars in France* both appeared in 1727. He also brought out his first extensive narrative poem, the long-awaited *Henriade* (1728), dedicated to Queen Caroline.

Celebrated in England, Voltaire was granted license to return to Paris in 1729, and there he continued to write plays, poetry, and historical and scientific treatises. He also began about this time his mock-epic poem *La Pucelle*, though it was published only in 1762. During the 1730s, Voltaire wrote the *Histoire de Charles XII* (1731), followed by his *Philosophical Letters*, which were published in 1733. The second of these books was banned, and Voltaire was forced to flee Paris, but the English edition became a bestseller. Living in fear of imprisonment, Voltaire took up residence with Madame du Châtelet, outside French jurisdiction at Cirey in the Duchy of Lorraine (1734–49). The couple traveled annually to Brussels, Paris, and Versailles, where Voltaire—thanks to Mme de Pompadour—was by the mid-1740s in favor once again at court; in 1745 he was appointed historiographer to Louis XV, and a few months later, he was elected to the French Academy. During his long sojourn at Cirey, and later Lunéville, Voltaire enlarged and altered *La Pucelle*. He also gathered material for the *Essai sur les*

*mœurs*, which was published over two years (1761–63) and the *Siècle de Louis XIV* (1751). It was during these years that he began writing the short prose works for which he is best remembered. *Zadig* (1747) was Voltaire's first philosophical novel, and others followed right to the end of his life (*Micromegas*, 1752; *Candide*, 1759; *L'Ingénu* 1767; *La Princesse de Babylone*, 1768; *Le Taureau blanc*, 1774).

Following Madame du Châtelet's sudden death in 1749, Voltaire moved to Berlin at the invitation of Frederick the Great, who had, as Crown Prince of Prussia, first paid homage to the philosopher in 1736. "Master and pupil," as Bloggs said, finally met in 1740 and quickly established a complex friendship. Frederick wanted to attract the most celebrated man in Europe to his court. Voltaire being Voltaire, however, no sooner arrived at Potsdam than the two fell out. He nevertheless remained in Berlin for almost three years, and it was there that he published *Le Siècle de Louis XIV* and began the *Dictionnaire Philosophique*. Finally, in 1753, Voltaire left Berlin, settling briefly in Lausanne and then Geneva before crossing the French border at Ferney. Here, in relative peace, he spent the rest of his life, working, entertaining visitors, and taking up the cause of the oppressed. As an essayist, the elderly Voltaire defended freedom of thought and religious tolerance. His *Dictionnaire Philosophique* (1764) was condemned in Paris, Geneva, and Amsterdam. Finally granted permission to return to Paris, Voltaire died there on May 30, at the age of eighty-four, the undisputed leader of the age of Enlightenment. More than 14,000 of his letters have survived, and his oeuvre encompasses many hundreds of published works, including books, verse, and pamphlets.

E.M. LANGILLE

### Editions

*La Pucelle d'Orléans*. Critical edition by Jeroom Vercruysse. *The Complete Works of Voltaire*, Geneva, 1971. This edition gives a full account of the eighteenth-century editions of *La Pucelle*.

### Further Reading

*Voltaire en son temps*. Edited by René Pomeau. Paris and Oxford: Fayard and The Voltaire Foundation, 1995.

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## WALTER, ANNE

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1950–  
French writer

### *Les relations d'incertitude*

*Les relations d'incertitude* is set in contemporary Paris. The narrator is a single, well-read, middle-aged woman who co-owns and co-manages a small shop of antiques and rare books with her like-minded cousin Theo. At his suggestion and recommendation, she starts posing for a renowned painter he has known for some years. The ageing painter is called Volodia, though by and large he is only referred to as 'V\*,' the way he signs his paintings. From the very first sessions, he appears aloof and laconic, if not cutting. One day, as she poses nude for him, he brutally yet detachedly shoves the ivory handle of a shaving brush between her thighs. Coldly ordering her not to lose the pose, he then twirls and further pushes the thick shaft into her—this materializes the beginning of his physical domination over her, which she accepts as 'a cruel and refined game' (p. 30).

From them on, V\* becomes more productive and the quality of his paintings does improve,

whilst the narrator goes through what she calls her 'summer of submission' (p. 32). She becomes his prostitute: evenings, he makes her wear 1900s style old-fashioned undergarments (tight corsets and Victorian waist petticoats) and he sells her to other men, sometimes in his workshop on Quai Bourbon, sometimes at other locations in Paris, including the Bois de Boulogne. He usually watches while they abuse her, which occasionally involves violence and bondage. Sometimes it is not one man but two men who use her at the same time, including two brothers. V\* himself rarely touches her, which she construes as a form of proxy: she is emotionally his through his portraits, and physically his through all those other men. Besides describing what he does to her, she also reflects on her condition: she feels 'enslaved, humiliated, ill-treated... most certainly, yet infatuated too!' (p. 33), she is 'humble, fearful, yet bewitched by that man' (p. 35). Their relationship, somehow comparable to that of O and René in *Histoire d'O*, is based on his domination and her love for him—though in *Les relations d'incertitude* there is limited evidence that the authoritarian man really cares for the subservient woman: for V\*, obsessed with the quality of



his painting, she is but a model and an object, rather than a lover; he treats her rather like an inept maid and shows little care. In the logic of emotional sado-masochism, this only makes her love him even more: 'My pleasure is to give up. Because it's him. Because he decides, contemplates and enjoys himself' (p. 38). Then one day Theo tells her that V\* is leaving Paris and does not wish to see her any more—this would naturally dispirit her heavily, yet that aspect is not developed. Theo himself gets ill and is hospitalised for a couple of months—with his cousin he only talks about his hepatitis in inverted commas, which clearly indicates that it was something else, possibly a more serious AIDS-related disease ('une maladie d'amour, ou de l'amour?' p. 71). A few months later, at the end of winter, V\* is back in Paris and organizes one more meeting with the narrator, showing her some paintings he had mysteriously made of her as a child, implying that he had known her then, yet this is not clear at all. On the night of V\*'s death shortly afterwards, the narrator gives herself one more time to a foreign man, as a sort of ultimate homage to V\*.

As implied by the title, the relationships between the characters in the book are very complex, if not too uncertain to analyze. Besides the triad narrator/Theo/V\*, two other strange characters keep being mentioned: a woman named Olga, with whom the narrator shares an uncanny resemblance (Olga, who was also Theo's girlfriend, posed for V\* too and was his prostitute until her death) and a man wearing loden green who regularly and inexplicably turns up, watching her through shop windows and car windows as if stalking her, eventually buying her for sex from his friend V\*. What is the relationship between Theo, V\*, and the man in loden green?

Why did V\*'s health so suddenly deteriorate? Did Olga too die of AIDS because of V\*'s prostituting her to numerous men without any sexual protection? Did she in turn contaminate Theo? *Les relations d'incertitude* shows how erotic literature can discreetly tackle sensitive contemporary issues, whilst respecting the complexity of real-life relationships as opposed to perfect, novel-like structures and situations.

Eventually, a strong originality of *Les relations d'incertitude* is the way the author makes use of the French theologian and writer Fénelon (1651–1715). The narrator, Theo, and V\* all have one of his books in hand at some stage, and Fénelon is also quoted directly several times, with reference to his theory of Pure Love. As a key exponent of Quietism, a form of religious mysticism developed in the seventeenth century and rapidly condemned by Rome, Fénelon indeed wrote about Pure Love (for God) as involving submission, self-annihilation, and self-abnegation—and the relationship between the painter and his model in *Les relations d'incertitude* is presented as a secular application of that mystical conceptualisation of Pure Love.

### Biography

Anne Walter worked in the cinema industry before becoming a writer and settling in Brittany.

LOYKIE LOÏC LOMINÉ

### Selected Works

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## WARD, EDWARD

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1660/7—1731

English pamphleteer and journalist

Edward 'Ned' Ward once viewed writing as a form of prostitution: 'the condition of an Author,' he wrote in his preface to *A Trip to Jamaica* (1698), 'is much like that of a strumpet.' Both shared, he believed, a talent for pleasing and a willingness to perform acts 'which we are very much ashamed of' in order to subsist. Ward's shame is ironic for his writing is a deliberate celebration of popular culture with its vibrant scatological turns of phrase, vulgar colloquialisms, and coarse humor. His style of pleasing is to 'tantalize and divert his readers' in a language of 'exaggerated characterization embellished with abundant metaphor and bawdy comment' (Howard Troyer, *Ned Ward of Grubstreet*, p. 29). In addition, Ward intends to please by making his readers participants in, rather than voyeurs of, the low-life scenes he describes. He achieves this by recreating scenes and sensations for his readers' enjoyment that he himself had experienced (Steven Earnshaw, *The Pub in Literature*, p. 112). The eroticism in Ward's work, therefore, resides in his graphic portrayal of the language, pleasures and vices of his contemporary society and especially of London's low-life.

The low-brow literature resulting from Ward's encounters with the lives, aspirations, and activities of the Capital's underclass stood in sharp contrast to prevailing literary tastes for Augustan ideals of propriety, refinement, and decorum. In 1728, Pope attacked Grub Street's hack-writers, including Ward, in *The Dunciad* for appealing to low culture and for their destruction of literary, cultural, and moral standards. With specific reference to Ward, Pope suggested that his 'viler rhymes' would find their main appeal in America where they could be exchanged for cheap tobacco (Bk1: 233). Ward responded in *Durgen, Or a Plain Satyr Upon a Pompous Satyr* (1728) and *Apollo's Maggot in his Cups* (1729) where he heaped personal abuse on Pope for his hump-backed deformity and his poetic pretensions.

*A Trip to Jamaica* (1698) was one of Ward's first successes and is an early indication of his characteristically coarse and ribald style. Written during Ward's visit to the island in 1697 where he hoped to escape the debts he had accumulated over the previous six years as a sometime hack-writer, the pamphlet ruthlessly parodied publications used to recruit settlers. It also exposed the island's corruptions by suggesting its male inhabitants had 'just knock'd off their fetters' and its females had been transported there for prostitution.

In November 1698, Ward published the first edition of his periodical *The London Spy* which ran in eighteen monthly editions until May 1700 and which met with such overwhelming success that it was subsequently reprinted in book form. The *Spy* followed the predictable format of aiming to expose 'the vanities and vices of the town' through the eyes of an artless country visitor who passed ingenuous commentary on his city ramblings in the company of a more guileful former school-friend whom he met on his second day in the City. Written in an informal style that marries prose and poetry, *The Spy* is innovative in that it makes ordinary Londoners and their milieu the subject of its study of the city, bringing 'the supposedly marginal or insignificant work and recreations of common people to the fore.' (Paul Hyland, *The London Spy*, xv). The *Spy* teems with erotic reference as it recreates the sensory atmosphere of eighteenth-century London with its coffee-houses, taverns, fairs, and brothels and introduces London's inhabitants including prostitutes, criminals, rogues, tavern-keepers, astrologers, and soldiers whom Ward met and observed at work and play. By the end of the first issue, the reader is invited to pry 'into the dark intrigues of the Town... the whims and frolics of staggering bravadoes and strolling strumpets' and in the ensuing months meets with many a Covent Garden Lady and 'weather-beaten strumpet' (Paul Hyland, *The London Spy*, 194). At every turn on the *Spy*'s perambulations, the reader is ambushed by some

form of lewdness, but the eroticism is peculiarly English, in that it combines titillation with bawdy humor. Thus, when an elderly man ogles dirty prints of gentlemen and milkmaids in print-shop windows in St Paul's, the reader is told that 'as many smutty prints were staring the church in the face as a learned debauchee ever found in Aretino's *Postures*' and an over-weight fair-ground entertainer had buttocks that 'trembled when she stirred, like a quaking pudding' (Paul Hyland, *The London Spy*, p. 196). Although Ward's coarse form of eroticism aimed at pleasing his readers, *The Spy* did not shirk its moral responsibility for Ward also used his character sketches of the poor to expose the 'self seeking and dishonest behavior of the governing orders' who regulated their lives (Paul Hyland, *The London Spy* p. xvii).

Ward was prolific and by 1715, had produced over seventy publications, twenty of which had been written during the time of *The London Spy*. He wrote on a wide range of subjects including some lengthy works such as *The Secret History of Clubs* (1709), a two-volumed edition in hudibrastic verse of *The Life and Notable Adventures of Don Quixote* (1711–1712), and a three-volumed *History of the Grand Rebellion* (1713) in verse form. It is in his ephemeral writings, however, where Ward introduces a variety of Londoners, that the reader encounters his particular blend of eroticism which collapses at times into humor, bawdiness, and obscenity. For example, in *The Rise and Fall of Madame Coming-Sir* (1703) the heroine is an innocent country girl, abandoned by her officer lover and forced into prostitution with men of ever-descending status until she catches venereal disease and is cast out. In *A Frolick to Horn Fair*, (1700) it is the hostess of a tavern who relates a risqué story of the origins of the fair and the cuckolding of a miller by King John. In *The London Terrae Filius* (1707–1708), the reader meets the mistress of a flogging school in Moorfields and in *The Reformer, Exposing the Vices of the Age* (1700), an 'Insatiate Wife.' Neglected by her husband, the wife finds pleasure with a gallant on the pretext of going to church but always returns home in time to give her husband a goodnight kiss. The titles of other works suggest their prurient nature: *The City Madame and the Country Maid* (1702), *The Forgiving Husband and Adulterous Wife* (1708), *The Northern Cuckold* (1721). This ephemeral material should not

be regarded as mere prurience for, as Hyland has argued, Ward took his work seriously enough to begin, from about 1700, to collect his writings, in varying forms of completeness, into a six-volumed *Miscellaneous Writings in Verse and Prose*. By so doing, Ward demonstrated that he aimed at more than pure erotic pleasure for his readers, rather he intended to provide 'an epic panorama of popular society and culture' (Paul Hyland, *The London Spy*, p. xx).

### Biography

Born in Oxfordshire in either 1660 or 1667 and poorly educated, Edward Ward moved to London about 1689 where he became a prolific Grub Street journalist and a publican, keeping taverns in Clerkenwell, Moorfields, and Fulwood Rents successively. As a hack-writer, Ward produced over ninety publications including periodicals, plays, character sketches, travel pieces, and pamphlets which ranged over topics from tiger-baiting to political commentary against the whigs and low-church party. He is best remembered for *The London Spy* (1698–1700) and hudibrastic sketches of London life. In 1706, he was pilloried and fined for seditious libel against Queen Anne's administration in *Hudibras Redivivus* (1705–1707). Ward died at Fulwood Rents near Gray's Inn on 20th June 1731, leaving a wife and children.

BARBARA WHITE

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*The London Spy*. 1698–1700.  
*The World Bewitched: a Dialogue between Two Astrologers and the Author*. 1699.  
*The Cock-Pit Combat; or the Baiting of the Tiger*. 1699.  
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*The City Madame and the Country Maid*. 1702.  
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*The Dissenting Hypocrite; or Occasional Conformist*. 1704.  
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## WEDEKIND, FRANK

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1864–1918

German dramatist and poet

### ***Lulu (Erdgeist [Earth Spirit]; Die Büchse der Pandora [Pandora's Box])***

Although Wedekind experimented from an early age with erotic sexuality in his plays, for instance his adolescent *Das Gastmahl bei Sokrates* [*Supper at Socrates*] (1882) with Socrates' directive to his wife to undress, or his celebrated early masterpiece *Frühlings Erwachen* [*Spring's Awakening*] (1891) with its principal elements of masturbation and homoeroticism, it is his two closely linked *Lulu* plays with their explicit focus on the adult world that helped establish Wedekind next to Bertolt Brecht as one of the most influential German dramatist of the twentieth century. The editorial history of the drama is rather complex and often directly impacted by official and unofficial censorship. Initially conceptualized as a five-act play, the earliest version is the manuscript *Die Büchse der Pandora. Eine Monstretragödie* [*Monster Tragedy*] (1894) and premiered almost a century later under the auspices of Peter Zadek (1988). It did not appear in print until 1990. The original drama was divided

into two parts, an additional act was inserted and *Erdgeist* premiered in 1898 in Leipzig, while *Die Büchse der Pandora* (published 1902) did not premiere until 1904 in Nuremberg. Various external pressures, including repeated censoring and the need to adjust the plays to different theatrical stages, led Wedekind to rework the plays repeatedly until 1913. From this point on, it appeared under the unifying title *Lulu*. Wedekind's cleaned-up version of 1906 first included the *Prolog in der Buchhandlung* [*Prologue in the Bookstore*], which polemically refers to the measures of censorship and formally parodies Johann Wolfgang von Goethe's *Vorspiel auf dem Theater* [*Prologue in the Theatre*].

The play's title figure, Lulu, in her function as the "Urgestalt des Weibes" (the prototype of woman), the true, wild, and beautiful beast, as which she is introduced by an animal trainer in the prologue, represents a combination of sexual desires and primitivity, absoluteness and simultaneous naiveté as well as sweet innocence. Throughout the acts, all of these sometimes conflicting traits and her involvement with numerous characters from both sexes directly relate to bourgeois society and its high moral grounds, which are revealed to be grounded in lies and deceit. The central conflicts are but the

product of the clash between the contradiction between sexuality and society.

As a young girl, Lulu was rescued from the harsh life on the streets by the newspaper publisher Dr. Schön, who marks her his mistress. To rid himself of Lulu, in order to marry a high-ranking woman, Schön arranges for Lulu to get married: first, to the medical doctor Goll; after that, to the portraitist Schwarz; and, in due course, to Schön himself. In the four acts of *Erdegeist*, each relationship culminates in the eventual destruction of Lulu's men. While the demises appear to be alike, there is a notable intensification of the dramatic development. In each instance, Lulu betrays her current partner with her future partner. However, Goll simply dies from a stroke when witnessing Lulu's rendezvous with Schwarz; Schwarz slits his own throat after Schön informs him of the ongoing affair with Lulu; and, finally, Lulu guns down Schön after he surprises her with a group of devotees and after he desperately attempts to free himself from her, leading her to commit suicide.

*Erdegeist* is about Lulu's rise and increasing control in life; *Die Büchse der Pandora* follows Lulu's demise and tragic end. Assisted by the infatuated Countess Geschwitz and some of her lovers, Lulu manages to flee from prison and escape to Paris. Together with her new husband, Schön's son Alwa, she leads a luxurious, yet fraudulent existence. Faced by the threat of being sold to the Middle East as a slave by one of her dubious guests, Lulu flees to London together with her entourage (Alwa, Countess Geschwitz, the criminal and Lulu's supposed father Schigolch) after repeated denunciations to the police. Now a prostitute, Lulu brings her customers to their shared attic and her second customer strikes Alwa dead; after unsuccessfully trying to hang herself, the Countess Geschwitz and Lulu are killed by Lulu's fourth customer, Jack the Ripper.

Lulu's path of destruction is not that of a black widow that willingly and deliberately consumes and kills her suitors. Lulu is at once animalistic and infantile. In the end, all interpretations Lulu leave her to be the victim in her passive and innocent, yet destructive life. It is through her mythical status as paradise's serpent, as the animal trainer introduces her, and, simultaneously, as Pandora, as the fantasies Helena (Nelly), Eva or Mignon that her various

men employ to project their desires onto her and shape her. Wedekind's treatment of the rise and fall of this beautiful woman in a male-dominated society, in a society where men's violence against women is exposed, reveals mankind as the victim of its own natural desires. Everyone is a puppet of his or her own instinct, and by showing Lulu literally strolling across the corpses who fell victim to her natural impulses, the play manages to hold a mirror to the souls of the members of the audience. The play evokes the spectators' desperate attempt to hold on to their intricately fabricated structure of bourgeois morality.

The play, which is really more of a grotesque than a tragic drama, is in essence a set of different situations that are all self-contained and geared at baffling and awaking its audience with its constant bombardment of sexual topics. Therefore, as surprising as Klaus Völker's observation may sound, it is perhaps correct to view Lulu as a practical model of Friedrich Schiller's theoretical conjecture, namely the "ästhetische Erziehung des Menschen" [the aesthetic education of man]. Lulu is not a sexual deviant. And she is not the vamp as film and later stage adaptations portrayed her to be. Instead, her natural sexuality provides the essential element of her emancipating powers; some might say of her feminism, which only culminates in destruction because of the overall failure of society to emancipate itself.

Wedekind saw eroticism as a tool with a far-reaching impact, and although his subversive intent in his *Lulu* plays cannot necessarily be traced to social changes, one is correct to view audiences' outrage and ensuing restrictions as confirmation of his effort to convey to the public, how deeply their society was (and given today's occasional uproar following performances: still is) caught within the appearance of morality and rejection of sexuality.

### Biography

Born Benjamin Franklin Wedekind in Hanover, Germany, 24 July 1864. Second of five children. Family moved to Switzerland in 1872 for political refuge. Educated at Gymnasium Aarau, 1879–84; studied at universities of Lausanne, Munich, and Münster, 1884–86, and Zurich, 1888. Employed at advertisement section of Maggi in Zurich, 1886–88. Writer for the satirical magazine *Simplicissimus* in Munich, 1896.

Affair with Frieda Strindberg and birth of their son Friedrich Strindberg in Munich, 1897. Incarceration for satirical verses about the emperor, 1899–1900. Married actress Tilly Newes, birth of daughter Pamela and beginning of commercial success of his plays despite repeated altercations with censors, 1906. Birth of daughter Kadidja, 1911. Following a failed appendectomy (1918) and a period of complications related illnesses, Wedekind died in Munich on March 9 1918.

ARNE KOCH

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## WELSH EROTIC LITERATURE

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The richest erotic literature in Welsh is to be found in the strict-meter poetry of the later Middle Ages, from the fourteenth to the sixteenth centuries, before the onset of the Puritanism which suppressed erotic elements in Welsh literature until the late twentieth century. This poetry was the work of trained bards, and exhibits a high degree of technical sophistication in language and meter, particularly in the elaborate consonances of *cynghanedd*, which are inevitably lost in translation. The poems would have been performed to musical accompaniment before audiences in the halls of the nobility, originally by the poets themselves, and subsequently transmitted mainly by oral tradition. The bulk of the poetry was preserved by collectors from the sixteenth century onwards. None was published until the eighteenth century, and very little of the erotic material until the publication of Dafydd Johnston's *Medieval Welsh Erotic Poetry* (1991).

The mainstay of the Welsh bardic tradition was eulogy of noble patrons, but as Wales became more open to external influences in the wake of the Edwardian Conquest of the late thirteenth century, love poetry as entertainment formed an increasingly significant part of the poets' repertoire, using the new *cywydd* meter. This love poetry was mostly perfectly respectable, dwelling extensively on the beloved's beauty and the lover's sufferings, and dealing with the physical fulfilment of his desire only by implication and innuendo. But a small minority of poems are much more explicit in their depiction of the body and the sexual act.

The outstanding love poet of medieval Wales was Dafydd ap Gwilym (c. 1320–1360), a nobleman from north Ceredigion by whom some 150 poems of extraordinary complexity and imaginative power have survived. Although these express an ardent physical desire for two women in particular, the virginal, aloof Dyddgu and the accessible but fickle Morfudd (a merchant's wife with whom Dafydd seems to have had a prolonged affair), the sexuality is usually only implied, as when he makes use of the traditional

metaphor of ploughing for sexual intercourse, describing Dyddgu as unploughed land and himself as a young ox, only too ready to draw the plough. Similarly, there is undeniable eroticism in his image of Morfudd's nipples glowing beneath her smock like pennies in heat. But Dafydd ap Gwilym also composed the earliest and most remarkable of all Welsh erotic poems, an address to his own penis, *Cywydd y Gal* [*The Penis*]. In the form of a complaint at the penis's unruly behavior which is constantly getting the poet into trouble, it is in fact a boast of his own sexual prowess, magnified by the bardic technique known as *dyfalu*, a kaleidoscopic series of visual metaphors describing the penis, which is among other things a rolling-pin, a chisel, a bolt, a pestle, and a gun. That is by far the earliest use of the English loan-word 'gun' in Welsh; it referred to the recently-invented cannon. The personification of the penis is achieved by the image of its one eye which finds all girls attractive, and thus the poet manages to detach himself from any moral responsibility for his sexual behavior. This poem is a good instance of the censorship which has suppressed Welsh erotic writing, for it was excluded from Thomas Parry's standard edition of 1952 for no stated reason, and remained infamous but little-known until a reliable text was published in 1985.

A number of other sexually explicit poems are attributed to Dafydd ap Gwilym in the manuscripts, but most are clearly apocryphal. Among these is an ingenious poem which may indeed date from the fourteenth century, although it exists in a single seventeenth-century copy. It draws on and subverts the convention of the *llatai*, or love-messenger, the poet sending his own genitals which, he claims, are sure to win over his beloved. This might be seen as a literary conceit which parallels depictions in medieval iconography of genitals as creatures with feet and wings; on the other hand, it could be interpreted as an elaborate metaphor for rape.

Rape is a topic which occurs in a couple of poems giving sexual advice to young men. One

uses the voice of an old woman to give authenticity to the claims about female nature (perhaps influenced by a similar passage in the French *Roman de la Rose*). The advice is to use force to take a girl despite her protests, since her deceitful nature leads her to conceal her need for sexual satisfaction. This advice is seen to be acted upon in another poem from the Dafydd ap Gwilym apocrypha in the *pastourelle* genre in which the narrator meets a peasant girl in a woodland setting and takes her by force. She soon responds enthusiastically, and the poet's smug certainty that having had her once he can have her a hundred times is accompanied by the telling image of an eel caught on a fishing line (the point being that an eel when hooked will draw the line deeper into its body). The same assumption about the voracity of female desire once aroused lies behind a poem by the sixteenth-century cleric 'Sir' Dafydd Llwyd the Scholar about the seduction of a young virgin, a piece chiefly memorable for its inventive series of different expressions for intercourse as she insists on making love again and again.

Dafydd ap Gwilym's address to his penis is often accompanied in the manuscripts by a poem which is in a sense its natural companion piece, although in fact there is no direct connection between the two. The *cywydd* in praise of the vagina by the late fifteenth-century poetess Gwerful Mechain is no personal boast, but rather a celebration of the female body as a poetic topic, complaining that the detailed rhetorical descriptions by male poets ignore the finest part of a girl's body. The series of metaphors which follow serve to demonstrate the poetic potential of this silky, sour grove. Gwerful Mechain also asserted female sexuality in another challenge to the male-dominated poetic tradition by complaining about jealous wives who refuse to share their husbands' fine members with other women—an ironic counterpart to countless poems attacking the jealous husband. And Gwerful Mechain showed herself capable of answering obscenity in kind when challenged by a male poet, Dafydd Llwyd of Mathafarn, who addressed her with a verse purporting to be spoken with penis in hand asking her if she had a dish big enough to contain it. She replied with four verses in similar vein, offering to take him on and culminating with the image of the firing of a cannon. Gwerful Mechain produced a quite substantial body of verse on a variety of topics,

but because of these three erotic poems no full edition of her work was published until 2001.

Medieval Welsh literature is on the whole not tolerant of sexual deviation. A sixteenth-century poem about a boy dressed as a girl (presumably a boy-actor) concentrates on the paradoxical contrast between appearance and reality, with riddling references to two feet and three thighs. A profounder sense of unease with deviance from the norm is to be felt in a poem by the late fifteenth-century poet Llywelyn ap Gutun depicting a couple making love in an unusual posture, with the girl's legs raised up over the man's shoulders. The effect of the series of metaphors here is one of alienation, turning a sexual act into an anti-erotic spectacle, the girl like a hedgehog on a spike, like a horse on its back holding a bear, like a sheep being sheared by a wild dog.

Veneral disease was a recurrent cause of concern, as seen in a rueful comic poem by the fifteenth-century nobleman Ieuan Gethin of Glamorgan, which perhaps reveals profounder fears in its warning against trusting in such a long and crooked thing as a vagina. And in the eighteenth century there is dark humor in Iolo Morganwg's poem about a maid who countered sexual abuse from her master by putting a sickle between her legs to cut his hand when he groped beneath her clothes.

Obscenity features prominently as a weapon in bardic satires, abuse poems with either serious or humorous intent. One of the most vicious of these is by the fourteenth-century poet Prydydd Breuan attacking a woman by the name of Siwan Morgan of Cardigan, a repugnant piece of misogyny focusing on the fluids which flow from her vagina. Dafydd ap Gwilym is reputed to have sung a satire which caused the death of a poet called Rhys Meigen who had composed a verse claiming to have shafted Dafydd's mother. On the other hand, obscenity could be a means of amusement. Two of the most highly respected poets of the fifteenth century, Dafydd ab Edmwnd and Guto'r Glyn, exchanged poems in which Dafydd mocked Guto's swollen testicles (apparently the result of a hernia), and Guto replied by mocking Dafydd's long floppy penis with surreal imagery, likening it to Offa's Dyke!

The complex linguistic situation of medieval Wales could be the source of some erotic frisson in the literature. There are at least two macaronic poems in which a Welshman makes indecent



proposals to an uncomprehending Englishwoman. The best-known is by Tudur Penllyn in the mid-fifteenth century, and from the Englishwoman's responses in that poem it can be deduced that the Welshman's actions speak louder than his words, although he is left wondering whether or not she is willing. Of course, such poems presuppose a bilingual audience able to appreciate the whole dialogue and laugh at both the monoglot speakers.

Erotic poetry in the strict meters more or less came to an end with the demise of the old bardic order in the seventeenth century. But from that period onwards there is a wealth of free-meter verse deriving from folk tradition, sometimes known as *penillion telyn* [harp stanzas]. These were almost all anonymous, and they seem to have been the vehicle for women to express their feelings on a variety of subjects, including sexuality. The harp itself becomes a sexual symbol in a group of verses in which a girl longs for a harpist as lover, likening his fingering of the harp to the caressing of a girl's body. Lewis Morris (1701–1765) of Anglesey imitated that tradition in his long poem about an old miller who married a lusty lass, which gives sexual significance to milling and its paraphernalia, the grinding, filling of the hopper, and so on. Such folk traditions were suppressed as a result of the dominance of nonconformist religion from the late eighteenth century onwards, although ribald verse-making did not die out altogether, but took on a purely oral existence amongst agricultural workers.

Since the Welsh novel had its roots in the nonconformist culture of the nineteenth century, it tended to take a puritanical view of sexual relationships, and eroticism had no place in it until well into the second half of the twentieth century. Indeed, neurosis about sexuality can be seen to underlie much of the fiction of Kate Roberts (1891–1985), the foremost practitioner of the short story in Welsh. A crucial turning point was the publication of *Un Nos Ola Leuad* [*One Moonlit Night*] by Caradog Prichard in

1961. Based on reminiscences of his childhood in Bethesda, this novel was written when Prichard was a journalist in London, and its catalogue of sexual deviance, including incest, child-abuse, transvestitism, and a sex-murder, can be seen as a reaction against the stifling respectability which had so long blighted Welsh literature. It was some time before other writers followed Prichard's lead, but by the 1980s eroticism was as prominent in Welsh fiction as in that of any other language, although there remains a sense of rebellion against the Puritanism of the chapel. The old tradition of strict-meter erotic poetry also resurfaced at this time with the publication in 1973 of *Englynion Coch* [*Red* (i.e., blue) *Englynion*] by the radical Lolfa press, a collection of obscene verses some of which are attributed to major twentieth-century poets.

DAFYDD JOHNSTON

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# WHARTON, EDITH

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1862–1937

American novelist, short story writer, and poet

## *Beatrice Palmato*

*Beatrice Palmato* is a manuscript which includes a plot of a projected short story and a fictional fragment described by Wharton as an “unpublishable fragment of Beatrice Palmato.” The manuscript is located at the Wharton Archive, Beinecke Library, Yale University. It was probably written around 1919, and was first published by Cynthia Griffin Wolff in her 1977 study of Wharton, *A Feast of Words; The Triumph of Edith Wharton*.

The plot summary of the projected short story is about as long as the unpublishable fragment. It describes the tragic short life of Beatrice Palmato, the daughter of a rich and cultured half-Levantine and half-Portuguese banker living in London. The Palmatos lead a life of cultivated pleasure. Beatrice’s older sister, who looks like their English mother, unexplainably commits suicide at the age of seventeen. Their mother has a nervous breakdown, after which she is sent away to recuperate. Beatrice remains with her father, who takes charge of her education. The mother comes home after a year, and all is well for a while. However, Mrs. Palmato has another breakdown, grows mad, tries to kill her husband, and dies in an insane asylum a few months later. Mr. Palmato takes Beatrice to Paris with him, and engages a young governess, whom he marries a few years later. Beatrice is very close to her father and to her step mother, but at eighteen marries a young Englishman of good family and no artistic or intellectual tastes, who falls madly in love with her. They settle in the English countryside.

Beatrice doesn’t see her father for some time, and then starts visiting Mr. Palmato. Early in her marriage her friends notice deep changes in her, “Her animation and brilliancy have vanished, and she gives up all her artistic interests....”

She goes with her father on a short trip to Paris, and “comes back brilliant, febrile and restless....” After several years of married life Beatrice has two children, a boy and a girl, at which point her attachment to her husband increases. Mr. Palmato dies around the time of the birth of Beatrice’s daughter. Beatrice’s husband loves both children, but exhibits a particular attachment to their little daughter. As the little girl grows to be five or six years old Beatrice becomes morbidly jealous of the affection between her husband and daughter. It seems that Beatrice is growing “queer” like her mother. One day the husband goes away for a week. He returns unexpectedly, and finds his daughter alone in the drawing room. As father and the child hug and kiss each other, Beatrice comes in and screams “Don’t kiss my child. Put her down! How dare you kiss her?” She snatches the little girl from his arms. As husband and wife stare at each other, he begins to comprehend the horrifying secret which has come between them. Beatrice, realizing what she has unwittingly betrayed, runs to her bedroom and shoots herself dead. While most people assume that Beatrice succumbed to the madness running through her mother’s side of the family, her brother comes to visit her husband and they have a long talk about Mr. Palmato.

The “unpublishable fragment” describes in great detail a love-making encounter between Mr. Palmato and his daughter Beatrice, which sequentially takes place after she is married. While Beatrice marries a virgin, it is obvious from the fragment that she and Mr. Palmato have had erotic encounters before. While the plot summary describes a tragic story of a family rent apart by madness and sexual perversity, the fragment describes the love-making, consisting mostly of oral sex, as an exuberant encounter, much different from the painful and rough advances of Beatrice’s husband.

While the fragment is extraordinary in its explicitness, it and the plot summary may be seen as an integral part of Wharton’s work.

## WHARTON, EDITH

Critics have assumed that *Beatrice Palmato* was to be a ghost story, one of two types which Wharton wrote. Short stories such as *Mary Pask* and *All Souls'* included a spectral double, an alter-ego, a reflection of an evil and foreboding impulse shared by a character within the story. Other short stories, including *Kerfol* and *The Pomegranate Seed*, centered around a jealous love triangle which included a ghost as a romantic interloper. The plot summary for *Beatrice Palmato* reached into both types of stories.

Parental power is another theme evident in Wharton's writings. For example, the character of the mother is an important element in the horror of *Ethan Frome*, and in *Summer*, the major novel published before *Beatrice Palmato* was written, the heroine marries her foster father. In a later novel, *The Mother's Recompense*, for which Wharton sketched the characters as early as 1919, the portrait of Beatrice Cenci, a sixteenth-century Italian woman who was supposedly raped by her father, confronted the heroine in her husband's bedroom. Wharton's interest in barbarism, taboos, and ritual sacrifices, exhibited in her travel notes on Morocco (first published in 1919), also came through in such novels as *The Age of Innocence*, the first novel written after *Summer*, and published after *Beatrice Palmato* was conceived. The precocious sexuality Wharton observed while traveling in Morocco was reflected in the exoticism and sexuality of Mr. Palmato's Mediterranean character.

The name Beatrice, as well as the incestuous nature of the fragment, resonated personally with Wharton. Beatrice was the nickname given by Wharton's lover, Morton Fullerton, to his cousin, Katherine Fullerton, who grew up in the same household with him, believing at first she was his sister. Morton Fullerton almost married her around the time he began his long love affair with Edith Wharton.

Edith Wharton was a prolific writer, and there has been considerable interest in her work since the 1960s. Despite the unusually explicit pornographic nature of the *Beatrice Palmato* fragment, it has been published only once, in 1977, shortly after its discovery in the Wharton Archive, and very little has been written about it since.

## Biography

Born in New York City in 1862, Edith Newbold Jones Wharton was the most famous American female novelist of her time. Her novels and short stories were informed by her experiences growing up in the Dutch Protestant and nouveaux riches milieu of New York. From 1902 until her death she published on average one book a year. From 1913 she lived in Europe, and died of a heart attack in Brice-sous-Forêt, France in 1937.

RUTH WALLACH

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## WHITMAN, WALT

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1819–1892  
 American poet

Walt Whitman's writing career began in the early 1840s, when he began writing both prose and verse for journals. Of these, the *Democratic Review* was most important in that it vociferously espoused the "Young America" program of demotic literature, culture, and social structures that also informed even Whitman's early work. But to the social platform Whitman added an amalgam of transcendentalism and materialism that has, often simultaneously, attracted and dismayed subsequent generations. The terms of Whitman's dialectic were manifest throughout the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* but especially in "Song of Myself." In part 5, for example, there is his credo of the soul ("I believe in you my soul"); however, the soul is not the transcendental oversoul but rather one in dialectical tension with the body ("the other I am," and that there be no doubt, in part 24 he compounds the credo, "I believe in the flesh and the appetites"), and neither is to "be abased to the other." Four verses later he evokes a distinctly erotic image, notwithstanding that it is a metaphor of the soul, recalling a summer morning on, appropriately, the grass, where "you settled your head athwart my hips and gently turn'd over upon me, / And parted the shirt from my bosom-bone, and plunged your tongue to my bare-stript heart." This is promptly elevated by infusing the atmosphere with "the peace and knowledge that pass all the argument of the earth." But if

transcendence is a continuous imperative for Whitman, it ever abides in the good earth, as he insists in part 3: "Always the procreant urge of the world. / Out of the dimness opposite equals advance, always substance and increase, always sex...." Whitman's position in this respect is essentially Blakean; contraries—as in male/female, body/spirit, passion/reason, "good"/"evil"—generate creative energy.

The question of how much correspondence there was between the exuberant sensuality in Whitman's verse and the manifestation of it in his personal life is necessarily a matter of speculation. Testimony from friends quotes Whitman as saying that "the ardent expression in words of affection often tended to destroy affection," as in the myth of Cupid and Psyche, also citing personal experience of just such an occurrence. But testimony from other friends indicates that Whitman could be demonstrative: "And so kind, sympathetic, charitable, humane, tolerant a man I did not suppose was possible. He loves everything and everybody. I saw a soldier the other day stop on the street and kiss him [in Washington, DC, where Whitman tended to Civil War soldiers in military hospitals]. He kisses me as if I were a girl." An article by Whitman about his hospital work in the *New York Times* notes, "To many of the wounded and sick, especially the youngsters, there is something in personal love, caresses, and the magnetic flood of sympathy and friendship, that does more good than all the medicines in the world." In his letters to one young soldier Whitman

walks a thin line between lover and comrade. One letter addresses “my dear darling comrade,” another “my dearest comrade,” and at points he seems the awkward suitor, hoping “God will put it in your heart to bear toward me a little at least of the feeling I have for you.” Whatever these anecdotes and letters may suggest about Whitman’s sexual disposition, they do indicate a correspondence in the frequent effusiveness of amorous vocabulary in both Whitman’s private and his public styles.

For the third edition of *Leaves of Grass* (1860) Whitman consciously adopted a challenging, not to say abrasive, erotic stance with the inclusion of the “The Children of Adam” and “Calamus” sequences. He included them over Emerson’s objections because, as he had already insisted in “Song of Myself,” the dialectic of nature demanded the body and the soul on equal terms. His poetic mission required that he articulate, indeed declaim, not only a democratic ethos of freedom but also the ethos of nature, “Creeds and schools in abeyance, / ...I harbor for good or bad, I permit to speak at every hazard, / Nature without check with original energy.” If America was to grow beyond cultural mimicry of the old world, Whitman’s essential agenda, it required the full focus of America’s native genius, its harmony with natural energy, its fecund ground for, as he had said in “Starting from Paumanok,” “A world primal again, vistas of glory incessant and branching, / A new race dominating previous ones and grander far, with new contests, / New politics, new literatures and religions, new inventions and arts.” Accordingly, the erotic and its generative “body electric” were imperative.

Whitman’s original conception for the two sections was that “Children of Adam” should represent “the amative love of woman” just as “Calamus” reflected “adhesiveness, manly love.” The terms amative and adhesive he appropriated from phrenology. In the first sequence Whitman evokes the primary theme of sexual energy, sometimes as the procreative force we have noted and sometimes as exuberant excess and transgression. The Adamic motif opens the sequence, invoking the Garden and its loss as if the poet wanted to exorcise the accompanying shame and its fig leaf. The poet is “determin’d... my own voice resonant, singing the phallus / Singing the song of procreation, / Singing the need of superb children....” But his song is

“Renascent of grossest Nature” and soon swells to ecstatic extremity, “The female form approaching, I pensive, love-flesh tremulous aching / ... The mystic deliria, the madness amorous, the utter abandonment.” If generation is natural, a corollary theme, so is it, here, transgressive, “Two hawks in the air, two fishes swimming in the sea not more lawless than we.” Erotic images abound, some certainly obscene by the standards of the time: “love-flesh swelling and deliciously aching, / Limitless limpid jets of love hot and enormous, quivering jelly of love, white-blow and delirious juice,” or “Love-thoughts, love-juice, love-odor, ... / lips of love, phallic thumb of love, breasts of love, bellies press’d and glued together with love.” But Whitman vigorously insists on the “divinity” of the erotic, and the physique of sex is rendered transcendental, “O I say these are not the parts and poems of the body only, but of the soul.” But then that dialectic, mediated by a passionate love that is sometimes platonic and sometimes palpable, is characteristic of Whitman’s erotic rhapsody.

While Whitman compromised his initial candor a bit in “Children of Adam,” deleting his embrace of prostitutes for example, with “Calamus” he seems to have felt the need for still greater masking of intent. The 1953 discovery of the original manuscripts revealed the narrative of a homoerotic relationship reaching heights of happiness and then, to the poet’s despair, devolving. This was clearly delineated in a sequence of twelve poems that were distinctly informed by erotic impulses but did not evoke the pulsing erotic imagery of the Adamic sequence. The images of the former poems, however, hover over the even more transgressive narrative of “manly love” in the latter. But in the publication Whitman disguised the story, first, by inserting several unrelated poems between the two complementary sets, and secondly by interspersing revised versions of the twelve poems among thirty-three others so as to dilute the narrative implications of the sequence.

Nonetheless, such images as the male speaker—throughout *Leaves of Grass* identified with the poet himself—sleeping in the arms of a male lover carried considerable impact. Still, the exact nature of Whitman’s erotic life remains a matter of speculation. What continues to be true is that the poet’s embrace of human being—from its grossest character to its most

transcendent aspirations—was of such magnitude, candor, and eloquence as to earn him the admiration of both his elder and junior contemporaries—for example, Thoreau, Emerson, Longfellow, Whittier, Twain, Holmes, and Tennyson. And likewise these qualities make him one of, if not the most distinctive erotic poet in the history of the art.

### Biography

Walt Whitman was born May 31, 1819 to Walter and Louisa Van Velsor Whitman, the second of nine siblings. His mother was a follower of Elias Hicks' Quaker mysticism, and his father subscribed to the politics of Tom Paine and the anti-capitalist stance of early nineteenth-century radicalism. After five years of public school in Brooklyn, he became a printer's apprentice, and printing and journalism were to be staple employments throughout his life. Between 1836 and 1850 Whitman worked as a school teacher, a newspaper editor, and contributed to substantial dailies and journals, where he engaged political issues such as slavery, free soil, territorial expansion, and the Mexican war, among others.

Whitman's political sympathies were to find their eloquence in his 1855 Preface to *Leaves of Grass*, where he located the "genius" of the United States in the "common people," and announced his poetic credo of "perfect personal candor" that would assert itself so conspicuously in the third, 1860, edition of *Leaves*. Meanwhile his work attracted the attention and praise of the great transcendentalists Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. Whitman's earliest poems of 1850 reflect his hostility to slavery, but the 1860 edition of *Leaves* expand his level of candor with the inclusion of two distinctly erotic poetry sequences considered by the proprieties of the time to be obscene, "The Children of Adam" and "Calamus."

Following discovery of Whitman's original "Calamus" manuscript in 1953, homoerotic interpretations of his life and work proliferated. During the Civil War, Whitman worked as a volunteer in army hospitals, and some of his extensive correspondence with former patients has also been construed to confirm his

homoeroticism. Be that as it may, by the 1870s Whitman's work was being sold in Europe, providing welcome finances and recognition, as well as lecture and reading opportunities. In the early '80s he was able to buy a house in Camden, New Jersey, but subsequently both his finances and his health deteriorated until his death on March 26, 1892.

PETER MICHELSON

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## WILDE, OSCAR

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1854–1900

Irish playwright, novelist, and aesthete

Oscar Wilde was a leading representative of the late nineteenth-century movement in art and literature known as “Decadence.” The decadent artist, or “aesthete,” was known for his cultivated manners and dandyish appearance. Decadents rejected the conventional canons of morality and professed a contempt for the ordinary. As in Wilde’s case, the decadent often spent more time perfecting his pose of “exquisiteness” and contemplating beauty, than he did in creating his own works of art. Indeed, Wilde claimed that his life was his art, and he became known for his quotable one-liners, or “the quip” and for his flamboyant style of dress and living. A proponent of the platonic philosophy of homophile friendship, Wilde revealed the fine line many men had to walk between fin-de-siecle decadence and “homosexuality”—a new legal and medical identity that had emerged by the 1870’s and was declared illegal in England in 1885 under the Criminal Amendment Act. His 1895 trial for homosexuality erased the public’s doubts about Wilde’s sexuality and also created a larger moral panic and justification for censorship of art and literature. While Wilde has become one of the most celebrated “queer” playwrights, homosexuality as a theme is not always obvious in his works.

Wilde achieved popularity and fame for his comedies of Society, such as “Lady Windemere’s Fan,” (performed 1892), “A Woman of No Importance,” (Performed 1893), and “An Ideal Husband” (performed 1895). All three plays contain formidable dowagers, dandified aristocrats, and female innocents forced to confront the sordidness of social and political life. Wilde’s most famous and posthumously most successful play, “The Importance of Being Earnest” (performed 1895) does seem to have a homosexual subtext. A farce about guilt, secrecy and the double life, the play deals with two friends, Algernon and Jack, who use alternative identities (Jack’s

Ernest and Algernon’s Bunbury) and the women who love them. The false identity allows the men to escape debt and enjoy a life of pleasure in London and conceal their vices from those in the country. Queer theorists read the play as homoerotic, as the friends, portrayed as effete, leisured, and amoral, discuss their fondness for “bunburying” in London, perhaps a code word for homosexual jaunts, cruising for “rough trade” which Wilde secretly practiced outside of his marriage. Critic Alan Sinfield says of the play, “the whole ambience reeks...of queerness.” However, the conversations of the two men tend to dwell on women and property and the play ends with the upcoming marriages of both.

Wilde’s most famous novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* veered away from his usual attempt at wit and parody. Borrowing the premise of Stevenson’s *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* Wilde introduces the character of Dorian Gray, the eternal youth who seeks to escape moral punishment. At Oxford, Wilde had belonged to a circle of students whose poetry worshipped male beauty and youth and the writings of Plato. Dorian’s very name evokes the Ancient Greeks. In this novel, the homoerotic bond between Dorian Gray and the artist who paints him, Basil Hallward, are evident. Wilde champions the superiority of the leisured gentleman who “has discovered how to live.” Dorian’s “new Hedonism” and lack of self-control lead to debaucheries that include adultery, murder, opium addiction, and the moral corruption of others, but only his painting registers his guilt; Dorian remains ageless, beautiful, and innocent on the exterior. Having driven the woman he loves to suicide and murdered to keep the secret of his portrait, Dorian at last rediscovers the power to feel; he slashes the painting and thereby kills himself. In 1890 the *Daily Chronicle* called the novel “a poisonous book, the atmosphere of which is heavy with the mephitic odours of moral and spiritual putrefaction” and filled with “effeminate frivolity.” Five years later the novel

was used as evidence at Wilde's trial of "relations, intimacies, and passions of certain persons of sodomitical and unnatural habits, tastes, and practices."

Another of Wilde's controversial works was his play "Salome" written in 1891 and published in 1893 along with Aubrey Beardsley's erotic illustrations. Wilde never saw the play performed in his lifetime as the London Lord Chamberlain's Office banned the work which represented a Biblical subject. Wilde threatened to leave England and move to Paris, "I will not consent to call myself a citizen of a country that shows such narrowness in artistic judgement." The character of Salome was an icon of female sexuality for *fin de siècle* writers and artists, the ultimate *femme fatale* whose unquenchable desire challenges the conventions of patriarchal culture. In the play Wilde transforms the political execution of John the Baptist into a sexually perverse lust murder. As the prophet denounces female sexuality, Salome tries to seduce him, and agrees to perform for Herod her Dance of the Seven Veils in exchange for the prophet's head on a platter. After the prophet's death, she then horrifies Herod as she lovingly speaks to and even kisses the decapitated head, and Herod orders his guards to kill her. Critics at the time described Wilde's play as bizarre, ferocious, and repulsive, and some compared Salome to the feminist New Woman of the late nineteenth century. Wilde, hinting at the homosexual subtext of the play, posed for a photograph dressed as Salome and declared "Salome, c'est moi."

During and after his imprisonment, Wilde used his writing to contemplate his own life and express his sexuality in a more open manner than his previous works allowed. "I don't regret for a single moment having lived for pleasure.... There was no pleasure I did not experience ... Tired of being on the heights I deliberately went to the depths for new sensations." The trial altered the public's perception of Wilde from the witty dandy to that of a criminal, and his writing changed in response to his public's hostility. In "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" (1898) Wilde used the story of Trooper Charles Thomas Woolridge, a fellow convict sentenced to death for the murder of his wife, as an analogy for his own fate as a condemned man. He also used the poem to link sexuality and death, as he did in "Salome," and laments "each man kills the thing he loves." In his long prison letter to Lord

Alfred Douglas, "*De Profundis*," (published after Wilde's death), Wilde notes the lack of a distinct boundary between his public figure and artistic persona: "I was a man who stood in symbolic relations to the art and culture of my age." In the work, he meditates on the nature of Christ as well as his own self-destructive behavior that led to his downfall. The letter opens with a section on Wilde's and Douglas's three-year love affair, Wilde's generosity, and Douglas's selfishness. He acknowledged his attraction to young males, calling it "feasting with panthers...the danger was half the excitement." Although he tried to celebrate his sexuality which he had been forced for so long to conceal, Wilde notes in his letter that his sexuality was also the source of his personal and professional suffering: "Of all possible objects I was the most grotesque. When people saw me they laughed."

### Biography

Born in Ireland, 1854 to a poet mother and eminent Dublin physician. Educated at Trinity College, Dublin, and then Magdalen College, Oxford where as a disciple of Walter Pater he founded the Aesthetic Movement, which advocated "art for art's sake." From 1878—1881, Wilde became a well-known dandy and party guest in London, known not for his writings but for his wit and flamboyant attire of velvet coat, knee breeches, silk stockings, pale green tie, cane, and shoulder-length hair. In 1882, he toured North America for a year. When a customs officer asked if he had anything to declare, Wilde replied, "nothing but my genius." At 28 he lectured in 70 American and Canadian cities on the arts and literature, attracting crowds as varied as West Coast intellectuals and Kansas farmers. Upon his return to London he worked as a literary critic, journalist, and author of several children's books; he married Constance Lloyd in 1884, and fathered two sons. He reached the peak of his career from 1890—1895 as a playwright and novelist, and his works, with their critique of Victorian mores and hypocrisy, helped usher in the modern era. In 1895, Wilde sued the eighth Marquess of Queensberry (the father of Wilde's young lover, Lord Alfred Douglas) for libel. The suit backfired and Queensberry's accusations of Wilde's homosexuality led to the writer's arrest and trial for "acts of gross indecency." The trial, which resulted in



## WILLY (HENRY GAUTHIER-VILLARS)

two years' imprisonment with hard labor in Reading Gaol, destroyed Wilde's career, reputation, and alienated him from his family and friends. Upon his release from prison in 1897 he wandered around Europe, in poor health and financially ruined. He died in 1900 in Hotel d'Alsace in Paris, of cerebral meningitis, under the pseudonym "Sebastian Melmoth."

JULIE ANNE TADDEO

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# WILLY (HENRY GAUTHIER-VILLARS)

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1859–1931

French writer and critic

By his early thirties, Henry Gauthier-Villars was not only a successful journalist, he was also the father of an illegitimate son whose mother had died before her divorce could be finalized. Colette's family, with whom he was on familiar terms, looked after this child at their home in the countryside for a time before other arrangements could be made. Presumably it was at this moment that

Colette, who harbored ambitions of her own, first came into contact with him. Given the disparity in fortune (while Gauthier-Villars came from a wealthy family, Colette was little more than a poor girl without a dowry or any visible marks of intellectual distinction), the marriage between this ill-assorted couple, which occurred in 1893, was viewed by contemporaries as an unusual arrangement. Within a short while, Colette, like many others, was producing work which her husband edited and signed with his own name.

The two most entertaining works produced by Willy's "fiction factory" were probably dashed off in haste by Jean de Tinan (1875–1899), one of the more able minor decadent writers of the period. The first of these, *Maîtresse d'Esthètes* (1897), manages to combine a racy narrative about the tangled love life of an artist's model, Ysolde Vouillard, with an entertaining satire at the expense of the advanced artistic and literary fashions of the day. The novel begins with Ysolde's seduction of the fashionable sculptor Franz Brotteaux (she performs a striptease in his studio). When Brotteaux, emotionally and physically exhausted by her demands (it is hinted that they make love five times a day), decamps to the coast, she forces herself on his best friend, the writer Jim Smiley (Willy's own alter-ego), who has already adopted another former girl friend of Brotteaux's, Clarisse, as his own. On one hand, the novel seems to be a study of male empowerment with the two men casually trading women between themselves. However, though both men find Ysolde fascinating, especially because of her active solicitation of sex, both are also ultimately glad to escape her importunities. Smiley even claims to prefer the almost asexual domestic satisfactions offered by Clarisse, an uncomplicated *grisette*, more to his taste.

Indeed, the general tone of the novel is misogynistic rather than erotic. Predictably, Ysolde is repeatedly defined in terms of the hysterical woman. More unusually, her behavior is also explained in terms of an artificial voluptuousness which is a literary construct of the period. In fact, Ysolde is the illegitimate daughter of a street prostitute whose knowledge of art and literature derives almost exclusively from her contact with writers and musicians. Indeed, her first lover, a failed Wagnerian composer, is responsible for introducing her to the work of Sotaukrack (with whom she also conducts an affair), the leader of an avant-garde esoteric coterie. Self-educated, Ysolde's understanding of these new ideas is at best unreliable and a source of ribaldry for her male companions. *Un vilain Monsieur!* (1898), also largely written by Jean de Tinan, contains a similar satirical note.

Most of the works published under the "Willy" soubriquet contain transparent references to real people. Ysolde in *Maîtresse d'Esthètes* is probably based on Henriette Maillat, a former mistress of the prolific Joseph Péladan,

the leading esoteric novelist of the day. The latter is clearly the model for Sotaukrack. Brotteaux, with his Christ-like face and numerous sexual conquests, resembles a youthful Catulle Mendès. The various references in the novel to Jean de Tinan's writing perhaps confirm his hand in the authorship as does the theme of impotence, a subject about which we wrote elsewhere. Overall, *Maîtresse d'Esthètes* is an extremely sophisticated novel in terms of the hints and asides it makes (both cultural and sexual), though Ysolde's highly fetishistic striptease (she retains her hat, gloves, and stockings) and subsequent semi-rape of Smiley constitute the main erotic episodes. Despite its quirkiness, the novel may still be read with some pleasure.

Willy and his team of ghost-writers, despite such salacious tendencies, generally managed to avoid legal complications. In 1903, however, *La Maîtresse de Prince Jean* was prosecuted for obscenity. The novel itself concerns an affair between Maurice Lauban, a young poet, and Gaëtane Girard, a middle-aged actress rumored to be the mistress of the elusive (and probably non-existent) Prince Jean of the title. Lauban, who is mean, vulgar, and provincial, is mainly motivated by snobbery, the notion of cuckolding a minor aristocrat appealing to his self-conceit. Although this allows for some low comedy in the opening chapters (Lauban has to defer his first tryst with his new mistress because of the lamentable state of his underwear), the novel is otherwise unremarkable. The most entertaining passages concern an account of a fictitious duel that Lauban persuades Maugis to write for *Gil-Blas*. This simple hoax not only provides Lauban with an excuse for his earlier non-consummation of the affair with Gaëtane but also adds to his own prestige in her eyes. Despite the casual portrayal of sexuality through the work (calling on Maugis, Lauban finds him in bed with a *grisette*; later he becomes obsessed with the idea that Gaëtane has lesbian proclivities, referring in passing to the relationship of the ostensible author's former wife with Polaire), *La Maîtresse de Prince Jean* has little to recommend it as a work of fiction. Willy managed to generate a considerable amount of publicity from the trial (even calling Huysmans as a witness), recouping the cost of the fine that was handed out to him (1,000 francs) many times over in increased sales.

### Biography

Henry Gauthier-Villars was born on August 10, 1859, at Villiers-sur-Orge in the Seine-et-Oise. After completing his studies at the Lycée Fontanes and the prestigious Collège Stanislas, he turned down a position with the family publishing and printing firm founded by his father (a staunchly conservative concern) in favor of pursuing a literary career on his own hedonistic terms. His first work, a collection of sonnets, was published in 1878. By the early 1880s, even while completing his military service in Le Mans and Besançon, he was contributing articles and stories to various Parisian and provincial newspapers and journals. By the mid-1880s, he was also publishing material under the pseudonym Henry Maugis; later he would also write criticism under the name Jim Smiley. In 1887, having decided to ingratiate himself with his father, he finally joined the family firm, which was located on the Quai des Grands-Augustins. From his ground-floor office, he held open house for such *fin-de-siècle* literary celebrities as Catulle

Mendès, Mallarmé, Paul Verlaine, Marcel Schwob, Pierre Louÿs, Jean de Tinan, and Rémy de Gourmont. Most of the numerous works signed “Willy” demonstrate a similar interest in the erotic, including several works published in the 1920s which deal with the fashionable theme of homosexuality. Such works continued to appear until the eve of his death in 1931.

TERRY HALE

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## WILMOT, JOHN, SECOND EARL OF ROCHESTER

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1647–1680

English poet and satirist

Rochester’s writings were intended for manuscript circulation among a coterie of courtiers who valued wit and extremity, violent debauchery, and polished epigrams. He added a sexual twist to almost everything he wrote. When he revised John Fletcher’s tragedy *Valentinian*, a drama already steeped in decadent lust, he added extra details about the emperor’s love for eunuchs and boys (p. 161; all citations from *Works*, edited by Harold Love). His letters, like his poems, often express the absurdity of sex, the incongruous mismatch of “head” and “tail.” Scholars still cannot decide whether Rochester

is a libertine poet (the most striking example in English literature) or an anti-libertine, who exposes the emptiness of desire by acting out its contradiction in extreme personas—the woman wit tempted to become a whore, the “disabled debauchee” frenetically encouraging others to sin because he himself is diseased and impotent. His famous *Satyr against Mankind* shocked contemporaries by defining “right reason” as a device to keep up the pleasures of sensuality, and yet suggests the idiocy and filthiness of human passions.

Rochester’s poetry is often erotic and obscene, though not always both at once. Lyrics like “An Age in her Embraces Passed,” “Love and Life,” “Absent from thee I languish still,”

“A Young Lady to her Antient Lover,” or “The Fall” show a profound understanding of the erotic bond, its cruelty and fragility. Rochester laments (or perhaps celebrates) the separation of volition, desire, and performance, the fleeting nature of feeling, the compulsion to betray, and the philosophical doubts that force lovers to torture one another: “Love raised to an extream” through anguish and jealousy gives them a sense of reality, since “pain can ne’er deceive” (p. 28). In equally elegant drinking songs, Rochester’s various personae strive to “Raise pleasure to the topp” (p. 23) by alternating bouts of wine, boys, and “Cunt.”

The verbally obscene poems themselves range from surprising tenderness to hysterical aggression. “Faire Cloris in a Pigsty lay” makes a pastoral out of the pig-girl’s masturbatory dream, and even the violent *Ramble in St James’s Parke* has a moment of pathos, when the jealous lover recalls the former “tender hours” that Corinna has now “betrayed,”

When leaning on your Faithless Breast  
Wrapt in security, and rest,  
Soft kindness all my powers did move,  
And Reason lay dissolved in Love.

(p. 79)

In other poems (and in other parts of the long *Ramble*) obscene words and images are thrown in the reader’s face. A female character wants her “eyes fucked out.” A courtesan is savagely attacked for her power to enslave men—or more accurately, to arouse men so that their own “Bollox” make them “slaves” to her. To begin his curse Rochester invokes the mock-epic “Bawdy Powers,” dipping his pen in menstrual rather than poetic “Flowers.” He ends with a perfectly-manicured explosion of disgust and degradation: “Her Belly is a Bagg of Turds, / And her Cunt a Common sewer” (“On Mrs Willis,” p. 37).

Many of Rochester’s more outrageous poems interconnect sex and politics. The ingenious ode “Upon Nothing” brackets together kings’ promises and whores’ vows. One notorious lampoon, slipped “by mistake” into Charles II’s pocket, asserts that the monarch’s “sceptre and his prick” are not only the same length but equally manipulable by whomever lays her hand on them. Britain may be famous “For breeding the best Cunts in Christendome,” but its ruler is completely dominated by his phallus, a single-minded, “peremptory” creature who will

“break through” all religion and law “to make its way to Cunt.” Illogically, this all-governing organ is also so “disobedient” that Nell Gwyn has to use “Fingers, Mouth and Thighes” to raise it, while even in its regnant state the “graceless Ballocks” weigh it down and render it ridiculous (pp. 85–89).

Rochester turned every syllable and every gesture into Wit, which meant not just humor but literary sophistication and creativity. Rather than simply *producing* erotic literature, he explores the similarities between literature and the kind of sex he knows best, scandalous and illicit. Whores and men of wit are alike because their patrons first “enjoy” them and then “kick them out of doors,” but “a threatening doubt remains” in both cases, since the satirist’s sting lingers on like the burning of syphilis (p. 58). One of his aristocratic speakers claims to have “never Rhymed but for my Pintles sake,” that is, on behalf of his penis (p. 259). A female character with literary ambitions at first hesitates because “Whore is scarce a more reproachfull name / Than Poetesse,” but this recognition then makes her all the more eager to write, like her author “Pleased with the Contradiction and the Sin” (p. 64). Transgression itself is the chief spur to writing.

The contradictions central to Rochester’s life and work include the violent contrast between the “lacy precision” of the verse and the obscenity of its content, and the comical disjunction between the sublime grandeur of eros and the gross anatomy of sex. Writing to an obese male friend, he describes the ludicrous spectacle they made when running naked in the park (revealing “the strange decay of manly parts”); writing to his wife, he laments the “disproportion twixt our desires and what [Fate] has ordained to content them.” (See *Letters*, edited by Treglown, pp. 159, 241–242.) Even writing to his actress mistress, he seems taken with the irony of it all; with a typical logical twist, he assures her that his passion must be sincere because it sounds so false.

The unpredictable autonomy of the genitals haunts Rochester’s longer poems of debauchery. *A Ramble in St James’s Parke* proclaims that “There’s something generous in mere Lust,” and yet reduces the faithless mistress to a “Cunt” that speaks in her mouth and “came spewing home, / Drencht with the Seed of half the Town” (pp. 78–79). “The Disabled Debauchee” celebrates drunken brothel riots and

bisexual orgies, but in the voice of a syphilitic, impotent man. Impotence is the classic theme of *The Imperfect Enjoyment*, where the penis becomes in rapid succession an “all-dissolving Thunderbolt,” a spear which “Where e’re it pierced, a Cunt it found or made,” a withered flower, a “wishing, weak, unmoving lump,” a cowardly street hooligan, and “a Common Fucking Post.” The phallus is at once the *raison d’être* of Rochester’s poem and the “worst part of me” (pp. 14–15).

Rochester was luridly imitated during his lifetime and extravagantly praised after his early death. Religious leaders paid tribute to the “subtlety and sublimity” of his wit, the “heightening and amazing circumstances of his sins” (repented at the last minute). Women poets like Aphra Behn and Anne Wharton (his niece, adopted sister, and reputed lover) celebrate Rochester for embodying “all the charms of Poetry and Love.” He became the prototype for every brilliantly wicked rake in English literature.

Publishers rushed to cash in on Rochester’s notoriety. Any obscene or erotic poem they could find was posthumously printed as his, and for this reason it is still difficult to know precisely what he wrote. Most of the poems in underground editions can be attributed to other writers, as David Vieth proved long ago. In his great edition of 1999, Harold Love has shown convincingly that Rochester had no connection with the bawdy classics “Signior Dildo” and *Sodom* (treated as his in popular works like Stephen Jeffreys’s drama *The Libertine*, 1994). The mock-heroic drama *Sodom*, evidently written by an individual or group of would-be wits outside the Court circle, imitates Rochester at certain points (for example when King Bolloxinian declares “with my Prick I’le governe all the land”). But it rarely rises above what film critics call the teenage gross-out mode: in one scene, for example, the courtiers make up culinary dishes of “Cunts” garnished with crablice or infected vaginal discharges, and discuss the pleasures of “Turkey’s arse.” The version entitled *Sodom and Gomorah*—published only in Love’s appendix of spurious works—is more extreme and more coherent.

### Biography

Born April Fool’s Day 1647, at Ditchley in Oxfordshire, to a pious mother and an absentee

father exiled (and given the title Earl of Rochester) for his personal commitment to the defeated King Charles II. After his father died in 1658, Rochester was in effect adopted by the King (restored to power in 1660), who generally acted as a rakish companion rather than as a patriarchal authority figure. Entered Wadham College, Oxford, at the age of twelve, and took the Grand Tour of France and Italy in 1661–1664. Fought valiantly (and lost his religious faith) in a naval campaign against the Dutch; later gained a reputation for cowardice by fighting the police and running away, leaving a friend dead. With no profession and little inherited estate, Rochester lived partly off his heiress-wife Elizabeth Malet (abducted 1665, married 1667, four children by her and one by the actress Elizabeth Barry). Court pensions and sinecures, such as Keeper of Woodstock Park and Gentleman of the Bedchamber, allowed him to live and frolic in the inner circles of Whitehall.

Drunk for five years continuously—as he candidly admitted in conversations recorded by the Scots clergyman Gilbert Burnet—Rochester still took his hereditary seat in the House of Lords. Several times imprisoned, banished the Court, or sent abroad for his impulsive behavior, he always managed to regain the King’s personal favor. Burnet records many of Rochester’s beliefs, presumably sincere even if stated for effect: Christianity is a fraud necessary to keep the lower classes in order; a benevolent God would never prohibit the promiscuous “use of women”; all pleasure is legitimate provided it does no harm. His two ruling passions, Burnet observed, were “a violent love of Pleasure, and a disposition to extravagant Mirth”; he particularly “took pleasure to disguise himself as a Porter, or as a Beggar, ... to follow some mean Amours, which, for the variety of them, he affected.” (Burnet’s memoir is reprinted in *Rochester: The Critical Heritage*, edited by David Farley-Hills.) Rochester died of syphilis and alcoholism at the Christ-like age of thirty-three (26 July 1680), after a much-publicized conversion from his earlier flamboyant atheism.

JAMES GRANTHAM TURNER

### Selected Works

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*Poems, Etc., on Several Occasions, with Valentinian, a Tragedy*. London: Jacob Tonson, 1691; reliable edition, often reprinted, but excludes all the obscene poems.

*The Works of the Earls of Rochester, Roscomon, Dorset, Etc.* “4th” edition, London: Edmund Curll, 1714; numerous editions, each one with more smutty “Rochester” poems.

*The Letters of John Wilmot, Earl of Rochester*. Edited by Jeremy Treglown, Oxford: Blackwell, 1980.

*Rochester, Complete Poems and Plays*. Edited by Paddy Lyons, London: Everyman, 1993; convenient paperback, but unreliable attributions (accepts Rochester’s authorship of *Sodom*, for which there is no evidence).

*The Works of John Wilmot Earl of Rochester*. Edited by Harold Love, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999; includes works unreliably attributed to Rochester (“Appendix Roffensis”), with full scholarly evidence for authorship and distribution.

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Vieth, David [later Diana] M. *Attribution in Restoration Poetry: A Study of Rochester’s “Poems” of 1680*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963; essential information on authorship, also included in Vieth’s modern-spelling edition of *The Complete Poems*, New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1968 (the first edition to combine the canonical and obscene poems).

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## WITTIG, MONIQUE

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1935–  
French novelist

Monique Wittig received the 1964 Prix Médicis for *L’Opoanax* [*The Opoanax*], the first major novel of education from a non-male point of view and the first book of her trilogy which systematically experiments with gender in

pronouns and narrative subjectivity. Following the “events” of May ’68, an epic from a revolutionary feminist point of view, *Les guérillères*, was published in 1969. In 1974, her most deconstructive work appeared: *Le corps lesbien* [*The Lesbian Body*], where the female body is figuratively taken apart and reconceptualized from a lesbian point of view.

The trilogy was followed by three significant rewritings: a rewriting of the dictionary, *Lesbian Peoples: Material for a Dictionary* which Wittig coauthored with Sande Zeig in 1976; a play rewriting Cervantes's *Quixote, le voyage sans fin* [*The Constant Journey*], first performed in 1985, starring Sande Zeig; and a rewriting of Dante, *Virgile, non* [*Across the Acheron*], published in 1985.

In 1992, Beacon Press published *The Straight Mind and Other Essays*, Wittig's collected theoretical essays previously published in *Feminist Issues* and other journals over a period of a dozen years. Wittig developed an argument that foregrounds the centrality of obligatory heterosexuality as a political régime. Women, for Wittig, belong to a class constituted by the hierarchical social relation of sexual difference that gives men ideological, political, and economic power over women. What makes a woman is a specific relation of appropriation by a man. A feminist is one who fights for women as a class and for the disappearance of that class. "Sex" is the naturalized political category that founds society as heterosexual. All the social sciences based on the category of "sex" must be overturned. Because lesbians are outside the political economy of heterosexuality, "lesbians are not women."

In 1999, *Paris-la-politique et autres histoires* was published. A parable about power struggles in political groups, it is a collection of hard-to-find short texts that Wittig had previously published. She described them as "parasite texts that fall whole out of the main body on which they had grafted themselves."

In June 2001, Marie-Hélène Bourcier's translation of *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* was published in Paris as *La Pensée straight*. To celebrate this event, the publisher, Editions Baland, cosponsors with the University of Paris, Nanterre, a colloquium on the work of Monique Wittig. Scholars from Canada, Italy, and the United States as well as France presented papers to an overflow crowd in Reid Hall of Columbia University in France. Monique Wittig read excerpts from her work in progress, "Un Chantier littéraire" (A Workshop Space). She also discussed, with her partner, Sande Zeig, their new film, "The Girl," based on an unpublished Wittig short story and directed by Zeig. The film premiered in Paris June 17, 2001.

## Biography

Monique Wittig was born in Dannemarie (Alsace) France July 13, 1935. She was an experimental writer, lesbian feminist theorist, and activist. As author of experimental fiction she translated from French into a dozen languages. She was the best-known lesbian materialist theorist of the twentieth century becoming a founding member of MLF (French), Gouines Rouges (Red Dykes), and Lesbiennes Radicales (Radical Lesbians). Wittig died in Tucson, Arizona (US) January 3, 2003.

NAMASCAR SHAKTINI

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## WOMEN'S MAGAZINES

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In the broadest sense of the term women's magazines might refer to any serial publication consciously marketed at women. However, there are, and have been, a number of such publications which are not included in the category which cultural critics and common usage refer to as women's magazines. The term is generally taken to refer to a set of mass-marketed, serial publications aimed at middle- and upper-class women and containing domestic advice, romantic fiction, and in the later twentieth century sexual advice and discussion. From about 1970 a sub-genre of these has taken an overtly political stance in labeling themselves as feminist and arranging content accordingly. In a discussion of women's magazines in relation to erotic writing it is important to note that magazines are distributed through entirely different channels than literary books. Newsstands, supermarkets, and other neighborhood venues display women's magazines. Thus women interact with this form of writing in the course of everyday lives and do not have to seek it out in venues reserved for "high art" literature associated with middle- and upper-class culture.

Most scholars agree that publications identifiable as women's magazines first began to

appear in Europe in the late seventeenth century. First aimed at upper-class women, these publications contained little domestic advice and a good proportion of romantic fiction which detailed the sexual exploits of women both married and unmarried. By the mid-nineteenth century, mass-market publications which addressed the concerns of what was now culturally identifiable as the middle-class housewife began to appear in Europe and the United States. A formula of domestic, romantic and sexual advice, (often with erotic fiction added) emerged and lasted for at least the next century and a half.

A number of "women's" magazines are also read by teenage girls and many women have echoed Janice Winship's description of her first search for erotic knowledge in their pages:

Women's magazines became more intriguing as I tried to glean hints of the mysteries of sex and, perhaps more importantly, seek reassurance that my sprouting and increasingly alien body was not in the first stages of some dreadful illness. It was disappointing that my mother only had *Women's Weekly*. Mrs. Marryat gave little away on her problem page. But I used to love the romance and adventure of the serials...like Neville Shute's *A Town Like Alice*...mainly because



## WOMEN'S MAGAZINES

of one (or so I remember it) highly erotic scene in which the heroine lets down her sari robe to reveal and offer up her nakedness to the man she loves. (Winship, 2–3)

This passage highlights several important attributes of the erotic function of the women's magazine in the late twentieth century. Firstly, there are both fiction and non-fiction sources of sexual pleasure within the conventional layout of the women's magazine. The non-fiction elements include problem pages, advice, and information articles and quizzes which test a woman's romantic and sexual knowledge and predilections. These often allow women readers of all ages a vehicle for the discussion of sex and the exploration of their sexuality. They function as a way to communicate the sexual imaginary. (Until the 1990s this imaginary confined itself, in mass-market publications, largely to conventional, heterosexual sex). Fiction pieces contained within these magazines, at first often serialised but increasingly in short story form, often explore the ground between sexual desire and the myth of romance in creating erotic fantasies for women and girls.

In her landmark article, "Pornography for Women is Different," Ann Barr Snitow discusses the tension between romance (the emotional excitement involved in "catching a man") and sexual fulfillment in regards to mass-market paperbacks aimed at heterosexual women. More accurately, she argues that romance and sexual excitement are one and the same thing for women, that the negotiation of social structures of gender and the social function of womanhood must be addressed in order for women to find sexual pleasure within fiction. Therefore the heroines of heterosexual, mass-market fiction (in magazines as well as paperback books) are often caught up in the desire for an inaccessible man, between the needs of their self-respect and good social standing as women and their desire for sex. Sex is thus often delayed and the majority of the story involves the anticipation and negotiation through which the heroine is able to engage in the final sex act without guilt and achieve satisfactory orgasm. This anticipation and negotiation are part of the sexual pleasure of these texts. Snitow argues that romance is foreplay for the women who read this fiction. The crux of Snitow's argument is that

in a sexist society we have two pornographies, one for men, one for women. They both have, hiding

within them, those basic human expressions of abandon.... The pornography for men enacts this abandon on women as objects. How different is the pornography for women, in which sex is bathed in romance, diffused, always implied rather than enacted at all. (Snitow, 269)

Ann Snitow's use of the term pornography represented a radical step for a feminist scholar when the article was first published in 1979. A strong (though not universal) voice within the second wave feminist movement condemned pornography as inherently degrading to women. In particular, the involvement of violent fantasies in the pursuit of sexual pleasure was viewed with alarm and distrust. An issue of the American feminist women's magazine *MS.* (November 1978) attempted to discuss the representation of sex in women's erotic fiction and to articulate what would be acceptable within feminist politics. Gloria Steinem, founding editor of *MS.*, wrote an article for this issue which sought to delineate the difference between erotica and pornography and to articulate a framework for representations of sex which could give women readers and viewers pleasure without exposing them to images which would damage their newfound sense of empowerment.

Snitow's argument is open to attack on the grounds of its neat categorization of erotic literature according to the presumed gender and sexual orientation of readers, and its assumption that it can predict the uses to which readers will put a text. At the same time, it also ignores a range of publications which may be marketed at women, and/or have significant female readership, but are not commonly included in the category of women's fiction, or—for the purposes of this entry—women's magazines.

Since at least the nineteenth century a number a mass-market, serial publications which do not fit into the commonly accepted definition of women's magazines have offered erotic pleasure to women. These include so called pulp magazines like the American *True Confessions*, which in the guise of non-fiction offer any number of transgressive sexual fantasies for the pleasure of women readers. The advent of women's magazines like *MS.* in the United States and *Spare Rib* in the United Kingdom in the 1970s began to open up new ground in the sexual content of women's magazines. This in turn influenced more widely circulated publications.

## WOMEN'S WRITING: ANGLOPHONE, TWENTIETH CENTURY

Throughout the twentieth century the involvement of lesbians in the production of women's magazines has offered direction to women's magazines as they seek to expand the possibilities of erotic expression for women readers. The U.S. lesbian publication *On Our Backs*, which began publishing in the 1980s, offers an example of the kind of lesbian feminist sex magazine which arose in the late twentieth century throughout the United States and western and eastern Europe. These publications consciously defy second wave feminist distinctions between erotica and pornography and seek to encroach upon what has been seen as the male domain of transgressive pornography. Through fiction and visual spreads they offer sexual fantasy clearly aimed at women which seeks power

through the breaking rather than the creating of taboo.

MEREDITH MILLER

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# WOMEN'S WRITING: ANGLOPHONE, TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Women's erotic writing in the twentieth century is a rich and varied literary phenomenon which is fundamentally engaged with the active challenging of women's social and political positions throughout the century. Erotic writing appears early in the century and much of its themes, forms, readership, and the debate surrounding its production and consumption parallel various historical developments. Historically, during the twentieth century there was consistent engagement with questions to do with women's rights as individuals, both legal political rights and their rights as sexual and reproductive beings. From the turn of the century, the idea and reality of the New Woman, a liberated, freethinking, intellectual version of women established in the late-nineteenth century, continued into the development of the suffragette movement and Marie Stopes' fight for women's rights to choose on issues of childbearing. Early erotic writing accompanied these developments so that the poetry of HD (Hilda Doolittle), some elements of Virginia Woolf's writing, erotic writing by lesbian

and other literary modernists such as Djuna Barnes, established both topics and modes of expression on which those who followed them built. The historical changes of the twentieth century in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Australia/New Zealand, and that changing geographical construct the British Commonwealth, saw women gaining the vote, debates about the right to control their own sexual activity and reproduction, and a more general liberation of women's opportunities to write about their sexual desires, needs, and activities using the language and forms of erotic writing whether in explicit and focused work, or as part of acceptable expression in the full variety of poetry and prose.

### The Politics of Erotica

For lesbians, the opportunity to write about the erotic was problematized for many years since love between women was unnamed or considered Sapphic (after Sappho the Latin poet) and

perverse. If it was difficult for E.M. Forster to write of "the love that dare not speak its name" and homoeroticism during his own lifetime, (while some short stories were published, *Maurice*, his novel of homosexual love and the difficulties of conformity was published posthumously in 1970), it was so much more difficult for women whose sexual feelings and expressions were frequently misunderstood, denied, and overlooked in heterosexual contexts, let alone same-sex contexts. One result of silencing and distrust of expressions of sexuality, sexual desire, and the erotic was its codifying into other images, myths, motifs, symbols, so for some erotic writing, particularly in oppressive circumstances (whatever country and period) the reader must search in the discourse and narrative to discover the eroticism since it is suggested, hinted at, expressed covertly. The trial over the publication and distribution of D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* in 1960 was then a significant moment for those writing of sexuality, sex, and the erotic. Censorship and the division between pornography and the erotic, notions of harm and freedom of speech and behavior all underlay this trial, and those who spoke up for the novel (such as E.M. Forster, Helen Gardner, and Raymond Williams) as often great literary figures were part of a changing moment in history. Another change in the opportunity to write, publish, and express the erotic came with the trial of Allen Ginsberg's long political and sexually charged Beat poem "Howl," which was banned in 1956, published abroad by fellow Beat Lawrence Ferlinghetti, so beginning his City Lights publishing venture. Legal moments such as these freed up writers of both genders to explore sexuality and sex in their works and to write erotic fiction. They contributed also to the recognition of the status of erotic writing as frequently more than sleazy pornography, but instead often the sexual political language which expressed an awareness of identity, as a sexual being, and as an individual and member of society. In this context and this respect, and using the theories of Foucault (1978) which link power and control to discourse and the expression of sexuality and identity, much erotic writing can be seen as an expression of individual liberty and identity. This is certainly one of the ways the Beat poets, particularly Diane di Prima used it, though it would be stretching the case to suggest all the authors and readers of, for

example, the romances in the Black Lace series were making a decided blow for freedom throughout their pages. Erotic writing also sells well, and part of the enjoyment of it might be that it is still often rather frowned on—as sleazy porn.

### **Feminism and the Erotic**

Major changes and liberating moments mid-century, the sexual revolution accompanying the contraceptive pill in the 1960s and second wave feminism, underpin a new explicitness in erotic writing and fuel women's claims to the right to explore and write about varieties of sexual choice, taste, experiences, and also fantasies. Debates and legislation of the century began to establish equal rights not only in terms of jobs (Equal Pay Act 1970), property ownership (Married Women's Property Act 1964), and marriage/divorce (Divorce Act 1969), but more broadly in terms of equal citizenship, which includes the recognition and expression of sexuality and the erotic.

Freedom to express a sense of liberated sexuality in erotic writing and reading might seem to be a logical creative step from the social, political, psychological, and biological liberation which women sought and to some extent achieved during the twentieth century. However, the situation of erotic literature is not so clear cut. It has been fundamentally intertwined with feminism's most outspoken and vitriolic debates concerning what could be seen as a sexual and erotic continuum but which has more often been argued as a polar opposition. The continuum commences at one end with freedom of expression, assertion of individual liberty to write and read according to taste and choice, celebration of the body, writing the body, and the recognition of the importance of expressing sensuality and acknowledging and expressing sexual desire. With this writing, these beliefs, there is a refusal of censorship as an outmoded insistence on restraining women's self awareness and expression, a dangerous limitation. At the other end of the continuum lies the recognition that pornography debases women and men (see Dworkin, 1981), and relates in many cases to a legitimization of violence against women, removing women's rights and individual expression. Some writers align the erotic with the pornographic, although others distinguish between the two largely in terms of issues of freedom of choice,

that is, pornography degrades women and can be seen to turn women into objects for someone else's voyeuristic pleasure. In some cases, pornography is accompanied by violence against women. In other instances however, pornography can perhaps be seen as a shared construction, representation, and experience for men and women or women and women, and so there are no victims, only explicit sex and in many cases erotic expression. At the other end of the continuum, erotic expression in itself does not necessarily involve pornography but instead is a liberated exploration of sensuality, fantasy, experience, and pleasure. Anglophone women's writing is produced from any number of these positions and often the stages between them are blurred.

Angela Carter's much critiqued mid-century text *The Sadeian Woman* (1979), captures the flavor of this debate when she celebrates de Sade's creative, imaginative liberation of men and women's sexuality and their erotic selves while she also explores the fate of the two sisters, Justine and Juliette, indicating that one person's liberty could be another's suffering and oppression, and that status, money, language, power, and the relationships of these to gender are crucial in such a delicate balance. Michèle Roberts' *Flesh and Blood* (1995) explores similar territory considering erotic encounters between a range of characters notably a young girl "sold" by her father in marriage to an older wealthy rake, who, on meeting his decadent older mistress in the carriage on the way to their mansion, is expected to engage in a perverse threesome.

A key question of the century is how to engage creatively on a path which empowers and enables women's erotic expression in literature but which avoids falling into the trap of merely reproducing discourses and texts which fix women as someone else's sex object. A feminist argument here is that of subjectivity, and sexuality; the importance of the recognition, expression, and power of the individual subject, the recognition of individual and different subjectivities alongside actions which recognize individual and different sexualities. Much erotic writing by women in the century explores these debates, some has focused on developing what could be described as a feminist erotic, some a lesbian erotic, and some forms of erotic writing which appeal more to the general reader.

The issue of readership raises another debate within the production and consumption of erotic

writing; its literary status as high and or popular art. In the latter part of the twentieth century, Black Lace books began to appear on the top shelf of the most popular magazine and bookshop chains, ironically perhaps, giving erotic tales by women for women the same position and status as "girlie" magazines for men, also on the top shelves. Meanwhile, other readers were beginning to reread the difficult, high art, and modernist or post-modernist writers, Virginia Woolf for example, and discovering what was overlooked in literary critical comment on her and other great writers' erotic vein.

### Virginia Woolf (1882–1941)

She was letting her imagination sweep unchecked around every rock and cranny of the world that lies submerged in the depths of our unconscious being... And then there was a smash. There was an explosion...The imagination had dashed itself against something hard. The girl was aroused from her dream. She was indeed in a state of the most acute and difficult distress. To speak without figure she had thought of something, something about the body, about the passions which it was unfitting for her as a woman to say. Men, her reason told her, would be shocked. The consciousness of what men will say of a woman who speaks the truth about her passions had roused her from her artist's state of unconsciousness. She could write no more. (Woolf, 1931)

Woolf here confronts and explores, enacts the erotic. She expresses erotic, possibly lesbian desire and the censoring reactions against its expression, poetically and rather straightforwardly indicating as she does, that which must not be recognized or spoken of, passion voiced, powerful, politicized. This is erotic writing and the immediate censorship is fundamentally linked to her right of expression as an artist and a woman. So in this light the piece is an articulation of the hidden sexual expression, the erotic, in social contexts, using and exposing the language which would suppress it, so highlighting how its expression is both highly personal and highly political, both in the arena of sexual and of wider social politics. Erotic writing of the kind produced by Woolf, in particular, is fundamentally linked to free expression and the freedom to develop one's sexuality, and of a piece with her other polemical but not erotic work, *A Room of One's Own*, *Three Guineas*.

## Debates

Perhaps one of the problems ranged around the erotic and its recognition, acceptance, and variety, lies fundamentally with some of the issues upon which feminist theories and practices have been based, and on that very difficult (it sometimes seems) distinction between the erotic and the pornographic. The problem also lies with definitions, recognitions, and appreciations of the erotic, which will differ in relation to cultural context, visibility or invisibility, and reception and taste.

Pornography and the erotic have been linked culturally and historically, largely because the erotic is most frequently seen perhaps as a male preserve, and linked in its representation and construction with issues to do with power, and with pain. The difficulty of differentiating between pornography and the erotic and the moral lobby which surrounds any discussion of pornography threatens to hamper recognition, representation, and reading or appreciation of the erotic. In *Sex Exposed: Sexuality and the Pornography Debate* (Segal and Macintosh, 1992) there are several enlightening debates about these issues:

Over and over again, what we read as women's testimony against pornography are stories of women coercively pressured into sex they do not want. But surely the harm we are hearing about cannot reside in the pornographic image, nor even the possibility for men enacting the practice they depict - ....The harm is contained in the social context which deprives the woman of her ability to reject any sexual activity she does not want. (Segal in Segal and Macintosh, 1992, p. 86)

Some of the questions we might have in discussing erotic writing by women and that are for or about women are:

Would an erotica for women merely replicate that for men, with power over men as a key point? (if that is what is one key point in the erotics for men?)

How far does the erotic/do erotics relate to relationships of power, whether partners are male or female? Does this matter?

What kinds of beliefs, actions, and fantasies are involved in different versions of what is perceived to be erotic?

It is hardly surprising that "a women's erotica" is a challenging concept since it is difficult to be exact about what the genre encompasses.

In addition to aspects of feminism and postfeminism, the question of whether lesbian, bi-sexual, and heterosexual texts should be viewed under one heading of "women's erotica" is equally questioned. Contemporary erotica can be seen to be in the process of *becoming*, rather than in a fixed state of *being* (Bakhtin 1981, p. 7, Guattari, 1996).

## Post-World War II Erotica

Kate Millett's polemical *Sexual Politics* (1977) commended the work of Jean Genet (1910–1986), for suggesting that sexuality is the "very prototype of institutionalized inequality" (Millett 1977, p. 20), which must alter in order to elude its quotidian or everyday existence. Utilizing theories of sexuality and power, in his play *The Balcony* (1957), Genet explores a pathology of virility,

sexual congress as a *paradigm of power* over other human beings . . . His critique of the heterosexual politic points the way toward a true sexual revolution, a path which must be explored if any radical social change is to come about. In Genet's analysis, it is fundamentally impossible to change society without changing personality, and *sexual personality* as it has generally existed must undergo the most drastic overhaul. (Millett, 1977, p. 22)

Foucault helps us to read Genet here, recognizing a similarity in the argument about power controlling or enabling the expression of sexuality and the self.

Sexuality as a "paradigm of power" emerges as one of the most important factors in considering the postwar "sexual personality" which has undergone multiple psychological transformations. The current proliferation of women's erotic literature is evidence of a struggle to explore and express female sensuality. We might ask here whether and how "myths" of gender and sexuality have insinuated themselves into contemporary women's erotic texts.

In one respect we seem to have been enabled to recognize and reclaim the erotic for women, bringing into the light that which was taboo, and this is partly a cultural change. However, some of the aspects of that change might just be in different power relations and force different versions of desire on others and on us. The sixties and seventies peddled a liberation for women which confusingly coupled not only the demand for equality of pay and opportunity, but for sexual activity—and we don't need Germaine Greer to point out to us that this was a con

which left many flower-power ladies of the canyon washing the nappies out while their men not only celebrated love and peace but some wilderness porn games as well. Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* (1972), the books Maria Lauret considers in *It's My Party* (1994)—all show that this particular sexual revolution sold an ultimately painful and conformist lie (you had to have a man, several, then what?) to women of that generation and beyond. Was this erotics for women? For feminists? If it was, what would possibly be in it for us now that we have seen through it?

Lesbian or heterosexual, women have difficulties with the ways in which the erotic interfaces with structures and relationships of power. We also have difficulties sometimes in recognizing the erotic itself, as Bronwen Levy points out, because it is veiled, or does not appeal to our tastes.

As Bronwen Levy puts it:

Even recognising erotics when they are depicted may be a problem, let alone developing ways of adequately analysing the historical and cultural context of textual representations. ...Just what is erotic for women is a further important question. ...cultural questions, especially to do with sexual preference, but also to do with class, race, age, and so on, will need to be considered, so that the critic, rather than seeking erotica by a process of relatively straightforward identification or categorisation, as if to say, "now that's erotic," as if this is the last word, will need to rephrase her question: what, for different groups, might be erotic, "Now what is erotic? (Levy, 1992, p. 228)

Susannah Radstone comments in *Sweet Dreams*:

It has also been repeatedly and insistently argued of late, that in order to gain even a limited insight into the ways in which popular texts appeal to us, then the pleasures of those texts must be interrogated to reveal the ways in which they intertwine with the real concerns, needs, and desires of readers. Once however, it soon became apparent that an analysis which revealed only the conscious desires awoken, spoken to or fulfilled by particular genres would be limited by its inability to address the ways in which those genres speak to our unconscious as well as our conscious reading selves. (Radstone, 1988)

Radstone is suggesting here that we moved onto psychoanalytically informed readings. It is not always necessary to do this if we want to look at varieties of writing which deal with and relate to or represent feminist erotic(s) since some feminist writing is more overt:

In fiction the debate over what constitutes the erotic for women is to a large degree constructed by the capacities of various genres for various kinds of representation, as well as by the reading practices thereby encouraged. (Levy, 1992, p. 227)

A broader reading of what the erotic might mean comes from the essayist and poet Audre Lorde who traces the word back to its Greek roots *eros* born of Chaos, and celebratory of all things creative and harmonious. She says:

when I speak of the erotic, then, I speak of it as an assertion of the lifeforce of women, of that creative energy empowered, the knowledge and use of which we are now reclaiming in our language, our history, our dancing, our loving, our work, our lives. (Lorde, 1992, p. 80)

Celebration of the body and writing from the body relate to much of the erotic writing by and for feminists.

Jeanette Winterson, in her introduction to *Erotica: An Anthology of Women's Writing* (Reynolds, 1990), talks of pornography as men's control and ownership of women's bodies, whether women are earning or not through this. The book, she says:

seeks to return women to their bodies by offering a looking glass and not a distorting mirror. Here women can speak for themselves and by doing so deliver a valuable counter-argument to the lies, secrets, and silences that typically pass for a woman's sex-life. Redefining the erotic in terms of female rather than male experience is crucial to the pornography debate, not only to introduce some truth telling but also to remind those who want to protect and sanctify that censorship may replace one kind of gag with another. We don't want men to package us but we must have the freedom to describe ourselves. (Winterson, in Reynolds, 1990, p. xx)

It recognizes that nuance, suggestion, myth, and allegory are often the forms which women adopt in order to write of and in the erotic, and also that reception is a key factor. One person reads or receives as erotic what does not seem so to another. While the introduction tends to veer towards essentialism, stating that women are in tune with their bodies (all women?) and have different notions of the erotic, it does vindicate itself by recognizing taste and differences.

Women, unlike men, do not agree on the broad-stream of what is sexy. I do not know whether it is a fact about women per se or whether it is a result of our fragmented inheritance. I do know that such a

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lively dispute takes us away from the monolithic tedium of male pornography. (Winterson, in Reynolds, 1990, p. xxii)

She argues that sex and titillation are not disturbing, and asks "can women arouse and engage without exploitation?" (Winterson, in Reynolds, 1990, p. xxii) Her views on the erotic are closely related to those of:

Erotica consists of those portraits which are used honestly and with love. This explains why one woman's pornography is another woman's erotics. (Reynolds, 1990, p. xxix)

In considering the erotic, there are other issues beyond those of censorship and pornography. One very clear problem is taste. Trying to discover and define what is erotic and then discuss it with others and expect some kind of a consensus is fraught with difficulties. As a topic among friends and colleagues it is more likely to cause disruption and disagreement than politics and religion ever will. It is just this kind of response which I have found in the various collections of self acclaimed erotic writing by and for feminists, (*Moments of Desire*, Hawthorne and Pausacker, 1989; *Erotica*, Reynolds, 1990) and critical discussion of what the erotic and a more traditional, conventional, or feminist erotic might be, what it is for, and what kinds of sexual politics they engage with.

Sappho, George Sand, Colette, and Aphra Benn are seen by Winterson as the "good time" grandmothers of a feminist erotica. An exploration of a range of individual women writers and some themes within women's erotic writing follows.

### Anais Nin (1903–1977)

Nin was born of artist parents in Paris and at age 11 started her lifelong diary. She spent her teenage years in New York with her mother, married artist and banker Hugh Guiler in 1923 and had a number of affairs, living a largely bohemian lifestyle. Her earliest published works were the surrealist *House of Incest* (1936) and the novelette *Winter of Artifice* (1939). In 1944, she wrote the infamous sexual fantasies which were in 1977 collected into *Delta of Venus: Erotica* and *Little Birds* (1979). Her novel sequence *Cities of the Interior* came out in 1959. Feminists took up her cause in the 1970s

when her unexpurgated seven volume diary was published posthumously as *The Journal of Love* (first volume in 1986). Her life was one of sexual experiment, performance, and record.

Anais Nin discovered the taboo on women's sexual feelings and more particularly on their expression of these feelings when her erotic writing from the 1940s was published in 1976. Noting differences between her own and male sexual expressions, she attributed the male with explicitness and gusto, the female with ambiguity and poetry arguing:

The true liberation of eroticism lies in accepting the fact that there are a million facets to it, a million forms of eroticism, a million objects of it, situations, atmospheres, and variations. We have, first of all, to dispense with guilt concerning its expansion, then remain open to its surprises, [and] varied expressions . . . (Nin, 1992, p. 9).

An avant-garde writer, Nin studied psychology and famously wrote erotica for a dollar a page. In her article entitled "Eroticism in Women" (1974), she noted "the erotic writings of men do not satisfy women" (Nin, 1992, p. 6), and as men and women have different erotic fantasies it is "time we wrote our own" (ibid.). Her comment on the difference between pornography and erotica is that "[p]ornography treats sexuality grotesquely to bring it back to the animal level/Eroticism arouses sensuality without this need to animalize it." (ibid. p. 7).

### Djuna Barnes (1892–1982)

Djuna Barnes, 1892–1982, born in America, Barnes lived and wrote largely in Paris and the United Kingdom. A modernist in style and a Bohemian in lifestyle, she mixed with journalists and expatriates, with Natalie Barney's lesbian group, whom she satirises in *Ladies Almanac*, 1928. Her greatest work is based on the doomed and bizarre relationships she had with actor Thelma Wood, whose dark wanderings and promiscuity form the basis of characterization and action in *Nightwood* (1936), published by TS Eliot. The novel's spokesperson, Matthew O'Connor, is based on a real life doctor, an underworld character. The novel refuses the continuities of character and narrative, scene and reality, and is located in the imagination as much as the streets. It evokes an eroticized nightmarish world of transvestism, lesbian and

multiple affairs, identity blurring, and dangerous desires.

### Pauline Réage (1907–1998)

Réage's *The Story of O* (1954), has caused great controversy, sitting as it does on the borderline between being erotic or pornographic. In its portrayal of a traditional male fantasy of a totally submissive woman/slave who becomes a commodified object of value between men (in particular, René and Sir Stephen) it offers no erotic liberty for women but confirms the unpleasantness of some male-authored pornography. Angela Carter argues in *The New Statesman* (1975):

A piece of comment I once read about that monstrous book, *The Story of O*, suggested that only a woman could have written it because of some curious metaphor about, I think, curlers, somewhere in the book . . . but it seemed to me that *The Story of O*, bore all the stigmata of male consciousness, not least in that details about clothes are just the sort of thing a man would put into a book if he wanted the book to read as though it had been written by a woman. (Carter 1982b, pp. 207–208).

However, James Marriott (editor, Nexus Publishing—owned by Virgin Publishing) confirms that Pauline Réage is now an elderly woman living in an old people's home in France. Since *The Story of O: Part Two* (1969), shorter, more prosaic, less elaborately stylized and more aware of the realities of pain and venereal disease is so different from its predecessor, it is possible they have two different authors. "O" is left to choose between remaining at the Roissy château/brothel and returning to the outside world, leaving us to consider whether she now seems free, or still imprisoned in her role.

### Erica Jong (1942–)

Erica Jong is the author of eight novels including *Fear of Flying* (1973); *Fanny, Being the True History of the Adventures of Fanny Hackabout-Jones* (1980); *Shylock's Daughter* (formerly titled *Serenissima*) (1987); *Inventing Memory: A Story of Mothers and Daughters* (1997), and *Sappho's Leap* (2003). Several of her novels have been worldwide bestsellers. Her other books include the non-fiction works *Fear of Fifty: A Midlife Memoir* (1995); *The Devil at Large: Erica Jong on Henry Miller* (1994); *Witches* (1981); *What Do Women Want* (1998), and six

volumes of poetry. (*About Erica Jong*, [www.ericajong.com/aboutERICA.htm](http://www.ericajong.com/aboutERICA.htm)) *Fear of Flying* (1973), *Parachutes & Kisses* (1984), and *Sappho's Leap* (2003) are erotic novels. She won the United Nations Award for Excellence in Literature (1998) and the Sigmund Freud Award for Literature (1975).

In 1973, *Fear of Flying* explicitly explored women's sexuality. On publication it was praised by such prominent writers as John Updike and Henry Miller. In *The New Yorker* Updike wrote of the novel's "class, sass, brightness, and bite," noting that "[Chaucer's] Wife of Bath, were she young and gorgeous, neurotic and Jewish, urban and contemporary, might have written like this," while Henry Miller in the *New York Times*, predicted "this book will make literary history, that because of it women are going to find their own voice and give us great sagas of sex, life, joy, and adventure." *The Wall Street Journal* argued it "transcends being a woman's book and becomes a latter-day Ulysses, with a female Bloom stumbling and groping, but surviving." (*More About Erica Jong*, [www.ericajong.com/aboutERICA2.htm](http://www.ericajong.com/aboutERICA2.htm))

Jong's work both entertains and illuminates the needs, desires, and rights of women (*More About Erica Jong*, [www.ericajong.com/aboutERICA2.htm](http://www.ericajong.com/aboutERICA2.htm))

### Anne Rice (1941–)

Anne Rice is best known for her *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) filmed with Tom Cruise and Brad Pitt in 1994, but she has also published works of erotica. As Anne Rampling she has published two erotic books *Exit to Eden* and *Belinda*, though *Belinda* has less of a raw erotic tone than does *Exit*, and is more of a romance involving an older man and a teenage girl. Under the pen name A.N. Roquelaure, she wrote the Beauty series, *The Claiming of Sleeping Beauty* (1983), *Beauty's Punishment* (1984), *Beauty's Release* (1985), a trilogy of erotic novels with the same vividness and level of intensity as her other works.

Rouquelaure was a cloak designed by Count Rouquelaure in the eighteenth century, and Anne used it because of its meaning—"Anne under a cloak"—as well as for its erotic sound.

"I love being a controversial writer. It's only in a free, open marketplace where people can develop," – Anne Rice



The Beauty trilogy sparked controversy when the Columbus Metropolitan Library (Ohio) removed the books from the shelves and banned them following a complaint. The library then defined them as hard core S&M pornography, but when asked to produce their written definition of "pornography," the library's director, Larry Black, admitted that he did not have one. (*Erotic Writings of Anne Rice*, <http://www.empirezine.com/spotlight/rice/rice-erotica-of.htm>)

Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) rejects the images and language of disgust, repulsion, and loathing to be found in Bram Stoker, and uses instead the language of the erotic to describe the vampire Lestat's draining of Louis, and Louis of Claudia and others, the strongest and chosen of whom are then turned by this draining and re-filling with the vampire's own blood into a vampire themselves. While Louis hates Lestat for this act which condemns him to be a child of the night himself, destined to feed on small animals, and people, nevertheless the first person description of this and other acts of vampirism is languorous, intense, hypnotic, ecstatic. Louis, turning Claudia's woman friend Madeleine (a favorite vampiric name) into a vampire, by their mutual request, enables both of them to soar (literally in the film) to amazing heights of passion and new life. It is a compellingly eroticized description:

She gasped as I broke the flesh, the warm current coming into me, her breasts crushed against me, her body arching up, helpless, from the couch. And I could see her eyes, even as I shut my own, see that taunting, provocative mouth. I was drawing on her, hard, lifting her, and I could feel her weakening, her hands dropping limp at her sides, 'Tight, tight' I whispered, 'look at it! 'Her heart was slowing, stopping and her head dropped back from me on the velvet, her eyes dull to the point of death.....I felt the gentle pressure of her mouth, and then her hands closing tight on the arm as she began to suck. I was rocking her, whispering to her trying desperately to break my swoon; then I felt her powerful pull. Every blood vessel felt it, I was threaded through and through with her pulling, my hand holding fast to the couch now, her heart beating fierce against my heart, her fingers digging deep into my arm, my outstretched palm. (Rice, 1976, p. 292)

It is a mutual exchange of near death swooning, and life-giving passions, traditional erotic ingredients. The rhythm of the language involves the reader in this powerful exchange, all

encompassing and life dominating as Madeleine takes blood from Louis in return.

### **Anna Couani (1948–)**

Australian author Anna Couani's erotic monologue in *Moments of Desire* (Hawthorne and Pausacker, 1989) depends on writing and reveling in the body. Her work consistently uses a flow of writing, monologues of trapped housewives afraid to leave the house unless they check and counter-check all the windows, and here a celebration of self/orgasm:

The map of the world if felt from the inside. Rough around the coastlines and smooth over the hills and sand dunes. Warm and moist through the rivers which lead outside to the forests like long hair then sparser like shorter more bristly hair.

Flying low but fast across the land masses. Make yourself feel like the world. As old but not as troubled. (Couani in Hawthorne and Pausacker, 1989)

The rhythms of this piece are fluid, repetitive, and the imagery concentrates on equating the woman/self, each part of the body part of a living whole, with the world, its oceans and its curves. This woman is returning descriptions of herself as a natural force, a natural being, to their rightful owner, herself, rather than the traditional male poet/lover who would see her from the outside, not the inside. She refuses to be the object of male gaze. "The map of the world if felt from the inside" gives back women's bodies as organic and natural, to themselves/ourselves for our own subjective experience, and it is a positive experience. You end up as a world/like the world and yet not as troubled and suffering. The piece explores and enacts self recognition and celebration.

### **Kathy Acker (1947–1997)**

Beat-influenced Kathy Acker is a radical writer who exposes social and romantic lies about women's roles and lack of power. Stream of consciousness reproduces the inner thoughts and feelings most of which would be far too sanitized by the formality of conventional fiction, even more conventional prose poetry. Kathy Acker in *The Adult Life of Toulouse Lautrec* by Henry Toulouse Lautrec (1975) manages to mix her modes of writing and response. She gets inside the graffiti culture and critiques it,

while celebrating the erotic and its freedoms. She is radical and critical in her awareness of the dangers inherent in forgetting self, others, poverty, the sickness of the street and living rough in a capitalist society of which street-based teenage lovers are an indictment, on which they are like a running sore. But she also envelopes the reader, draws you in with the second person invocation "you" and involves you in the rhythms and the overwhelming nature of the sexual embrace of the lovers, Marcia and Scott, who forget their poverty, and so ultimately are both escapees from it and its victims:

being wet and dark with women.  
Being touched and being able to know the person  
will touch you again. (Acker, 1975)

Kathy Acker's work is always confrontational. While she explores the fantasies of the erotic and its other overwhelming powers of sexual desire, lust, love, showing them to be an explosive force upsetting all the old-world lies and values, she still shows how such desires and dreams can be a very insidious part of a sick society in which the individual has no place, and where money and power politics rule, all sexual relationships are destructive, and the only real response left is graffiti—a radical written refusal and taunt.

Foucault is clear about the policing of desire through discourse and the socially conformist, repressive ends this serves. Kathy Acker, developing the energies of the Beat generation into post-punk feminism, exposes the lies fed through politics and conventionality, aligning cultural insight and critique with the explosiveness of desire, the transgressive power of the erotic.

Every position of desire, no matter how small, is capable of putting to question the established order of a society; not that desire is asocial; on the contrary, but it is explosive; there is no desiring-machine capable of being assembled without demolishing entire social sections. (Acker, 1984, p. 125)

One of the most destructive forces in the world is love: "Love can tear anything to shreds" (Acker, 1984, p. 125). This writing overtly politicizes the erotic, uses the same kinds of rhythms as the more personal, celebratory writing, but determinedly makes a claim for the erotic as an arena of power politics and sexual controls. Denials, suppression, repression, and lies are exposed and indicted, and

both erotic writing and graffiti are the vehicle for this.

### Audre Lorde (1934–1992)

African American lesbian writer Audre Lorde widens the definition of the erotic as a celebration of woman's life-force, an empowerment: "the erotic is the nurturer or nursemaid of all our deepest knowledge." (Lorde, 1992) For her the interpretation is essential and broad, the erotic is directly related to a sense of joyousness, celebration, self recognition, and enjoyment of many different activities, not just the sexual.

Another important way in which the erotic connection functions is the open and fearless underlining of my capacity for joy. In the way my body stretches to music and opens into response, hearkening to its deepest rhythms, so every level upon which I sense also opens to the erotically satisfying experience, whether it is dancing, building a bookcase, writing a poem, examining an idea.....That self connection shared is a measure of the joy which I know myself to be capable of feeling. (Lorde, 1992, p. 81)

Erotic knowledge is empowerment. It stops us from being docile and suppressing truths, and for Audre Lorde it is also a matter of recognizing self in woman-identified relationships. But this is not the only way to reach the erotic. Audre Lorde's celebration of the erotic then is a broad one which recognizes self and others, joy, and power. It is in relation to this kind of version of the erotic that Alice Walker's politicized *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992) can be read. Audre Lorde's statement about the power of the erotic is central to Walker's novel:

in touch with the erotic, I become less willing to accept powerlessness, or those other supplied states of being which are not native to me, such as recognition, despair, self-effacement, depression, self-denial. (Lorde, 1992, p. 82)

Lorde asks how Black women can seize and recognize an erotica which enables them to be anything other than wild objects? She asks:

So how do we speak of our desires for each other to each other in a language where our relationships to our bodies and desires lack dignity as well as nuance? (Lorde, 1992, p. xx)

What are our names and the touch taste of our bodies? Where do our tongues linger on each other and

## WOMEN'S WRITING: ANGLOPHONE, TWENTIETH CENTURY

what is the nature of the language we speak? (Lorde, 1992, p. xx)

What she claims are present in the collection are owned by the producers, there is no recognition of the difficulties of reception really here, but the celebration is lively and rich.

Here in these stories we are not myths and stereotypes, art forms or sex objects. We are simply folks at intimate play; our fierce rhythms of desire, the exotic unencumbered by the 'other' close and hot. (Lorde, 1992, p. xx)

Any investigation of a Black erotics by White writers and readers steers close to the imperialistic appropriation of later nineteenth-century travel and exploration narratives as well as those fictions of colonial power which consistently represented Black women in particular as equitable with a nature which needed taming, redefining, but whose lush tropical pleasures could be revelled in in the meantime, prior to that necessary civilizing taming. This notion builds on Freud's use of the term "dark continent" (1953) to signify female sexuality. Audre Lorde enters the debate and differentiates between pornography and the erotic:

Pornography is a direct denial of the power of the erotic, for it represents the suppression of true feeling. (Lorde, 1992)

The difference between eroticism and pornography is the difference between celebratory and masturbatory sex. (Marcuse, 1955)

### Alice Walker (1944–)

Alice Walker's *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992) is overtly political. It focuses directly on the suppression and oppression of women's sexuality and their erotic lives and in so doing raises key issues of cultural context, difference, and the censorship/pornography/erotica debate.

However, Alice Walker treads on dangerous ground as a westernized Afro-American intellectual investigating the cultural practices of Africa (Wisker, 1994), clitoridectomy, surely a practice which ensures the denial of an erotic life for women. Her recognition of her roots as well as the comparability if not actual identity of oppressive practices in the United States, Europe can nonetheless be labeled a kind of post-colonial imperialist appropriation: her superiority of developed culture, especially in the accompanying book (Walker and Parma, 1993) and "Arena"

program "Warrior Marks," casting the critique of this traditional, horrific practice in the light of the culturally "primitive." Celebration of a denied and hidden erotic is powerful, however, if we look at the seizing of individuality, sexual empowerment by women in the stories of African American women writers including Walker.

Women's rights to an erotic element in their lives is politicized in *Possessing the Secret of Joy* (1992) where Tashi's discovery of the politicized nature of genital mutilation and denial of women's power and erotic lives, comes when she recalls that as a child she heard the (male) elders under a tree recounting a myth intended to explain how to deter women's active sexuality. Tashi's metaphorical liberation takes place sadly only at her death when she, having recalled, challenged, and undercut the myth of repression of women's sexuality, the queen ant myth, destroys the national heroine M'Lissa who performs the genital mutilation (clitoridectomy) underlying the myth, the outward show of the repression. Tashi understands her own sexuality and that of other repressed, mutilated women, not merely of the Olinka, her own village, but of westernized societies adopting both genital mutilation in the name of purity and order, and oppression of women in a more general fashion.

### Ntozake Shange (1948–)

Poet, prose, and drama writer Ntozake Shange frequently explores the erotic lives of her characters such as the protagonist in *Liliane* (1995) who grows away from the middle class expectations of her parents, and the increasing stifling of her boyfriend to find a newly liberated erotic self. An erotic self is linked with achievement of freedom and identity as Liliane realizes, "The freedom you wage your most serious battle for is your very own mind." (1995, p. 44) Using an alternation between first and third person narrative, Shange has artist Liliane learning to speak out, against racism and the denigration of her boyfriend. When he criticizes her "labia boxes" art she retaliates and finds her own identity, developing eroticized language, recalling sensual affairs.

### African American Erotica

There are considerably more complex problems around the definitions of a Black feminist

erotics which are not engaged with fully in the introduction to *Erotique Noire* by Ntozake Shange (1992). This might well be because the book is centrally about Black erotica rather than Black female/feminist erotica or because there is no sense of a problematizing of female erotica in relation to male, just the celebration of a black erotics. While she certainly acknowledges the difficulties of Afro-American women, and Latin American women consistently appropriated by a White male gaze throughout time, their bodies used as commodities, exploited, degraded, and devalued, she also recognizes that the myths surrounding Black men and women are jungle myths—a version of the Black as perpetually hot and lustful which itself denigrates Black men and women.

More African American writers, male and female, are devoting books to eroticism in the African American context. Reginald Martin's new book, *Dark Eros: Black Erotic Writings: An Anthology*, (1997) is part of a Black erotica movement developing round Martin, a professor of English at the University of Memphis who argues that while Black erotica resides mainly in pop and hip-hop lyrics concerning sexuality, its expression is growing in literature and art. Gail E. Wyatt, sex therapist and author of *Stolen Women: Reclaiming Our Sexuality, Taking Back Our Lives* (1998), says that talk about erotica is premature: "We need to understand our own sexuality before we can understand erotica." Wyatt suggests the African-American community ask itself one important question: What is erotic to us? The poetry, fiction, and essays contained in this urban anthology follow *Erotique Noir/Black Erotica* (1992), by Martin, Miriam DeCosta-Willis, and Roseann P. Bell, which sold 150,000 copies and is cited in the publishing world as a pioneer in Black erotica. While *Erotique Noir* features the writings of African-American, Latin-American, and Caribbean-American men and women, *Dark Eros* is a collection of erotic writings by African Americans only.

Martin enabled young writers to write from their own experiences and imagination, so cultivating erotica with fresh angles. "Black sexuality has never been properly written about," he says. "Instead, what you had was a white view of sexuality." A stereotype which figured African Americans as sex obsessed. (James L. Dunn Jr., 1997).

Female novelists Zane, Shonda Cheekes, JD Mason, and Eileen M. Johnson have each written erotic novellas for *Blackgentlemen.com* (2002) a Web site for African-American bachelors who hope to find love. The novellas, about women who meet men from the site are *Duplicity* and *Delusions* by Zane; *Lessons Learned* by Shonda Cheekes; *Your Message Has Been Sent*, JD Mason; and *The Adventures of the Bold and Bourgeois* Eileen M. Johnson (*Blackgentlemen.com*, Maryland: Strebor Books).

### Zane

"Porn is just straight sex. My books have a story. If I took the sex out of it, you'd still have the story," says Zane ('Little black books,' *The Guardian*, Saturday September 18, 2004. [www.guardian.co.uk/weekendstory/0,3605,1305854,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/weekendstory/0,3605,1305854,00.html))

Author of erotic novels including *Breaking the Cycle* (2005), *Afterburn* (2005), and *Addicted* (2001), Zane is a bestselling popular fiction author specializing in Black erotic fiction. Zane retains her anonymity.

'Zane is to urban erotica what J.K Rowling is to children's fiction' (Kalyn Johnson, 'Zane, Inc.'). She has much more on her mind than black erotica. Behind the best-selling author's pseudonym is a shrewd businesswoman, astute publishing entrepreneur and – oh, yes – a wife and mother of four.' (*Black Issues Book Review*, September–October 2004, v6, i5, p. 17, (3))

Widely translated into Japanese, Danish, and Greek ('Little Black Books,' *The Guardian*, Saturday September 18, 2004. [www.guardian.co.uk/weekendstory/0,3605,1305854,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/weekendstory/0,3605,1305854,00.html)) and having sold more than two and a half million books, Zane, who began writing out of boredom, producing an erotic legal-based short story thriller, "First Night," which first gained acclaim as it traveled round her friends, has entered a hugely lucrative world in which the central theme—sex—is universal. Her characters, plotlines, and language belong to black America. She says:

Pity the Japanese translator who had to offer a faithful rendition of: "No matter how hoochie I tried to be, she out-hoochied me every single time. She had on a skin-can't-get-no-tighter-unless-you-embed-the-clothes-in-your-ass-tight black sundress and some black leather pumps." ('Little black books,' *The Guardian*, Saturday September 18, 2004. [www.guardian.co.uk/weekendstory/0,3605,1305854,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/weekendstory/0,3605,1305854,00.html))

Zane's books and those of her contemporaries are part of a newly resurgent genre in which middle-class African-American women work and play hard, asserting both financial and sexual independence, hectic jobs, and frantic love lives.

In February came *Cosmopolitan Girls*, by Charlotte Burley and Lyah Beth LeFlore, currently in its second printing, in which the two main characters bond over cocktails and the woes of work and family in New York. *Sexual Healing*, by Jill Nelson, is about two women in San Francisco who set up a sex spa in Nevada offering male prostitutes. And there is *Bling*, by Erica Kennedy, about a young woman from Ohio who nets a recording contract in New York and mixes it with hip-hop's elite. ('Little black books,' *The Guardian*, Saturday September 18, 2004. [www.guardian.co.uk/weekendstory/0,3605,1305854,00.html](http://www.guardian.co.uk/weekendstory/0,3605,1305854,00.html))

Themes developed here can be described as "chicklit," also seen in the work of Helen Fielding, (*Bridget Jones' Diary*, 1996), Terry McMillan's *Waiting To Exhale* (1992), and *How Stella Got Her Groove Back* (1996), Bebe Moore Campbell's work, and that of rapper and broadcaster Sister Souljah with her novel *The Coldest Winter Ever* (1999).

These works range from the highly raunchy to the everyday, blending concerns with race, sex, and class in a world where Black lives and ways are central, in Black neighborhoods, where folk listen to Black music.

In 1999, Zane set up an e-zine with dirty jokes, stories, and sex advice: [www.eroticanoir.com](http://www.eroticanoir.com). She sent people extracts for which they paid, published her first collection of short stories called *The Sex Chronicles: Shattering the Myth* (1991) herself, then used Black distributors to get her books out to street stalls and Black bookstores, where they were noticed.

### Poppy Z Brite (1967–)

Poppy Z Brite, who has variously been an exotic dancer and Goth, has a number of gay-themed erotic horror stories (collected in *Swamp Foetus*, 1993, *Lost Souls*, 1992, *Drawing Blood*, 1993, and *Exquisite Corpse*, 1996) which show a fascination with vampirism, necrophilia, and the lost lower-middle class post-Vietnam war youth generation of rock bands, deserted children, and drug addicts. Their often bizarre, fetishized relationships combine the sexually rapacious and the

deadly. Her eroticism is dark, appearing in the vampire exchange or devouring which usually leads to death. She identifies our fascination with vampires as a metaphor for transgression.

The vampire is everything we love about sex and the night and the dark dream-side of ourselves: adventure on the edge of pain, the thrill to be had from breaking taboos (Brite, 1994) and in her tales homoerotic exchanges (for the most part) frequently presage unpleasant deaths. Her exquisite, visceral language is at its best in "His Mouth will taste of wormwood" which traces the decadent adventures of Howard and Louis in New Orleans. They drink the outlawed absinthe for "the treasures and the pleasures of the grave," moving beyond sex, drugs, fetid skulls, and all manner of erotic involvements, to a fatal, erotic fascination with death:

Louis and I, you see, were dreamers of a dark and restless sort...both of us were dissatisfied with everything. We drank straight whiskey and declared it too weak. We took strange drugs, but the visions they brought us were of emptiness, mindlessness, slow decay. The books we read were dull....For a time we distracted ourselves with carnality...When we had exhausted the possibilities of women we sought those of our own sex, craving the androgynous curve of a boy's cheekbone, the molten flood of ejaculation invading our mouths. Eventually we turned to one another, seeking the thresholds of pain and ecstasy no one else had been able to help us attain. (Brite, "His mouth will taste of wormwood," 1993, p. 55)

Eroticism here is mixed with perversity and death.

### Black Lace Books

Black Lace books are erotic novels for women about women by women (on the whole) and could be perceived as either the prey of myth or as attempts towards creating artificial myths.

Launched in 1993, as an experiment to a blaze of media attention. (About Black Lace, [www.virginbooks.com/go/sp/InfoPageErotic\\_46.html](http://www.virginbooks.com/go/sp/InfoPageErotic_46.html)) the explicit Black Lace books explore female sexuality, sexual fantasy, and erotica in a contemporary setting. Over 300 Black Lace books have been published in several different languages including Japanese and Czech. Recent books include *Bedding the Burglar* (2004) by Gabrielle Marcola and *Wild in the Country* (2003) by Monica Belle.

Black Lace books are unashamedly explicit and have explored areas of sexual fantasy where other women's erotica has feared to tread. With many of the books exploring the experimental side of sex, they've attracted considerable attention (*About Black Lace*, [www.virginbooks.com/go/sp/InfoPageErotic\\_46.html](http://www.virginbooks.com/go/sp/InfoPageErotic_46.html)).

They have now published over 250 titles, sold over three million books, and been translated into languages as diverse as Japanese and Czech. "These days, as many women as men are reading and writing porn fiction and feeling very comfortable with what has traditionally been seen as a male-only preserve." Notes the site, define the books as "Upbeat contemporary stories with loads of outrageous sex" (*About Black Lace*, [www.virginbooks.com/go/sp/InfoPageErotic\\_46.html](http://www.virginbooks.com/go/sp/InfoPageErotic_46.html)).

They are "escapist fiction, not instruction manuals. Every novel starts with the statement: Black Lace novels are sexual fantasies. In real life always practise safe sex" (*About Black Lace*, [www.virginbooks.com/go/sp/InfoPageErotic\\_46.html](http://www.virginbooks.com/go/sp/InfoPageErotic_46.html)).

The logo which is displayed on all "Black Lace" books declares them to be "erotic fiction written by women for women" (although anecdotal evidence suggests that men read them too). Lengthy guidelines to prospective authors are creatively proscriptive, and many of their plots are based on traditional male pornographic writing. So in de Sade the despicable Dubourg refers to masculine power in explaining to the young Justine, "here on earth, my child, nothing but what brings in gain or insures power is accounted" (Sade, 1991, p. 470). Paradoxically, sadomasochism is a common theme in Black Lace novels and the influence of the writings of the Marquis de Sade are firmly embedded in them. Roland Barthes argues that Sadeian writing is not in itself erotic:

But what is eroticism? It is never more than a word, since practices cannot be so coded unless they are known, i.e., spoken; now our society never utters any erotic practice, only desires, preliminaries, contexts, suggestions, ambiguous sublimations, so that, for us eroticism cannot be defined save by a perpetually elusive word. On this basis, Sade is not erotic. . . (Barthes, 1977, p. 26).

The books contain varying degrees of pornography, and belong to the "popular fiction"/"low art" end of the erotic fiction spectrum. In her

paper, "From Ann Radcliffe to Black Lace: Female Gothic for the 1990s," Laura Kranzler explores the influences of de Sade.

. . . I would suggest that many Black Lace books derive their plots [from the Marquis de Sade], but they do so with an emphasis on a woman's experience of sexuality within a libertine narrative. (Kranzler 1997, p. 1).

While typically patriarchal literary devices are appropriated in these texts, they are often used to empower women. In *Silken Chains*, Abbie notes

. . . possession wasn't love. It was domination. And while domination in his [Leon Villiers'] fantasy world was something she found acceptable to the point of delirious excitement, in real life there should be equal respect on both sides. (Nicol, 1997, p. 216).

Erotica for women is now seen as a valid genre as Kerri Sharp, Black Lace editor notes In her introduction to *Pandora's Box*, a Black Lace anthology:

. . . [Women's] fantasies haven't always met the approval of the media . . . Articles began to appear with shock headlines like *Women Writers betray their own sex* and *Is this really the fantasy of British women?* . . . Things have improved over the past couple of years but it seems that we've still got a long way to go before we get to a sex-tolerant society which isn't riddled with double standards. (Sharp, 1996: vii-viii).

Owned by Virgin Publishing (owned by Richard Branson) popular Black Lace plots and topics include necromancy, vampirism, fairytales, mythology, and witchcraft, from heterosexuality, lesbianism, homosexuality, bi-sexuality, fetishism, and sadomasochism. Reviews problematize some of these sexual preferences where otherwise socially liberated women seem to want to be dominated. However the series and collection are popular and provide a glimpse into a new culture of erotic tales written by women for women.

### Susie Bright (1958–)

Born in March, 1958, Susie Bright is an author, editor, performer, and educator who has written and directed several erotic stories including *How to Write a Dirty Story*, 2002, *SexWise*, 1995, and the journal *Herotica*, 10th Anniversary Edition, with an afterword by the editor, 1998.

### JD Mason

JD Mason was born in Paris, Texas and lives in Denver. She is author of *Don't Want No Sugar* (2004) and *One Day I Saw a Black King* (2003).

### Susannah Indigo

Susannah Indigo is a writer and editor of erotic fiction. Her novels include *Oysters Among Us* (2001), and *Going Mad from Roses* (2000). Susannah Indigo is the editor-in-chief of *Clean Sheets Magazine*—an online weekly erotic zine.

### Mary Anne Mohanraj (1971–)

Mary Anne Mohanraj was born in Sri Lanka in 1971. She moved with her family when she was two years old to Connecticut and attended the University of Chicago. Her erotic novels include *Aqua Erotica: 18 Stories for a Steamy Bath* (2000) *Bodies in Motion* (2005), *Wet: More Aqua Erotica* (2002).

### Portia Da Costa

In *Gothic Blue*, Portia Da Costa's plot is Gothic, set in an isolated priory, with freak weather conditions, and a (230-year-old) hero who should long since be dead, a heroine whose life is endangered, magic, sexuality, and humor. But it is clichéd: when Belinda describes 'her sex felt empty and in need of male possession' (Da Costa, 1996, p. 23), and 'his cock was a rod of iron now' (ibid., p. 42).

### Laura Kranzler

Dr. Laura Kranzler is an academic whose *The Name of an Angel* is very different from the usual Black Lace style. While she works within the publishing guidelines, she has written an erotic novel considering complicated gender issues and using many literary allusions. The central character, Clarissa Cornwall, an English Literature lecturer regularly attends the gym and conducts an affair with one of her students. She has a "strong, curvy and voluptuous" body, (Thornton [Kranzler], 1997, p. 3). Her course is "Representations of the Erotic."

Clarissa's affair with one of her young students, Nicholas St Clair, is set off by her reading John Donne's "The Flea" in class.

The relationship is taboo, experimental, and Clarissa has more emotional responses than many Black Lace heroines. She is herself actually writing a book on erotic literature—very self reflexive and intertextual, but subject to some of the same defences that Kranzler herself has had to construct with her university colleagues:

"It is *not* a dirty book,' Clarissa snorted defensively, then added somewhat pretentiously, 'It's a post-modernist, post-structuralist, post-foundationalist analysis of the representation of the erotic, and it's on its way to my editor even as we speak. Don't mock this weighty tome . . . I need this book to be really great or I may not have a job here next term'" (Thornton, 1997, p. 103).

She visits a Gothic, sadomasochistic cellar club called 'Glory Box,' derived from descriptions in the Marquis de Sade where normally restrained colleagues enact sadomasochistic fantasies.

One dowdy Monica Talbot is dressed in:

. . . a black mask across the top half of her face, conical breasts atop a black leather-and-metal corset, fishnet stockings gartered up over her plump white thighs, and fetishistic black patent leather boots with cruelly pointed toes and impossibly high heels (Thornton, 1997, p. 3).

### Candace Bushnell (1959–)

The highly popular TV series based on the novels by Bushnell, *Sex and the City*, both reinforces the sense that women are unable to sustain an intelligent conversation, and depict them searching for and bedding a variety of men in ways more common among groups of male friends. Sexual olympics and a challenging attitude make the series entertaining, liberating in some respects, erotic and sexually lively, but also reinforce some rather more conservative relationships in the end.

### Writing the Body

Writing the body has given feminists an opportunity for erotic writing which fulfils Audre Lorde's desires that the erotic be celebratory of all living. It has also enabled women to express and feel themselves in the world as subjects, rather than objects, because they are speaking from the inside, from the interface between body and world, rather than perceiving ways in which they are represented in writing and art aimed

more obviously at a male readership and gaze. Adrienne Rich says of writing from the body:

I am really asking whether woman cannot begin, at last to *think through the body*, to connect what has been so cruelly disorganized—our great mental capacities, hardly used; our highly developed tactile sense; our genius for close observation; our complicated, pain-enduring, multi-pleasure physicality (Rich in Reynolds, 1990).

She goes on to eroticize women's ability to experience pleasure:

We are neither "inner" nor "outer," constructed; our skin is alive with signals; our lives and our deaths are inseparable from the release or blockage of our thinking bodies.

The repossession by women of our bodies will bring far more essential change to human society than the seizing of the means of production by workers. The female body has been both territory and machine, virgin wilderness to be exploited and assembly-line turning out life. We need to imagine a world in which every woman is the presiding genius of her own body (Rich, 1976).

Others who have written about women's celebration of and awareness of the body include Helene Cixous whose "The Laugh of the Medusa" (*Signs*, 1976) in celebrating women's right to write also uses eroticized language, comparing orgasm to the free expression of writing, flying to breaking free and speaking out. So too Jeanette Winterson writes in a fashion which uses the erotic in her *Written on the Body* (1992).

### Jeanette Winterson (1959–)

Much of Winterson's work deals with sexuality and relationships of gender and power. While *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, (1985) which brought her to fame, deals with adolescent lesbian relations, later books explore the erotic, reverse gender role expectations and stereotypes. *Written On The Body* (1992) enacts writing the body, and is erotic and sensual in places.

Of Louise it is said:

Louise's tastes had no place in the late twentieth century where sex is about revealing not concealing. She enjoyed the titillation of suggestion. Her pleasure was in slow certain arousal, a game between equals who might not always choose to be equals. She was not a D.H. Lawrence type; no-one could take Louise with animal inevitability. It was necessary to engage her whole person. Her mind, her heart, her soul and

her body could only be present as two sets of twins. She would not be divided from herself (*Written on the Body*, pp. 67–8).

Love, loss, and emotional pain are detailed rather than the sadomasochism which briefly appears in the later *Sexing the Cherry* (1989). It is difficult to determine the gender of the narrator who wishes to rescue Louise for the tangle of gender stereotyping and labeling of the past. Critics have suggested that undoing the patriarchal past requires more than representing a bisexual or sexually unlabeled narrator.

Lesbian or not, the story re-enacts a patriarchal control over women. In order to abolish gender distinctions and rewrite the laws of sexual desire, a novelist needs to do more than linguistically castrate her narrator (Barr, 1993).

However, Cath Stowers in "The Erupting Lesbian Body: Reading *Written on the Body* as a Lesbian Text," suggests that Winterson is fantasizing, experimenting with how to write female pleasure through "redefining the erotic in terms of female rather than male experience." (p 90). Later love for Louise is explored through the naming of her body parts in which she is compared to various smells, beings, and objects from the mythical past. Questions are asked about the texture of love, and the erotic is recreated in such lines as:

Can love have texture? It is palpable to me . . . I weigh it in my hand the way I weigh your head in my hands . . . Your hand prints are all over my body. Your flesh is my flesh. You deciphered me and now I am plain to read. The message is a simple one; my love for you (ibid. pp. 105–106).

Winterson's first novel of adolescent lesbian passion and religious challenge *Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit*, winner of the *Whitbread First Novel Award* in 1985, enabled expression of eroticized relations between women both in text and in the televised version. Jeanette's love for Melanie, although short lived, redressed the lies of romantic fictions, helped her establish her own sexuality as an individual despite her repressive household, and set her on the path for future interactions.

### *Vampire Erotic*

Vampirism is, in Rosemary Jackson's words "perhaps the highest symbolic representation of eroticism" (Jackson, 1981). Richard Dyer in



"Children of the Night" (1988) locates the attraction of the vampire as erotic metaphor in the private setting, both our beds and our innermost thoughts. The equation of blood draining with sexual ecstasy, the domination and swooning, the sensuality, the promise of eternal love and life make the vampire motif central to that of romantic love and central to erotic depiction and imaginings.

It is not merely a feminist erotic that vampiric narrative celebrate and embody of course, and the immensely popular *Interview with a Vampire* as text can be interestingly explored as a fine version (?) of the feminist erotic at times and the homoerotic at other times. Richard Dyer's essay (1988) concentrates on the latter. Vampirism is a metaphor both for social controls and fears of sexuality walking the night streets, and an expression of the taboo of eroticism.

Dyer comments:

The ideas in vampire fiction of what sexuality is like—privacy, secrecy, uncontrollability, active/passive—have a complex relationship to the place of sexuality within the social order. Until the 1960's—and, really still today—sexuality was approved within marriage. Vampirism takes place outside of marriage. Marriage is the social institution of the private of sexuality—the vampire violates it, tapping at new windows to get in, providing sexual scenes for the narrator to witness. Marriage contains female sexuality—hence the horror of the female vampire walking the streets at night in search of sex. Men are allowed to walk those streets for that purpose, hence the ambivalence of the male vampire, the fulfilment of the importunate nature of male sexuality, dangerous, horrible, but also taken to be what men, alas, are. Finally marriage restricts sexuality to heterosexuality—vampirism is the alternative, dreaded and desired in equal measure (1988).

Dyer concentrates on also equating vampirism as metaphor for homosexuality/lesbianism but in point of fact it is the rather catholic sexual tastes (except that the victim must be attractive! they can be of either gender) of vampires which provides part of the frisson. The male vampire seeks female victims/partners, and often also males, while female vampires, the paradigmatic oversexed demonic women also traditionally seek both sexes. "Carmella" (Le Fanu, 1992) the Romantic's female vampire is the first in the tradition of lesbian vampires. Perhaps the lesbian/gay reading is but one of the most contemporary

readings of how vampirism is used to depict the thrill and the fear, repulsion and attraction, temptation, fulfilment, and threat of potential danger inherent in eroticized sexual encounters. With the curse of the AIDS crisis founded upon the exchange of bodily fluids, vampirism emerges as ironically both a metaphor for bad blood, the dangers of the sexual exchange, and an alternative to it—vampires are not often seen kissing or making love; they get their kicks by drinking blood and while this can in most cases kill the prey, it soars above the threat of AIDS in ensuring the predatory vampire further eternal life-giving draughts.

### Angela Carter (1940–1992)

Carter frequently used imagery and settings from de Sade to explore the constraints, inequalities, and eventual liberation of female sexuality and uses language which is replete with oxymorons, and are often erotic. Carter's "Lady of the House of Love" (1979) and "The Loves of Lady Purple" (1986) turn romantic love on its head, the one depicting a cursed countess who dies upon a kiss, in a reversal of fairytales, the other a man made vampiric predatory creature, the fruit of a male compulsion to depict woman as sex object and automaton, who comes to life and acts out the scripted life as femme fatale prostitute. Carter's tales and versions of the vampiric are less obviously celebratory, more problematic, but still highly eroticized in their language.

In *The Bloody Chamber* collection (1979), she deconstructs the patriarchal structures and reverses the sexual politics of short stories based on Perrault and other fairytale sources. In the title tale a Bluebeard Marquis recognizes in his young, lower-middle-class bride, the potential for the enjoyment of sadomasochistic relations—assessing her "like a housewife inspecting cuts on the slab"—the erotically charged tale gets to the heart of the contradictions in de Sade. The young woman's sexuality is awakened but on his power terms: "of her apparel she retains only her sonorous jewellery." Both she and the reader are troubled by suggestions of cannibalism, impalement, and then the revelations of previous dead wives soon to be joined by the new wife seeking after knowledge on his deadly trail. But the erotic awakening of women's sexuality goes unpunished in Carter's reversals of patriarchal fairytales. In *The Bloody*

*Chamber* the girl is rescued by her warrior mother on horseback, in "The Company of Wolves" (1979) Little Red Riding Hood laughs in the face of the deadly courtship rituals of the predatory carnivorous wolf, burning both their clothes and leaping into bed with him, satisfying her own erotic nature.

In "Love in a Cold Climate"—a paper given at a Conference on the Language of Passion, University of Pisa, Italy, 1990—Carter writes that:

Repression, not ecstasy, is the goal towards which British lovers strive and which they applaud themselves upon achieving. The language of passion is extruded with extraordinary difficulty through the stiff upper lip. Georges Bataille opines that 'the essence of mankind lies in sexuality.' That may be true on the continent, perhaps. In Britain, no.

In *The Passion of New Eve* (1977) the exchange between Evelyn and Leilah is more one based on sadism leading to Leilah's abortion, and Carter explores both the ways in which society constructs and represents a perfect woman, (a transvestite, Tristessa de St Ange, given the same name as Madame de Saint-Ange in the Marquis de Sade's *Philosophy In The Bedroom*, Sade 1991, pp. 179–367) on the screen and how conventional representations of sex and gender roles might be troubled by gender reversals. Evelyn, captured by a matriarchal cult beneath the sands, is castrated and turned into a woman (a *Playboy* centerfold, p. 75), only to recognize how women suffer at the hands of men like himself. Less erotic writing per se and more an expose of the inequalities which produce conventional pornography and some eroticism, this powerful fantasy novel explores the male gaze, defamiliarizing the reader and inverting classical erotic themes.

In "The Company of Wolves" Carter's rewrite of "Little Red Riding Hood," Rosaleen spots traces of her missing, devoured granny, like a trained sleuth and although she fears the blood "she must spill" (Carter 1979, p. 117, his or hers?), she answers him back, forgets her fear, and throws both their clothes in the fire, having undressed him. His practiced moves and lines are absurd! he is in control: "'All the better to eat you with.' The girl burst out laughing. She knew she was nobody's meat" (p. 118). Sleeping between the paws of the tender wolf, Rosaleen has her sexual partner tamed her own way.

The horror/fairytale has a resolution returning sexual power to women.

Angela Carter's young Rosaleen reveals herself as an equal partner in the sexual games the werewolf initiates. If werewolfishness connotes unleashed sexuality, Rosaleen's answering of his standard questions and her burning all their clothes, trapping them in their werewolf condition, connotes her desire to embrace and take control of her own sexual fate. In a closure in which women's sexuality is allowed energetic free rein despite male attempts at control (rape and devouring, or rescue) the result is a new celebratory howling. The trajectory of the cautionary horror tale is evident until the end of the tale. A restoration of normality and order at the story's end *doesn't* return Rosaleen as the daughter of patriarchy, but rewards her sexual energies. There is harmony without everyday restoration of status quo.

Carter's tale serves as a paradigm for much radical women's horror. It utilizes the tropes and trajectory of a conventional horror tale: threats amid the familiar; the deceptiveness of what seems attractive and safe; the instability of ordered lives and norms (granny's precautions, warnings to Rosaleen) to protect from real danger, but it then disturbs them, with Rosaleen's embracing of werewolfishness, and so of her own sexuality. Recognizing her own sexuality, Rosaleen chooses embrace over devouring. Conventional closure is refused, sexual energies triumph. There are several other eroticized werewolf encounters in Pam Keesey's collection *Women Who Run with the Werewolves* (1996).

Sarah Gamble describes Carter as being influenced by the "graphic extremism of pornographic forms" (Gamble 1997, p. 8), discovered in Japan. Her short story, "Flesh and the Mirror," is set in Tokyo with a heroine suffering from "the Bovary syndrome" (Jones & Williams 1996, p. 223). The city is bizarre, and she moves like a sleepwalker into a relationship with a stranger in an "unambiguous" (*ibid.* p. 224) hotel, shocked to find the experience somewhat pleasurable, despite the potential danger.

None of the lyrical eroticism of this sweet, sad, moon night of summer rain had been within my expectations; I had half expected he would strangle me . . . The mirror annihilated time, place and person; at the consecration of this house, the mirror had been dedicated to the reflection of chance embraces. Therefore

it treated flesh in an exemplary fashion, with charity and indifference (ibid.)

Despite some feminist criticism, it can be argued that Carter's play with pornography demythologizes traditional views of women's sexuality as passive.

### Lesbian Erotic Writing and Debates

Lesbian erotics have, since those days, been brought out into the open, celebrated, more clearly defined as a way of seizing identity and the creative power of love, beauty, relationships with others, for women recognizing their sexuality as woman-identified there is a political freedom which like Rich's lesbian continuum (1980) enables a celebration of sexuality and eroticism which is able to avoid the debasing power relations seen in this equation as concomitant with women's role in heterosexual relations. Heterosexual gender relations, whether they include an erotic element or not, carry with them an enormous social baggage of power politics, ideologically dubious discourse, and enculturated roles:

Perhaps the problem of (heterosexual) sex is substantially a problem of what often goes along with it—the demands of marriage and motherhood (although motherhood and the social demands of sexual relationships will also create problems for lesbians)... That women, as opposed to men, may enjoy sex outside marriage or a committed relationship is still not culturally acceptable has witnessed much discussion, including among feminists, upon the topics of women, casual sex, and prostitution. But sexual politics will still cause difficulties with sex itself for relatively 'liberated' women. The still largely masculine construction of women's sexuality, of women's bodies being prostituted as much by the "male gaze," results in obstacles which women must negotiate if they wish to develop alternative accounts, and practices, of sexuality (Levy, 1992, p. 226).

Debating popularized accessible and acceptable versions of erotica for lesbians is seen by Jenny Kitzinger and Celia Kitzinger (in Griffin, 1993) as fraught with problems. Some male and female producers of pornography and/or erotica assume that lesbians take pleasure from the same representations of women's bodies as do heterosexual consumers. Kitzinger and Kitzinger are explicit about the dangers of re-reading male porn or of celebrating sadomasochism, which they see as a range for practices lesbians

should come to terms with and recognize as likely to be dangerous rather than liberating. In this they agree with Audre Lorde: "Even in play, to affirm that the exertion of power over the powerless is erotic, is empowering, is to set the emotional on stage for the continuation of that relationships, politically, socially, and economically" (Lorde 1982, p. 68) They comment "We believe that critical representations of such activities are fine: uncritical celebrations of them are not" (in Griffin 1993, p. 24). Sadomasochism and aping male pornography are not the only versions of lesbian erotics imagined. Theirs assume representations of lesbian sex or erotica must be "coy and acceptable" featuring "cats and pot plants" or sweet. Kitzinger and Kitzinger argue:

Lesbian sex is not always pretty, or sweet. Nor do we wish to deny the passion of lesbian desire. But we do think that the current emphasis on the active lesbian audience re-reading male porn for their own 'revolutionary' purposes, and the celebration of sadomasochistic lesbian porn is misguided and dangerous' (p. 24). The images are merely by lesbians and for lesbians (Barbara Smith, 1988, p. 180) is not enough.

Moving beyond clichéd symbols and both the traditional male sexual codes and their inversion is necessary if new representations are to be possible. We would like to see the invention of new ways of exploring sexuality, which challenge and deconstruct (instead of simply affirming) desire as it currently exists (p. 24).

The Australian anthology of erotic writing, *Moments of Vision* (Hawthorne and Pausacker, 1989)—an explicit and available anthology of such writing is criticized by Levy (1992, p. 233) for its limiting stance anti-pornography and violence, which the editors set out deliberately to ensure: "We know we were looking for writing what did not use the structural power differences between women and men as the basis for eroticisation" (Hawthorne and Pausacker 1989). An argument put forward by Stevenson and Levy is that what results is "rather bland and not particularly erotic" (Hawthorne and Pausacker 1989, p. 233). This opens up the whole debate about the place of violence and sadomasochism in "acceptable" (politically/sexually/morally acceptable?) feminist relationships, whatever they might be. For lesbians in particular, the issue of sadomasochism is raised in Pamela May's

recent "Easy come, Easy Go" (1990) about the acceptability of lesbian sadomasochism as a version and image of the erotic.

### Contemporary Women's Erotic Horror Writing

Particularly Vampire erotica transgresses the boundaries of both the horror genre and the kinds of finally conformist, comfortably "normal" social behavior which conventional horror initially destabilizes and ultimately restores, offering instead radical, creative, and liberating alternatives.

Not only does it critique and disturb social conventions, it also refuses to conform to the formulae of conventional horror. Its celebration of the erotic, the Other, the dark exciting side of life/death, dream/nightmare is essentially creative and liberating. Like the erotic in its many selves, contemporary women's radical horror writing challenges conventional norms, translates and rescripts the discourses of oppressive ideologies and their popular manifestation in fictional and filmic formulae, refusing the value systems which underlie them. Desire, it seems to argue, does not have to be linked to sin and duty. Much contemporary women's horror denies the destructive polarities of male/female, good/bad, passive/active, and life/death. The formulae of horror, rescripted, revalued, can be used to critique rather than reinstate forms of power. Examples are Angela Carter's "Company of Wolves" (1979), Pat Califia's "Vampire" (1993), Katherine Forrest's "O Captain, My Captain" (1993), and Cheri Scotch's *The Werewolf's Kiss* (1992) each of which rescripts to celebrate the erotic, with a certain forbidden *jouissance*.

The "point at which the lines between sexuality and violence become blurred" (Keesey 1993, p. 16) is pivotal for Pat Califia's groundbreaking lesbian S&M "The Vampire" (1993). Wasp-waisted, blonde Iduna, whose "complexion was so pale it was luminous. In the dark she almost seemed to glow" (p. 170) actively seeks out the leather-clad dominatrix, Kerry, who takes her male victims literally, beating them past endurance, but refusing the blood she needs. Iduna represents an alternative partner, no victim, freely offering her blood and enjoying the exchange, conditioned and "well schooled" (p. 183), which she has actively hunted out, as needy as Kerry,

adapted to this new kind of vampire relationship of mutual exchange. At the height of vampire passion: The venom that had prevented her blood from clotting and closing the wound sang now in her veins, making her see colors behind her closed eyelids, making her warm inside, simultaneously relaxed, alert. No other drug could ever duplicate this ecstasy, this calm. She should know, she had had long enough to search for a substitute (Califia 1993).

Sex, then, is "not out of the question."

Not all women's horror radically rescripts the convention to promote active, equal erotic exchange, however. Some contemporary women's erotic horror concentrates on the kinds of scenarios and relationships which could horrify or disgust women in particular. Highly eroticized, dark, bestial rape fantasies seem to be popular choices for the intermixing of both horror and the erotic personae which, to many feminists, is problematic to say the least.

A case in point is the Australian Darryle Caine who tends to play with highly eroticized, deadly scenarios. In "Predators" (in Kinhill, 1996) the predatory couple, the female narrator and Tiger, her boyfriend, indulge in sexual safaris along Surfer's Paradise, picking up and sharing women whose own isolation and slightly underachieved attractiveness made them succumb easily to flattery and friendship.

The language of seduction and destruction—"devour" (p. 16), "target" (p. 18)—and the erotic foreplay hinting at danger, pales into insignificance once their most recent prey, Elvi (anagram for evil) plays them at their own game, seducing Tiger. The seduction is based on the kind of danger they are used to inventing and controlling for themselves. Caine's erotic writing is more like conventional (male produced) pornography. In this story as in several others in *Screams* (1996) and *Scream Again* (1997), there are any number of descriptions of such as the "angry red rod he packed, its purple tip bursting with the intensity of his arousal" (*Screams* 1996, p. 19) and "roughly his knees parted her thighs and he sank that angry, purple tip into her sopping, swollen sex lips. Up, deep and smooth he plunged, to the hilt with a deep-felt groan" (1996, p. 19). Elvi's inhuman gaze and growing fangs terrify the narrator who cannot extricate her impaling lover. This is a hermaphroditic monster, for when it has finished with the dying Tiger, it turns on the narrator:

I could not guess what sort of gruesome weapon she packed between her legs. For the tatters that remained of his sex looked like he had been having it off with a giant pencil sharpener... And then the demon-creature turned on me. It had transformed further, and now a ferocious looking device was protruding from its groin, like some giant, deformed penis weapon. And it was meant for me! (1996, p. 21)

Imagery of violence, invasion, and destruction characterize sex acts in Caine's work. Her erotic horror fantasies replicate many of the stereotypical abject scenes involving women — Medusa, the Iron Maiden, the *vagina dentata*— and combine these with horrors specifically designed for women—invading, throbbing, barbed monster penises, inhuman power, bestiality, the helplessness of the female victim whose life, partner, unborn children, everything are threatened or destroyed.

Some contemporary women writers in the vampire genre deliberately reverse and trouble the forms and figures of the genre, and refuse the narrative trajectory which would condemn female and lesbian vampires in particular to a permanent death as a punishment for their transgression.

The use of the erotic in women's horror is not only transgressive, however, it is also transgressive in order to suggest new ways of behaving and relating in both heterosexual and homosexual love/sex/erotic unions. A mutual recognition of the other as a subject, however similar or different, is the basis of positive human relations. Erotic horror works in several ways. Some of it exploits the sadomasochistic tendencies which fuel many relationships, and perhaps replicates the Otherising and the power imbalances on which such relationships are predicated and which they uphold and reinforce. Other erotic horror explores the creative and celebratory potential of relationships of mutuality, where difference is a reason for celebration not destruction.

In *Bonds of Love: Psychoanalysis, Feminism and the Problem of Domination* (1988), Jessica Benjamin, a psychoanalyst, suggests that healthy relationships and development demand “mutual recognition, the necessity of recognizing as well as being recognised by the other” (1988, p. 23), “the reciprocity of self and other, the balance of assertion and recognition (p. 25).

In this definition, erotic expression is seen as an element of health. Vampire erotic horror

combines the *frissons* of horror with the charged, eternal promise of fulfilled and constantly refilling desire. What could be more transgressive in a censorious society, and what more celebratory and liberating?! There are similar needs for mutual self recognition in romance fictions, and in women's erotic horror fictions.

Melding the genres of science fiction, romance, and horror, and blending the Gothic motif of the vampire with the science fiction motif of the alien Other, Katherine Forrest's short story “O Captain, my Captain” (1993) utilizes the tropes of all three genres to create an erotic horror in which the space captain vampire Drake (Dracula, but the adventurer Sir Francis also), captain of the ship Scorpio IV, does not prey upon her traveling companion but instead awakens her to the pleasure of her body in a highly erotic union graphically, but never tackily described. The lesbian relationship is initiated by Drake with the military lieutenant, Harper (after Jonathan Harker). It is then entered into mutually with full awareness of what each “is,” what they can offer, and the limitations of this relationship. Vampires in contemporary women's erotic horror do not need to drain their victims unto death; they embrace in a mutually aware exchange which refuses to turn the temporary or long-term mate into a member of the undead. Forrest and others can use the transgressive power and the liberating eroticism of the vampire relationship to suggest and describe new heights of a passion which is mutually sought and exchanged.

### Jewelle Gomez (1948–)

As Paulina Palmer has explored at length in her *Lesbian Gothic* (1999), Gomez's chief radical act in writing *The Gilda Stories*, in terms of the treatment of the eroticism of the relationships of the vampire, is to reappropriate and positively revalue that psychoanalytically conventional abjection of the mother and the mother's body which we find in so much male-produced horror. In so doing, she dramatizes a lesbian erotic which valorizes a sensual, sexual, maternal, erotic exchange between (mostly, here) female vampires. Blood exchange is a moment of high sensuality and the act of suckling equates the maternal with eroticized relationships. Blood is a life-giving, not an abject defiling, fluid.

A vampirish encounter which takes place between Bird and Gilda illustrates these contrary associations. Here Gomez brings together the displaced image of the child suckling the mother's breasts, the act of birthing, and the mother's abject bleeding body. She describes how Bird, making an insertion in the skin beneath her own breast:

pressed Gilda's mouth to the red slash, letting the blood wash across Gilda's face. Soon Gilda drank eagerly, filling herself, and as she did her hand massaged Bird's breast, first touching the nipple gently with curiosity, then roughly. She wanted to know this body that gave her life. Her heart swelled with their blood, a tide between two shores. To an outsider the sight might have been one of horror: their faces red and shining, their eyes unfocused and black, the sound of their bodies slick with wetness, tight with life. Yet it was a birth. The mother finally able to bring her child into the world, to look at her. It was not death that claimed Gilda. It was Bird. (Gomez, 1992, p. 40)

In *The Gilda Stories* the real horror is the racial and sexual violence from which Gilda, originally called "the Girl" initially fled when escaping the plantation, before being rescued by Bird and the original Gilda, who ran a rather friendly brothel. Gilda witnesses lynchings.

## Conclusion

Eroticism *is* mystique; that is, the aura of emotion and imagination around sex. It cannot be 'fixed' by codes of social or moral convenience, whether from the political left or right . . . There is a daemonic instability in sexual relations that we may have to accept. (Paglia, 1992, p. 13)

Despite disputes and differing interpretations, women's erotic writing is growing. Some use the erotic to entertain, others to explore the potential for intellectual and individual liberation and demythologizing of constraining myths.

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## WOMEN'S WRITING: FRENCH, TWENTIETH CENTURY

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Women writers who have included eroticism as a primary theme in their work have had to submit to or find ways around the dictates of censorship more than their male counterparts.

So one cannot deal with the question of erotic writing by women without first studying the rules that govern publishing and the evolution of women's rights throughout the twentieth century in France: the literary prize "Vie Heureuse" (1904), which became the "Prix Fémina" in 1922, was founded by Anna de Noailles and other women who were concerned about providing a space for women, a space refused them in the very officious and very masculine world of letters. It was only in the 1960s that women were granted the right to publish without the authorization of a male sponsor or, for that matter, the right to have a sexual life with a non-procreative purpose (the Neuwirth law of 1967 on oral contraception).

This said, since the end of the 19th Century and the beginning of Rachilde's literary career, "feminine" writing has been popular, even if some women were obliged to publish anonymously. In fact, male authors sometimes used female pseudonyms to publish erotic stories, proving that the sexual prohibitions governing women were also a powerful force of titillation and transgression: the naughty Adrienne Saint-Agen was probably a man, Raymond Queneau published under the name Sally Mara, and perhaps Eric Losfeld under the name of Loulou Morin. And of course many women, constrained by social pressures, published erotic stories either in collaboration with a man who was in some sense their protector (the famous couple of

Willy/Colette or the less well-known duo of Jean de Létraiz/ Suzette Desty), or under a pseudonym. Marguerite Eymery gave birth to Rachilde; Renée Dunant was also Louise Dormienne, who secretly published *Les Caprices du sexe, ou les audaces érotiques de Mademoiselle Louise de B.* (1929) and perhaps also Spaddy, who, in her 1938 novel *Colette, ou les amusements de bon ton* joyously and obscenely plagiarized the famous kiss that the narrator of *A la recherche du temps perdu* (Proust) gave to Albertine; Pauline Tarn takes the name Renée Vivien, marvelously described by Colette in *Le Pur et l'impur*; Anne Desclos, better known under the respectable name of Dominique Aury, was the famous Pauline Réage, a secret that she would keep until the end of her life. Women authors of erotic texts are doubly handicapped: they are women, a difficult position to begin with in the male-dominated publishing industry, and they are immoral in a century that has long made sexuality something forbidden. And this also accounts for the impact of translations of such works as those by Radcliffe Hall (1938), and later those of Dorothy Bussy (1950), Virginia Woolf (1951), Claire Morgan (alias Patricia Highsmith, 1952), Anais Nin (1978), or Eve Ensler (1999).

### **From the Belle Epoque to the 1940s: Eroticism and Psycho-Social Deviance**

It is no accident then that the French pioneers of feminine erotic literature are already, by their life style and their attitudes, considered to be fugitives from the established social order, and often they come from a different world: theater,

music hall, literary circles, Natalie Barney's salon, and even some courtesans. Especially during the time of Victor Marguerite's *La Garçonne* (1922), these women are living what is generally considered to be a reprehensible lifestyle: multiple sexual partners, and often homosexual or bisexual. This free life style translates into a freedom and frankness in their writing as well, and will lead Colette to separate from Willy and to produce the rest of the Claudine series by herself. There are also a few of these women who may have regrets later on in life, like the fashionable Liane de Pougy or the lesbian Pauline Tarn, both of whom will finish their lives in the arms... of religion.

One can understand that the themes evoked by these singular writers might have shocked readers. *M. Vénus* (1884) by Rachilde, considered by Maurice Barrès to be the product of a feminine "nervous exhaustion," tells the story of a young man of modest means under the thumb of a woman who supports him and gradually leads him to madness and death. *Cendres et Poussières* (1902) and the poems of the American Renée Vivien, *Idylle saphique* (1901) and *Les Sensations de Mlle de la Bringue* (1904) by Liane de Pougy are so many hymns to Sappho. *Le Poème de l'amour* by Anna de Noailles describes feminine versions of sexual pleasure. Transgression becomes the rule and it goes all the way to a very explicit threesome in one of Spadsky's works, and even to zoophilism from the pen of the sixty year old Rachilde in *Refaire l'amour* (1928) who doesn't hesitate to mention, without describing it of course, a scene between a dog and a woman... The 1920s witness successes that demonstrate the hypocritical expectations of French society in those days; Colette has become an established author, *Un Mois chez les filles* by Maryse Choisy reveals the world of prostitution to its numerous readers in the most explicit terms. Raymonde Machard with *Tu enfanteras?* (1919) and *L'Œuvre de chair* (1925) as well as Renée Dunan with *Une Heure de désir* (1929) describe the convulsions of sexual pleasure.

But on the whole the style remains very much that of the period and even classical despite some very lively dialogue. The exception is Colette whose sensual prose deals with socially incorrect erotic situations: her Claudine books describe the joys of feminine homosexuality and of sexuality in general, her *L'Ingénue libertine* (1909) describes the heroine's desperate

quest for sexual pleasure (who, in a rather conformist twist, will find it in the arms of her husband), her *Le Blé en herbe* (1923) recounts adolescent yearnings, and the *Chéri* series (1920 to 1936) describes the agony of a mature woman who is overly sensitive to the attractions of a young Ephebe. Nothing particular to report under Vichy France and its moral order except perhaps for Colette's ongoing work and a few underground works such as the anticlerical *Histoire d'une petite fille* (1943) by Laure, Georges Bataille's partner.

### Renewal in the Fifties: Censorship versus Public Acceptance of Erotic Writing

There is a definite break at the beginning of the 1950s—censorship becomes more strict for one thing (post-war concern for birth rate politics perhaps), and a book may be struck by three different prohibitions: sales prohibited to minors under age 18, prohibition on posters and display, and prohibition of advertising. The only public notice of a censored book would be in the *Journal Officiel*, publishing graveyard. The only remaining recourse then becomes anonymous or clandestine publication, and especially the energy of editors like Jean-Jacques Pauvert, Eric Losfeld, Régine Deforges, to mention only a few.

In 1949, Simone de Beauvoir published *Le Deuxième Sexe* which would encourage an ever growing awareness of a woman's right to write about gender and sexuality. Her work didn't have the impact yet that it would have at the end of the 1960s and two symptoms show that nothing had really been won yet in the struggle to publish erotic works by women. Even with the support of Beauvoir, Violette Leduc's novel *Ravages* (1955) has its most explicit and poetic lesbian scenes cut by Gallimard, who has no qualms about publishing *in extenso* male writers who are much more explicit. "Thérèse et Isabelle," an excised chapter, was later published separately as a special edition by Leduc's friend Jacques Guérin. Leduc referred to this censorship of her novel as an "assassination" and she would die in 1972 without ever seeing her novel officially published in an uncensored version. Similarly, the publisher of *Angélique, marquise des Anges* (1956), a text that would become, along with the volumes that followed it, an international best seller, at first refused to publish

the novel under the name of Anne Golon (pseudonym for Simone Changeux), preferring to use her husband's name instead. The husband refused since he had only helped his wife with some of the historical research, and the book was finally published with the names Anne and Serge Golon. Even if Angélique remains emotionally and erotically dependant on the man whom she loves, she nevertheless represents a rebellious heroine for the time. The various attempts to guess the author of *Histoire d'O* are clearly symptomatic of a total resistance to the possibility of a feminine eroticism that would participate in male fantasies: Camus could not accept the idea that a novel about the love of submission could possibly be written by a woman, and the anagram Egérie Paulan encouraged people to think that Jean Paulhan was the author. It would be another forty years before anyone knew that the novel was in fact addressed to him as a testimony to unconditional love by a woman, Dominique Aury, alias Pauline Réage. The gradual success of this novel, classically drawn with a spare, almost precious style, recounting the adventures of a slave–heroine ended up becoming a classic—it received the Prix des Deux Magots in 1955, but not without a struggle, to which we will return.

Feminine erotic writing developed in several different directions during the 1950s: the existentialist style, in crude documentary form, in *Vie d'une prostituée* (1946, published in *Les temps modernes*) by an unknown author named Marie-Thérèse; the sober style, quite different from Violette Leduc, but so important for the impact that they had on the public, of Françoise Mallet-Joris (*Le rempart des béguines*, 1951) or Christiane Rochefort (*Le repos du guerrier*, 1958); deviant themes such as incest with a father, experienced as shame in Suzanne Allen (*La mauvaise conscience*, 1955); the violent, sensual, and poetic style in the “histoires nocives” by the Egyptian surrealist, Joyce Mansour (*Cris*, 1954; *Jules César*, 1956) If one considers that with the *Angélique* series a popular and long lasting form of feminine eroticism has finally appeared, the real revolution came in 1959 with the clandestine publication of *Emmanuelle* by an anonymous author (Emmanuelle Arsan, wife of a French diplomat). Thwarting the censors, her editor, Eric Losfeld, managed to publish the text which became an immediate hit.

Emmanuelle's quest (not a completely autonomous one since she is guided by a man, Mario) is not simply one of sexual initiation, but a quest for happiness: the novel describes a world before sin, a world indifferent to Good and Evil, free and utopian. Sexual pleasure is presented as natural, children are able to witness it without taboo, and we are given, perhaps for the first time and from the very beginning of the novel, a precise organic description of feminine sexual response. The freshness of the novel and its feeling of eternal renewal seems to prefigure the great upheavals in French society after May, 1968, and it is no accident that the novel was reissued in a new and this time official version in 1967. Eroticism then begins to move from the individual towards the political and it begins to assume philosophical positions as well: on the Surrealist side, Valentin Penrose, with her *Erzsébet Bathory, la comtesse sanglante* (1962) comes out with a novel of incredible violence, and it shows that a woman can be just as perverse a torturer as a man; the torture and mutilation scenes couple Eros to Thanatos, in the tradition of Bataille, and suggest a retooled gothic redolent of twentieth-century concentration camps.

### The 1970s: Politics and Eroticism

The May 1968 movement; the demands for a sexuality liberated from its age-old restrictions; the public affirmation of feminism (for instance with the founding of the publishing company, Editions des Femmes, by Antoinette Fouque in 1973); and theoretical writings on the social implications of sex by authors as different from one another as Monique Wittig and Luce Irigaray, will all contribute to a real evolution in erotic expression. The reissue of *Emmanuelle* in 1967 was an enormous success and it coincided with an explosion in female production as demonstrated by the public reissue of Laure's writings in 1971. Jérôme Martineau created his own publishing house and, after a stint as editor of the collection “L'Or du temps,” Régine Deforges created her own publishing house called “Régine Deforges.” It is important to note that Deforges would be one of the first “pornographers” who refused to defend erotic literature by arguing for its literary merit, a standard defense in French jurisprudence since

the trial of Flaubert's *Madame Bovary* in 1857. In 1969, Pauline Réage published *Une fille amoureuse*, a book that gives special emphasis to the link between eroticism and the spoken word. Monique Wittig, one of the co-founders of Women's Liberation Movement in France, after *Opoponax* (Prix Médecis, 1964), published *Les guérillères* (1969) in an innovative and polyphonic prose, incorporating collage techniques, and then brings *Le corps lesbien* (1973) into the broad daylight of legitimacy, demonstrating that eroticism can be integrated into the new stylistic experiments of the day. This link between literary freedom and sexual liberation is also evident, on a different plane, in the sexual onirism of Janine Aeply or Annie Lebrun, in the alternating coarseness and poetry of Françoise Lefèvre, and especially in the subtle undercurrents of eroticism in Marguerite Duras's work, to which we will return below. Even the themes became more radical, usually provoking the wrath of the censors, and they were reinforced by the use of the narrative conceit of real life stories (fictional or not) like the text by the prostitute Grisélidis Réal, *Le noir est une couleur* (1974). Xavière, with the publication of *La punition* in 1971, wrote a hyper-realistic version of *Histoire d'O*, focusing on the sadistic motivations and the concrete effects of masculine torture, and she even offers, in *F.B.* (1970), an explicit canine zoophilic scene in which the sexual act finishes with nausea, in stark contrast to the more indirect style of Rachilde. Belen (Nelly Kaplan) who had already published many texts in the 1950s, took the guilt out of incest with *Mémoires d'une liseuse de draps* (1974), contrary to the previously mentioned stance of Suzanne Allen. Gabrielle Wittkop, with *Le nécrophile* (1972), describes quite obviously a man's sexual relations with dead bodies, among them that of a young girl. Of course many texts cling to a more classical style of writing like those of the baroness Maud de Belleruche, Céline Rolin, Léone Guerre, or Régine Deforges. But political consciousness remains the hallmark of the literature and of the public stances of the period: *Le Cahier volé* by Deforges in 1978 serves as a reminder of the narrowminded views of the 1950s, and Just Jaeckin's 1975 film adaptation of *Histoire d'O* (he had just brought *Emmanuelle* to the screen in 1974) incurred the wrath of numerous feminists at the time who found both the novel and the film to be reactionary.

### **From the 1980s to Today: A Return to Moral Order versus Feminine Kamasutras**

The 1980s would witness the institutionalization of a certain type of feminism and along with it a backlash (Susan Faludi). But feminine eroticism had earned a clear legitimacy and was now more or less available to the general public through the sale of many different works in airports, train stations, and supermarkets or through the creation of a series like the Harlequin "Désirs," using feminine pseudonyms. One might accept as testimony to this broad acceptance the clear success of the volumes that would follow *La bicyclette bleue* (Régine Deforges, 1981), whose heroine, Léa, is a contemporary French version of Margaret Mitchell's marvelous Scarlett. And further testimony to this legitimacy would be the enthusiasm that greeted Marguerite Duras's narratologically complex novel *L'Amant* (Prix Goncourt, 1984), in which sensual scenes between a man and an adolescent girl are woven into the background of a conflictual and disturbing mother/daughter relationship. The victory in the publishing world for these women who have spoken out is accompanied by a desire, dating from the 1970s, to write about the body and about sexuality without recourse to coded allusions or to secret publication (bookstores specializing in erotic literature are firmly established businesses). At least that is what these commercially appealing titles would seem to suggest: *Jouir* (Catherine Cusset, 1997), *Viande* (Claire Legendre, 1999), *Putain* (Nelly Arcan, 2001), *Des désirs et des hommes* (Françoise Simpère, 2004), *Le divan* (Sophie Cadalen, 1999), *Sept petites histoires de cul* (Anne Cécile, 2001), the collective series such as *Fantasmes/Caprices/Désirs/Passions/Troubles de femmes*, or the somewhat more restrained *Vendredi soir* (Emmanuèle Bernheim, 1997) or *Corps de jeune fille* (Elisabeth Barillé, 1986)... More than ever, women novelists were looking for new avenues of expression or they were taking up pornographic themes that had previously seemed reserved only for men, at least in their public versions. And the men in fact are more often than not transformed into mere puppets, represented only by initials, or even, in the case of Virginie Despentes, Clothilde Escalle, or Chloé Delaume, then objects of violence that is presented as legitimate revenge. On the thematic level adultery, sodomy, fellatio, imaginative

masturbation, bi- or homosexuality, multiple partners, or even orgies have become common fare in women's literature, to an extent that one might speak of veritable literary kamasutras (Détrez, Simon, 2006). Some have even tried to stretch the rules of the genre playing with codes and expectations. Catherine Millet or Alice Massat (*Le ministère de l'intérieur*, 1999) write anatomical descriptions of scenes but using a very cerebral style, *Pas un jour* (Prix Médecis, 2002) by Anne Garetta can legitimately be read through the prism of queer theory, Alina Reyes in *Derrière la porte* (1994), alludes to the notorious pornographic film *Behind the Green Door*, but playing with the narrative structures in such a way as to remind us of both Sade and of *A Thousand and One Nights*. The point of all this, mixed with a bit of humor and irony, would seem to be the creation of a "Nouvelle Pornographie" (Marie Nimier, 2003) that is conjugated in the feminine. This literature, often written in the first person, may be integrated into the domain of autofiction, but also that of autobiography. Grisélidis Réal, active in the struggle for prostitutes rights, has published both documents (*Carnet de bal d'une courtisane*, 2005) and real life stories (*Le noir est une couleur*, 1974, reissued in 2005). Use of the first person allows specific erotic identification for both male and female readers, but and without even mentioning its clear commercial impact, it also raises issues concerning literary history. It is clear that women, who have been linked since time immemorial to the sphere of the intimate and the uterine, are at risk of conforming to a vision of the feminine that will of necessity be defined by the body and sexuality. This is especially true of certain women writers who may not be as subversive as they would have us believe. Catherine Millet may have posed nude for the cover *La vie sexuelle de Catherine M.* (2001), but the very commercial writer, Bénédicte Martin, ups the ante with her own attention grabbing pin-up shot on the cover of *Warm Up*. Alice Ferney, for her part, still exploits femininity, fragility, and emotional instability in *La conversation amoureuse* (2000). The return to a moral order and to age-old clichés hidden behind the scandalous prose and the obvious provocation end up being that much more effective because they remain implicit. There are many women authors of erotic texts who still promote the Pygmalion myth of the man who opens the woman up to a

previously unknown world of sexual pleasure, even through rape and this from writers who consider themselves to be feminists. The "obligatory" link between love and sexuality is a constant, and one even finds advice in women's magazines recommending "polyfidelity" (multiple faithfulness) as a means to keep one's couple together, supreme value of a sexualized contemporary world that is also concerned with social stability. Françoise Rey is thus presented by one of her publishers as a very proper wife, mother, and school teacher, and books appear with explicit titles such as *Le bonheur de faire l'amour dans sa cuisine et vice-versa* (Irène Frain, 2004) or, with an allusion to Mara, *Carnets d'une soumise de province* (Caroline Lamarche, 2004). Finally, censorship laws, updated in 1994, are still there and despite the development of Internet creations: an 'X' rating, meaning it is not allowed to be shown in regular theaters, was given to the film *Baise-moi* by Virginie Despentes and Coralie Trinh Thi in 2000 (that 'X' rating was revised the following year under pressure from the media which wasn't fooled by the political fear-mongering that wanted to silence hard core, anarchical feminism); a court case by parents against a high school teacher who had his 9th-grade students study Agatha Kristof's *Le Grand Cahier* (Prix Inter, 1992); feminine eroticism evicted from all high school textbooks; the creation of special sections dedicated to gay and lesbian literature or erotic women writers in bookstores like FNAC, sections that one might consider less as a form of recognition than as a new means of ghettoizing eroticism. It is nevertheless true that erotic literature written by women, from the time of its early and illustrious representatives at the beginning of the century, has finally found a legitimate place in the contemporary world of publishing.

ANNE SIMON

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## WOMEN'S WRITING: LATIN AMERICAN, TWENTIETH CENTURY

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### An Uncomfortable Script

Hispanic-American Women: the mere formulation of this adjective implies having to present a script that substantiates the main difficulty arising from the elaboration of this presumably evaluative compilation of women writers from Latin America and Spain. Joined by a common language, these two worlds are made up of very distinct cultures and societies. Each has an obvious impact on what their women write, even as they continue to occupy the role of anonymous protagonists of History on both sides of the Atlantic. Then, let us begin by commenting briefly on two problematic themes that are derived from these different origins: the construction of a literary tradition and within it the weight of multiculturalism.

Dating back to the tenth century, erotic literature in Spain is linked to a genre that is as ancient as the *jarchas* of Arabic descent, later rescued and recognized as a formative stream

in Spanish culture. What are believed to be the first manifestations of erotica in Latin America, however, were either obliterated by the violence of the conquest or simply ignored during the process of colonization, whereby a foreign language was imposed. The preservation of an important text written in Náhuatl, a poem called "Canto de las mujeres de Chalco"/ "Song of the Women of Chalco" is indeed a rare feat.

Another thorny issue: Even though the Spanish language, within the realm of what is published/publishable, acts as a binding force, cultural heterogeneity in Latin America has been considered and studied as having a thematically timely imprint on women's literature. In Spain, on the other hand, that which has not been acknowledged sufficiently within a recognized framework has yet to be debated in literary terms: the peninsula's cultural diversity is even reflected in its different literary languages. This fact alone, for example, prevents us from including Spanish

authors as important as Mercé Redoreda, (1908–1983) who wrote in Catalan.

A third aspect is worth mentioning, though it certainly merits more attention: the representation of social struggles in Spanish and Latin-American women's literary production. If we follow Fourier's line of thought in that the level of development of a society can be measured by the degree of emancipation that women are able to achieve, then Spain and Latin America would not be as distant from each other as their respective historical roles of metrópolis (Spain) and colony (Latin America) would seem to dictate. Common characteristics of both include being made up of underdeveloped societies whereby the State is a tool used by the Catholic church in setting standards for certain behavioral patterns that are reinforced through education and legislative measures. These two characteristics, economically and morally speaking, have acted as obstacles for the development of women's rights. In the realm of politics, traces of masculine superiority have been found in the remotest forms of indigenous government, call it what you will, the Spanish code or American *caciquismo*.

While it's true that in Spain women won their right to vote in 1931, it wasn't until after the end of the Franco regime that society began to include women in the process of modernization that continues to sweep the country today. The suffrage movement in Cuba is successful during comparatively early years, 1934, while in other countries of the continent, such as Mexico and Colombia, to cite two examples, this occurs twenty years later. For the most part, Latin-American societies subjected to armed struggles and dictatorships have not enjoyed the kind of profound democratizing transformation that would insert women in truly egalitarian spaces.

Paradoxically, the struggle undertaken by women writers in Latin America, rooted in an awakening of Creole consciousness, has been the most authentic and stable base from which the Continent enjoys the splendor of feminine literature. With the passing of time, this battle has taken on different nuances. In some places it remains closely tied to the political sphere. Central American literature comes to mind, the testimony of Rigoberta Menchu (1959–), or Claribel Alegria's (1924–) poetry of social protest. But it also manifests itself in the construction of a new language to express the wars of

liberation from a feminine perspective. This characteristic stands out in the lyrical-realist narration of the *Sandinista* episode related in Nicaraguan writer Gioconda Belli's (1948–) novel *El país bajo mi piel* [*The Country Under My Skin*] and in Luisa Valenzuela's (1938–) absurd and imaginative works such as *Cambio de armas* [*Change of Arms*] and *Cola de lagartija* [*Tail of a Lizard*] which criticize misogamy and the alliances among dictatorships. Creating new deterritorializing metaphors that reflect the phenomenon of Latin-American cultures in diaspora has also been an aesthetic preoccupation for women writers, be it a product of exile, as in the case *Memoria del silencio*, by Miami-based Cuban writer Uva de Aragon (1944–), or in dealing with the theme of emigration in texts such as *Santitos* by Mexican writer Amparo Rendón, Esmeralda Santiago's (1940–) *Cuando era Puertorriqueña*, or *Yo* by Julia Alvarez (1950–).

At the end of the century, a Spanish woman was referred to as “el ángel del hogar”/ “the angel of the home.” Before the twentieth century, Spanish feminism was able to advance only within the scope of education thanks to initiatives set forth by Krausism and the Institute of Free Education. The vindications demanded by women were tied to the struggles for obtaining suffrage rights, income equality, access to education, rights within the institution of marriage, maternity protection, etc. All of these issues are reflected in literature. The style of naturalism in vogue was used by Emilia Pardo Bazan (1851–1921) to denounce the sordid lives of women in the Spanish countryside in novels such as *Los pazos de Ulloa* (1886) and *La Madre Naturaleza* (1887). Due to her work experience and studies on the penal system, Concepción Arenal (1820–1893) was able to publish courageous works, truly ahead of her time, about the correctional institutions for women. In Spain, like Celia Amorós has theorized, feminism has always been closely tied to the conquests of the Enlightenment, and faithful to the demands of Modernity. Nevertheless, in the last decade novels such *Beatriz y los cuerpos celestes* [*Beatriz and the Celestial Bodies*] and *Amor, curiosidad, prozac y dudas* [*Love, Curiosity, Prozac and Doubts*] by Lucía Etxebarria (1966) are a reminder that narrative fiction moves complaisantly toward a postmodern cosmology, without renouncing to social critic.

### Essential Genealogies

Long before the twentieth century, women in Spain and Latin America, many of them anonymous, took it upon themselves to forge an alternative space within masculine literary canons, an enduring and creative space, though peripheral and almost invisible. As feminist critic Elaine Showalter (*A Literature of Their Own*) has asserted: it's almost always the case that a woman writer shines in the wake of a wave-like movement; while it's true that the crest, with its white foam, is the only thing we can perceive on the surface, underneath there are other profound forces at work, giving rise to a subterranean seismic rumble that makes her visible. Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1648–1695), Rosalía de Castro (1837–1885), Clorinda Matto de Turner (1852–1909), Concepción Arenal (1820–1893), Gertrudis Gómez de Avellaneda (1814–1873) and Emilia Pardo Bazán have stayed behind, to mention several literary icons that remain alive despite the lives of their contemporaries who were blinded by incomprehension. Although their works were published posthumously, it is important to remember that such pioneering efforts began to awaken in readers and critics alike the sensibility required to understand the peculiarities of feminine writing today, its texture, tones, and themes.

However, perhaps for the common reader the Chilean writer Isabel Allende (1942) with her *House of the Spirits* (1982) was the one who led the avalanche of editorial and public interest for feminine writing in Latin America that has taken place in the last decades of the twentieth century. This is not entirely untrue given that the novel was translated into various languages, among them Danish, was re-edited innumerable times, and even portrayed on the giant Hollywood screen in the spectacular though inaccurate cinematic rendition of the same title. Works on Allende popped up in every literary magazine; she was interviewed, analyzed during congresses, and invited to give conferences around the world. From academia to the mass media, everyone paid tribute to who was nonetheless referred to as “García Márquez’s imitator.” Although this isn’t the time to discuss this assertion, it’s worth remembering that Gabriel García Márquez recognizes having been deeply influenced by Elena Garro’s (1920–1998) style with her *Recuerdos del porvenir*, and is grateful to

Virginia Woolf for having inspired him to experiment with the flow of narrators. Paying debts, recognizing loans, in the same way, Jorge Borges and Bioy Casares would have to be studied in relation to the influence they received from the group of narrators that coalesced around *Sur*, the leading magazine founded by an Argentine woman named Victoria Ocampo (1891–1979) that became the platform for post avant garde reactions. Works by María Luisa Bombal (1910–1980) and Silvina Ocampo (1903–1993), published before those by such acclaimed masculine names reached the pinnacle of fame, introduced to Hispanic-American literature atmospheres and word games like the ones later recognized as the sole patrimony of the binomial: Borges-Bioy.

In post-Civil War Spain, (1936–1939) a polyphony of women’s voices erupt in literature with the strength derived from its ties with Social Realism, a current of wide-ranging traditions in Spanish prose once under the dominion of such great male authors as Pío Baroja, Ramon del Valle Inclán, Miguel de Unamuno, and Blasco Ibañez, among others. Among the traits of these works there is a desire to change a society that deeply wounded the lives of women caused by the war’s heartrending impact on the family. They are stories about the inability to adapt, death, and frustrating loneliness. However, soon these women writers begin to be recognized by important awards. Carmen Laforet (1921–2004) is the first woman to win the Nadal prize for her novel *Nada*, in 1944. Another new voice is that of Ana María Matute (1926–); her writing also reflects the desolate aftermath of the war from a pessimistic and existential perspective. In 1957, Carmen Martín Gaité (1925–2000) is awarded with a Nadal for her *Entre visillos*. Although it may seem heretical I feel it’s fair, from an anti-canonical standpoint, to include in this list of women authors who wrote from the entrails of the dark world of franquismo, the voice of a woman who achieved the then incredible sum of 400 million books sold. I’m referring to Corín Tellado (1926–), better known as the author of a genre called *novelas rosas* that captivated the feminine public for whom they were conceived. Undoubtedly full of stereotypes, for which her work was condemned to the realm of subliterate, Tellado’s work however broke the regimented silence surrounding the world of women.



### Support Networks

The sedimentation of a literary feminine anti-canon would be unthinkable without the connections that women writers, critics, journalists, editors, professors, and cultural promoters have created throughout the years. They are at the helm of anthologies dedicated to women, monographical courses, radio and television programs, interviews, academic and editorial publications. Two examples that stand out are *El cuarto propio* [*A Room of One's Own*], in Chile, and *Torreozas* in Spain, dedicated exclusively to feminine productions and used strategically to bear witness to the existing gap so that indifference yields to curiosity from which we finally arrive at recognition. However, literary contests, perhaps the most prestigious avenue in establishing a reputation and reaching effective dissemination, continue to be dominated by men.

Undoubtedly, Spain has been prodigal in creating awards for the divulgence of narrative works. Poetry, on the other hand, cannot rely on equally renowned contests. It may be that in this area Latin America is ahead of the rest in sponsoring the Casa de las Americas awarded in Havana, Cuba.

Spain's Planeta Prize, created in 1952, would acknowledge new feminine voices echoing a new era, although always at a numerical disadvantage in relation to that of their male colleagues. Ana María Matute receives it in 1954 for *Pequeño Teatro*, Lucía Extebarría (1966) was recently bestowed with this award in 2004 for *Un milagro en equilibrio*. In the interim, Planeta Prize has been awarded 52 times and only twelve women, including the two already mentioned, have been honored—Rosa Montero (1951–), Maruja Torres (1943), Carmen Posadas (1953–), and Soledad Puértolas (1947–) are among the women writers who have been awarded between 1989 and 2000, an evident sign of recognition that was long overdue and one which has remained consistent since the fall of Franco.

“Sonrisa Vertical” (Vertical Smile) was also created in Spain. It is the only prize in Iberian American literature that is awarded to narrative works of explicitly erotic themes. Surprisingly, once more in 2004 it went without a recipient, (this had happened three other times since the award's inauguration in 1979). Of 26 awards that have been bestowed a ratio of fifteen men

to eight women have walked away the winners. The lower number of female winners can be analyzed symbolically in light of the taboo that has been lifted only recently in relation to this theme. I don't think it's a topic reserved exclusively to women but surely we have much to say on the subject since only a century ago we were completely repressed.

### Still Some Treats

However, despite the good news circulating the world regarding the sales of *El albergue de las mujeres tristes*, by Chilean writer Marcela Serrano or *Malena es un nombre de tango* by Spanish writer Almudena Grandés, we should challenge two tendencies that threaten feminine Hispanic American literature, especially that which is produced in Latin America: the reception of its local aspects as exotic and picturesque; and the homogenization of feminine writings within a pattern that conjugates certain stylistic traits, such as poetic language and the use of humor, as an established collection of themes. Let us think of the words used in the compositions of *boleros* and in the culinary recipes that we were bombarded with after the success of *Like Water for Chocolate* by Laura Esquivel (1954–). Parody and the freedom of poetic language have been used as tools in the deconstruction of a masculine vision that they inherit from the strong literary models dictated by men. But once this stage, known by the critiques of Gilber y Gubar as the “anxiety of authorship” (*The Madwoman in the Attic*), is overcome, certain literary models that are too predictable should be dismantled. In literature, formulas are as useful as they are dangerous. A woman writer's worst advisors are hurried editors and shallow criticism in the media.

### The Erotic in Feminine Textuality. Problematic Definitions, Expressions, and Risks

Faced with the polemic over the existence of a kind of literature that can be referred to as feminine, we instead adopt Nelly Richard's term “feminine textuality.” The stamp of her socio-cultural life experience as a woman and the socio-biological elements that define her are considered here literary traces that conform the text through textual, not only thematic expression.

For this very reason we prefer to use the phrase "literature written by women" in place of "feminine literature." However, we find that much of what has been postulated by Helene Cixous in creating the concept of "feminine writing" is suggestive and useful. In the pages that follow we refer to the eroticism in the writings of Hispanic-American women authors only within narratives and poetry leaving for a brief, final coda theatrical expressions.

Literature that, while being cautious with labels, could be classified as erotic, is also polemic, sometimes bordering on the categorization of pornography and threatened with being excluded from the realm "beaux lettres." The fact that much of the literature written by women enunciates its discourse from the body—the subject's last space of resistance—according to Foucault, could be explained as the search for a place that attempts to decontaminate itself from canonical-patriarchal formulations of feminine sexuality. This simple fact serves to explain that erotic literature can be found broadly represented among works of feminine authorship.

However, the editorial market, with its powerful classifying function, has judged that this literature, precisely because of its iconoclastic nature, "sells." Binary judgments have a tendency to try to impose themselves and the feminine textualization of the erotic is judged from extreme, irreconcilable opposites: that which is vulgar/cultured; that which is popular/elitist. Hence, a female author of such incisive humor and raw eroticism as Cuban writer Zoé Valdés (1959–) can be read, due to the massive circulation of her work as a result of Planeta's promotion, from a pre-judgmental trivializing perspective. Or even worse, devalued by the label of "pornographic writer." Meanwhile, others such as Uruguayan writer Cristina Peri-Rossi (1941–), who works with the theme of alternative sexualities or whose characters and conflicts within the erotic realm can be considered dysfunctional, doesn't gain much success from her published works and is read primarily in academic circles. An interesting case that ruptures this trend is reflected in the work of Spanish writer Espido Freire (1974–), who has been awarded Premio Planeta, enjoys surprising popularity, and at the same time is recognized by critics for her unique aesthetics, not only in her treatment of the erotic but in her overall

vision of Spanish society and the challenges that modernization implies.

I turn then to the Argentine Silvia Molloy (1938), one of most renowned scholars of literature written by women in Latin America. One of her opinions may shed light on the interpretation of literature written by women from both sides of the ocean. Presumably rereading Roman Jakobson and his seminal differentiation in the uses of metaphors and metonymy, Molloy has signaled out that: "Turn-of-the century representation of women, in Latin America and else-where, is haunted by dismemberment. In a frenzy of synecdoche, (male) poets will exalt woman's hair, her eyes, her feet, one foot, a glove, a stocking, as *loci* of desire. Only through that mediation, plenitude-woman in her totality, woman complete-proves intolerable..." On the contrary, when Molloy examines the symbols of fragmentation in the feminine body in a text that is written by a woman, she finds that: "the erotic component, and by extension, the fetishization impulse, becomes much more extense in nature." (117)

Molloy looks to the poetry of Alfonsina Storni (1892–1938); I add another example: the work of Cuban writer María Elena Cruz Varela (1953–), whose erotic images also have politically subversive codes. Her poem "El circo" [The Circus] with its strong graphic element, imposes a woman's act of exhibitionism:

"...I will be the dancer who gallops in the nuderevealing the sparkling arch of her pubes. The round hip. The erect breasts are also for all of you. All of it is a great fanfare..." (\*)

As I've demonstrated more extensively in my book about this author, the body, exposed and violated by a gaze, can simultaneously represent the writer or the communal body, that in a country like Cuba is exposed to the controlling vigilance of the State.

On the contrary, to the metonymy that objectifies and ties the image to its physical referent, we find in "écriture feminine" the feminine metaphor that openly shifts, and situates the process of eroticization of the text (and of reading) into the creation of an image in movement, that can only be captured as a process, an ebb and flow that beckons participation. Let us see it in the lyrical and dynamic way in which Costa Rica native Ana Istarú (1960–) proposes her description of the act of copulation between a man and

a woman from a feminine perspective that is fairly recurrent in other female voices. Expressed as a symbiosis with nature, the traditional passivity of the body as an object of desire by the Other is excluded.

"The center of my body  
Of my body is the center.  
A piece of ebony in two branches,  
A tangled dye.  
A crescent moon  
Rides between my legs.  
In my golden thighs,  
Steed, the nascent sun

A similar approach to both bodies, that of the female and male loved one, where there are no hierarchies imposed by an objectifying gaze, is the splendid love poem of Spanish poet Ana Rosseti (1950–), who has been able to create a unique style by combining the art of eroticism and liturgical rituals. See such titles as "Exaltación del dulcísimo nombre"/ "The Exaltation of a Very Sweet Name," "Misterios de pasión"/ "Mysteries of Passion," "Porque mi carne no quiere verbo"/ "Because My Flesh Doesn't Want You As A Verb," and a brief demonstration of her graphic and sensual "El jardín de tus delicias"/ "The Garden of Your Delicacy:

Flowers, pieces of your body;  
His sap reclaimed me.  
I squeeze between my lips  
The lacerating bow of the gladiolus.  
I could sew lemons to your torso  
Their hard tips on my fingers  
Like the erect nipples of a young woman..."

"There is no great erotic literature, only eroticism in great works of literature." In that, I agree with Mario Vargas Llosa. This is palpable when we inquire into the production of women whose works can be classified as "historic novels." Many of them distinguish themselves for having female protagonists who experiment with historic changes as part of the very development of their lives. Generally they are *bildungsromans* such as *Arráncame la vida* [*Take My Life Away*] by Mexican writer Angeles Mastretta (1949–). In this text the progressive disassociation of women from their subordinated conjugal roles and from their acceptance of the political context that dissolves revolutionary ideals run parallel. The nexus Eros-Politics is even more clear in *La otra conquista* [*The Other Conquest*] by another Mexican writer, Marisol

del Campo, where the colonization and destruction of the Aztec empire is reread from the point of view of Malinche, giving her the status of protagonist, portraying her as a character of strong sentiments, not simply as Cortez's concubine as she is cast in traditional History books.

The very relationship between that which is personal and that which is public, psychological, and sociological is more indirect and complex in *La canción de Dorotea* [*Dorothy's Song*], a novel by Spanish writer Rosa Regas (1933–) that merited the Planeta Prize in year 2001. The Civil War is like lime for today's Spain, likewise the repressed desires of middle-class women burn between a traditionally feudal society and modernity. The novel's protagonist, a professional woman named Aurelia Fontana, will one day discover the intimate bonds between fear and desire, violence and corruption, in a work of literature where dramatic codes dissolve on the surface in the creation of atmospheres.

We could continue to inquire about the creative uses that women have applied to literary models sanctioned for their effectiveness in an editorial world dominated by men. The case of the so-called *bildungsroman* is also interesting when exploring the feminine vision of one of the principal component episodes of said novelistic style: sexual initiation. Gaetan Brulotte, arguing with Foucault, has observed with certainty that in the erotic arts of the west "sexual truth is essentially not contained in the discourse of confession, but in that of apprenticeship."

By becoming a mentor in bed the female subverts her position as the dominated other and takes on the role of the dominating one by mastering knowledge about sex that is secret and joyful. This inversion of roles gives her back the power and agency that are restricted by moral norms. It is also an ironic paradox that teaching as a profession has traditionally been an occupation that's allowed Hispanic-American women certain influence in the public arena, though only as a service to society.

*La nada cotidiana* [*The Daily Nothing*] by Zoé Valdés is already a classic reference on erotic language in episodes dealing with sexual initiation. In her style the illustrious Cuban writer uses oral expressions as a renovating source of artistic language and corruptor of stereotypes. By drawing upon humorous, local jargon, very typical of Havana youth, the writer narrates as the protagonist, Yocandra, decides to rid herself

of her virginity, which she considers a bothersome obstacle to achieving pleasure. She then searches for a man, who by her own initiative she will turn into a *devirginator* [desvirgador]. Her strong orality gives rise to neologisms, barbarisms, regionalisms, and the eruption of obscene words that typify Valdes's work, leaving an imprint of excess and a fusion between high and pop culture compared with the neobaroque impulse, as Severo Sarduy defines it.

While these explorations in orality can always be studied as signals of the desire to reach the implicit Other in feminine writing, they can also be read as stylistic features of postmodernism in Spain and Latin America, equally reflected in the works of Angela Vallvey (1964–) or Amparo Rendón. Their female protagonists are on the prowl, living itinerant lives in every sense, and open to having contact with the marginal, popular, and extravagant worlds... The works of these writers, one of which was conceived in Mexico's border lands, *Santitos* by Rendón, the other in today's Madrid, *A la caza del último hombre salvaje* [*To the House of the Last Savage Man*], by Vallvey, irradiate the destructive magma of the postmodern where high and pop culture fuse and sexual transgression is only one among a panoply of possibilities. Although the female emerges triumphant this cannot be read as an ideologically explicit feminist vindication. The problematic of gender is also blurred. In works like these, erotica is redefined by trivializing itself, incarnating in the most basic carnal instincts that remain as the only basis of identity for these characters struggling with their circumstances and with themselves.

The charged discussion on pornography as erotica's degenerative limit, the transgression that art cannot afford to commit if it is to be considered art, collects such indispensable voices as Susan Sontag's and George Bataille's. Hence, it must also have a space in this brief summary of what has been done in the area of erotica by women writers. Precisely because they are interested in probing all of its limits, it is very possible that we may frequently find texts written by women who are not frightened of being classified as pornographic as it occurred with Rosario Ferré's (1938–) "Cuando las mujeres quieren a los hombres" [When Women Love Men]. However, the Puerto Rican writer affirms that the very language used for controlling feminine sexuality can also be utilized to redeem it.

Others are less ambitious and use language as a playful, openly defiant instrument. Marcia Morgado (1951–), a Cuban-American author who writes in Spanish is worthy of attention. Her novel's title *69: memorias eróticas de una cubana norteamericana* [*69: Erotic Memories of a North American Cuban*] is a revelation of its context. Morgado pokes fun at the old approach of the turn-of-the-century Latin American *criollista* novel that set out to establish a glossary of names of the continent's flora and fauna that was believed should form part of collective knowledge if we were to interpret our identity. Morgado's glossaries teach us the thousands of ways in which Cuban slang identifies sexual organs, both female and masculine. Finally, I should mention the huge success obtained by Spanish writer Almudena Grandés (1960–) with her novel *Las edades de Lulú* [*Lulu's Ages*]. It won the Sonrisa Vertical Prize in 1989 and made it to the big screen in a cinematographic version in 1990 that exploits through images the pornographic element latent in the novel.

### **Brief Coda for Theater Written by Spanish-American Women**

In the previous pages we've touched on the narrative and poetic genres. Theatre deserves a separate space in its treatment of erotica, be it conceived by a female or male writer. The performance nature of this literary genre bestows it with a fresh singularity. Theater is word in action that cannot exist without voice or body. A character takes on life through the live actor and the presence of a peripheral element: the spectator. It is indeed the most dynamic, participatory, and to a certain degree the most unpredictable of the genres due to the fact that the nature of the text is subject to changes in each enactment.

In following Judith Butler's line of thought when she denies the existence of a "pre-discursive sex" (*Bodies that Matter*: 6) the theatrical arena could be an ideal stage for applying her theories about the importance of performance in defining the sexualized subject, according to which the process of enunciation of the self is inseparable from its generic constitution. The current production by women writers from both sides of the Atlantic apparently takes an interest in experimenting with the materiality of the body that leads to the theatrical scene.

One clear example of this subversive use of the body's materiality in theatrical scenes among Latin-American women writers is the work of Argentine writer Griselda Gambaro (1928–). Recognized by an atmosphere reminiscent of Kafka in her work and for her use of techniques that deal with the ironic and absurd, Gambaro creates characters that interchange their roles of victim and victimized. In this way she makes it clear to what degree we are accomplices of the mechanisms of control. The problem of genre in her work materialize in her feminine and masculine characters. The latter, characterized as caricatures, represent the best criticism of the patriarchal power that they claim for themselves and are therefore reduced to.

In the Spanish dramaturgy written by women Paloma Pedrero (1957–) and Lidia Falcon (1935–) stand out. In both writers, an interest in the world of women seems obvious. At least in Falcon the reiterated presence of female characters immersed in circumstances typical of the roles that real women perform in contemporary Spanish society has served to label her work as propagandist literature. For her part, Pedrero seems to be more interested in the psychoanalytic problematic, as she demonstrates in her most recent work "La Estrella" [The Star], a sort of inner voyage that attempts to salvage her dead father's past that permits the daughter to explore the generational tensions that arise among the two. Realist and contemporary, the theater created by these female authors does not resist being defined as feminist.

### **Eroticism and Lesbianism: Dangerous Relationships?**

Because lesbianism is a particular kind of love shared by two women, this cultural practice can be thought of as having a corresponding rich written expression. However, this apparently doesn't seem to be the case. A recent article that summarizes bibliographical findings from the last decade addresses "the almost inexistence of a 'lesbian literature' written by Spanish or Latin-American authors in their own language" and place even more emphasis on "the scarce translations of the works produced in this area by the anglosaxon culture," (relatoslesbicos.homestead.com) as if it was even known that the audience of our Hispanic countries is not prepared to absorb this theme without prejudice.

The possible reasons for these two absences can be searched for in the deep roots Catholic precepts have in our culture, sanctioning the union between homosexual couples as a sin. On the other hand, the cult of motherhood, a figure venerated in these lands, could imply a total disdain for those women, who by making love to people of the same sex, do not observe the copulative principles of procreation, thus threatening the sacred duty of women as reproducers of the species. However, from the open niche of North American Academia the studies dedicated to Latin-American writers who live and work in the United States (mainly Chicanos, Cubans, and Puerto Ricans) have created a space for research and divulgation of lesbian literature also written in Latin America and Spain. See for example the work of geneological construction presented by the anthology *Hispanism and Homosexualities* where we find a bold rescue of the novelistic creation of a precursor of this type of writing: Venezuelan Teresa de la Parra (1889–1936), in perhaps an even more daring attempt, demonstrating that some of the poems of "The Teacher of America" Gabriela Mistral (1889–1957), also reveal her lesbian sexuality. Fortunately, the contemporary writers no longer have to hide their sexual orientation or its effects on their writing. Uruguayan Cristina Peri-Rossi, Chicana Gloria Anzaldúa (1942–2004), Cuban-American Achy Obejas (1956–), Ena Lucía Portela (1972–) from Cuba, Puerto Rican Magali García Ramis (1946–), and Argentine Silvia Molloy (1938–), write, are recognized and divulged as lesbian writers. Another consequence of the intolerance imposed by the Franco regime was the fact that lesbian characters were scarce in Spanish literature during the first half of the century. Exceptional cases were the rare characters included in works such as *Los soldados lloran de noche* [Soldiers Cry At Night] (1964) by Ana María Matute and *El último verano en el espejo* [The Last Summer in the Mirror] (1967) by Teresa Barbero. Not until the appearance of *Julia* (1970) by the Catalán writer Ana María Moix (1947–) is this theme treated openly. Then, in 1979, Esther Tusquets continues along this line with her novel *El mismo mar de todos los veranos* [The Same Sea of All Summers] where the context of a lesbian relationship also represents the intellectual atmosphere of a university. These two authors are the most outstanding within this genre in Spanish literature.

A point of contact between Latin-American and Spanish writers is an interest to delve in the very process of construction of the relationship, in its internal complexities as well as in confrontations with public moral. Of course this doesn't exclude the recreation of atmospheres and scenes of sexual contact among the characters, but it could be said that lesbian erotica is not essentially constructed upon sexuality but instead on intimacy, the new forms of communication, be it verbal or physical, that two women create in their relationship as lovers.

### In Their Own Words

Meanwhile, for female writers, as Rosario Ferré affirms, writing is above all "corporal knowledge" since "it is only through pleasure that we can successfully code... the testimony of our history and our time." Erotic literature, then, can be defined as something much more simple and human, as Argentine Alicia Steimberg does in an exemplary way: "The difficulty in reproducing sexual history rests on the fact that it is an unbinding mix of things and life circumstances; if one attempts to extract those elements the result is strange and frequently pathetic."

MADELINE CÁMARA and LISSETTE CORSA

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## XAVIÈRE

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1941–  
French novelist

### ***F.B. and La Punition***

*F.B.* and *La Punition* constitute a striking denunciation of women's self-destructiveness and men's exploitation of their masochism. In both novels the erotic genre's habitual dreamy, seductive staging gives way to a realistic environment and, despite the presence of familiar motifs, Xavière's personal voice, her literary talent—although a minor one—and the questions she addresses bring these novels close to what might be termed high erotic literature.

*F.B.*, like its prototype *The Story of O*, is written in the third person and resorts to the same elegant euphemisms. It takes the reader into a shady network of drifting young women trapped in prostitution, wealthy pimps, and upper-class patrons, without clearly distinguishing between the latter two categories. Cora, the protagonist, is taken by her lover Michel to a luxurious apartment, whose door is opened by a splendid woman in the nude, F.B., with whom

she passionately falls in love. Symmetrically, Michel turns out to be in love with the master of ceremonies, a motif that brings out into the open the homoerotic relationship between René and Sir Stephen in *The Story of O*. While Cora's love for F.B. leads her to accept bondage—figuratively and literally—the novel foregrounds the morbid pride and satisfaction she derives from her growing degradation. The story of F.B., presented as a model of Cora's impending fate, is seen through Cora's own eyes. It is a story of passion and betrayal between women who can love each other in no other way than by allying themselves with the men who torment them and participating in each other's destruction. The women's tortures and humiliations at the hands of their masters culminate in hunting parties in which they are made to act as game. Just as the offenders remind them at regular intervals that they have chosen this way of life—although there would be a severe penalty for trying to refuse it—they also tell them that they are entirely free to run into hiding and escape their pursuers during the hunt. Sometimes there is an "accident" and a woman dies. In the end, F.B. is wounded, and invoking



Rimbaud in a rather failed attempt at sounding literary, Cora is confirmed in her intimate conviction that she has “belonged to an inferior race from all eternity.”

In *La Punition*, a loose sequel published shortly after *F.B.*, the first-person narrator writes: “My Lyons punishment, I had somehow wanted it even before knowing of its existence. This is why I could not accuse anybody without first accusing this stranger within myself whom I discovered in Lyons and with whom, from then on, I had to live.” This statement summarizes what may be considered the dominant message of both novels: the masochistic wish to be physically and morally “punished” (a recurring word) and the loss of self that ensues from its fulfillment. Whereas the masters find a reason for inflicting punishment in any minor act of disobedience toward them, the women’s motivation is not clearly defined, but seems to arise from a despair that leads to self-abasement. Thus, *F.B.* forcefully conveys the obscure pleasure of masochism and its sadistic underpinning, and *La Punition*, a more original attempt, even more realistically details a living through of the willed sentence. The narrator has chosen Lyons after hearing from F.B. that it offered the most severe punishment. The sordid hotel where she is taken by M. and Raymond turns out to be a low-class brothel. Confined to a dirty room, she has to service men on a box spring (without a mattress) all day long, to the accompaniment of a woman’s incessant screaming in the next room. This other victim, Gloria, considered insane by the masters, mirrors the narrator’s own abjection and will become the instrument of her salvation. Taken back to Paris after an indeterminate number of months, the narrator “forgets” Lyons within a week and resumes her life as a prostitute-hostess. Once, incomprehensibly, she refuses herself to a patron and receives a stern warning from Raymond, who threatens to take her back to Lyons. She consequently resolves to commit suicide. To celebrate this decision, she meets in her usual bar with a male friend. Gloria is there, back from Lyons, and so are M. and Raymond. Gloria then does what the narrator “would never have dared”: amid mounting silence, she starts insulting the two men and describing what they did to her in Lyons, “less to take her money than to demolish her.” The men beat her and leave her bleeding on the floor. Later, when the paramedics arrive, one of them starts laughing and tells

the others: “It’s that madwoman again. Let’s hope this time she won’t get away with it and they will put her away. Unless she croaks before.” Experiencing a new consciousness, the narrator then decides she owes it to Gloria, and to the woman she herself used to be before her subjection, not to die, but to live and remember Lyons. Thus, as opposed to *F.B.*, *La Punition* ends on a note of revolt and hope.

Indeed, the whole narrative of *La Punition*, written in retrospect, conveys this sense of revolt, not so much because it is consistently told from the point of view of the victim, but because the latter’s beatings and humiliations, her solitude (she prefers her weekday travails to the loneliness of Sundays, when she does not see any patrons) and, throughout, her depersonalization take place amid everyday, minute happenings that ring only too real and run counter to the erotic effect.

In addition, common themes of erotic fiction are subtly diverted and demystified in both *F.B.* and *La Punition*. Thus, lesbianism is not given the usual stereotypical treatment. In both novels, love for a female prostitute motivates the protagonist’s consent to her own prostitution. Lesbianism, however, far from appearing inferior to heterosexual relations—a mere occasion for male voyeurism—also constitutes an emotional refuge and crystallizes the women’s strongest love feelings, for which reason it is frowned upon by the masters. Similarly, the women’s mutual betrayals and their complicity with their tormenters are not viewed by the narrative voice as originating in nature, but rather as evidence of their inevitable disintegration after repeated sexual humiliations. There is nothing sugar-coated about their debasement. Trained into passivity, they take pleasure in their sense of shame, learn not to stand up for one another, and defy the masters only in order to be punished. Cora in particular feels joy under the whip, euphoria after torture, and an intense sensation of life after watching F.B.’s rape by a dog. Despite her lover’s obvious contempt, the narrator of *La Punition* is turned into a groveling supplicant in her terror of being left alone. Most noteworthy perhaps is the pervasive irony in the depiction of the masters’ power trips, callousness, and hypocrisy. As in *The Story of O*, they protest their love to the women, especially before torturing them, remind them that they are free, and solemnly orchestrate

a ludicrous initiation ceremony, which they crown by forcing Cora to masturbate with a rope “without cheating.” The men see themselves as trainers performing their experiments on female animals. Their victims’ frigidity does not bother, but suits, them. Alleging their will to know, they observe their victims with dispassionate interest (“It is not funny, but it is interesting”) and tend their wounds with expert gentleness. One of them asks for F.B.’s forgiveness when torturing her, while solidly maintaining her “riveted” on a table.

It is not inconceivable that some readers might experience erotic excitement when reading *F.B.* and *La Punition*. No doubt, the choice of scenes and their crudeness place these works squarely in the category of erotic fiction. At the same time, their raw cruelty and analytic tone consistently maintain a distance, and their satiric intent is unmistakable. They were written in the 1970s, at a time of feminist protest, and it is significant that Xavière’s production does not seem to extend much beyond that period. *La Punition* was a best seller in its time and in

1973 was the object of a film adaptation by director Pierre-Alain Jolivet, starring Karin Schubert.

### Biography

Born in 1941, Xavière Lafont is reported to have worked in Parisian nightclubs in the early 1960s. Her novels were published between 1970 and 1982.

LUCIENNE FRAPPIER-MAZUR

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# Y

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## YAMADA, AMY

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1959–  
Japanese novelist

Amy Yamada first gained notice with her ram-bunctious, sexually charged story *Bedtime Eyes*, which was peppered with graphic depictions of sexual encounters between the protagonist, a Japanese club singer named Kim, and a black American soldier named Spoon. First published in the middlebrow literary journal *Bungei*, it was awarded the journal's *Bungei Award* for that year. The story garnered attention for its bold depiction of sexuality from a female's point of view but also because of sensational reports in the media about the author's own experiences (with black American soldiers). Amy Yamada has since become one of the best-known contemporary women writers. Her real-life experiences and their subsequent fictionalizations fanned an underground fascination with black hip-hop culture among her younger readers.

Yamada seems to have made a conscious decision to use the potent image of a black soldier as a central trope for many of her narratives. She purposely blurs the line between her own life and that of her female protagonists, living a

glamorous, at times unconventional, life in the full view of the reading public. Yamada's early works are demarcated by two major tropes: sex and race. Her female personae are bold and aggressive in their pursuit of sexual pleasure, transcending the traditional, male-dominated gender relationships that characterize Japanese society. Most of her female characters work in the sex industry and are not bashful. The empowered sexual subjectivity represents a type of liberated contemporary young woman who is not bound by personal inhibitions or traditional roles.

The openness of Yamada's female character toward sex and sensual pleasure is unusual, as is the persistent focus of her gaze on black bodies. In *Bedtime Eyes*, culinary and animalistic metaphors are used to encode Spoon, focusing on color, smell, and texture. Kim compares Spoon's shiny, black body to sweet chocolate, with a "sweet juice that bursts out when one bites into it." She also describes Spoon's body as emitting "the sweet rotting fragrance of cocoa butter" that "smells fetid but not unpleasant. No, not unpleasant, but rather like as if I am aware of myself becoming cleansed while placed

in the filth, a smell like that. His smell makes me feel superior.” This last comment reveals the complex associations of black ethnicity in Japanese culture. Yamada emphasizes the erotic nature of her protagonists’ black partners, and they certainly represent an exotic Other within Japanese society, but she cannot wholly escape the discriminatory attitudes prevalent in Japan, which equate lightness of skin color with high status and social superiority. Moreover, she elides the political questions raised by the presence of foreign troops on Japanese soil, a remnant of the postwar occupation era that reflects a continuing asymmetrical power relationship between Japan and America, with colonialist overtones.

In *Finger Play* (1986), the protagonist Ruiko reunites with a former boyfriend, a black GI named Leroy. Having been expelled from the army, Leroy now works as a pianist. Ruiko suffers frequent physical abuse in this sadistic relation, until one day, as he is about to leave her, Ruiko accidentally kills him. Leroy’s nimble fingers, which play the piano and her body with equal dexterity, also deal out violence, and the line between violence and masochistic pleasure is often blurred. The sadomasochistic (S/M) theme continues in *Kneel Down and Kiss My Feet* (1988), where Shinobu, the queen of an S/M club, delineates the ethics of prostitution.

In *Jesse’s Backbone* (1986), the themes of drugs, sex, jazz, and S/M are toned down in a touching portrayal of an unexpected relationship between Coco, a Japanese woman, and her black lover Rick’s young son, Jesse. This sets the stage for the novel *Trash*, in which the relationship with Rick comes to an end, while her love for Jesse survives.

Other than the black–yellow love relationships that pervade in Yamada’s earlier works, her works with teenagers as protagonists are also worth noticing. *The Bound Feet of the Butterflies*, *Wind Burial Classroom*, *Keynote after School*, and *A Child of Old Age* sensitively capture the perils and ambivalence of growing up. Yamada avoids heavy-handed sermons and opts for an airy, lighthearted, colloquial style that makes her characters sound natural and approachable. Her sense of dry humor is best captured in her short story collection, *Verbs for Happiness*.

Lately, Yamada has turned to portraying more mature relationships between men and

women. *A 2 Z* (2000), a novel consisting of 26 vignettes based on the letters of the alphabet, depicts a couple, Natsumi and Kazuhiro, who are both having extramarital affairs. The marriage is saved and they are able to reaffirm their love for each other when Kazuhiro punches Natsumi at the end. Domestic violence does not exist in Yamada’s lexicon.

Amy Yamada’s writing highlights the sexual subjectivity of contemporary Japanese women who deem the pursuit of sexual pleasure their birthright. This assertion, however, is not without its problems. Though Yamada addresses issues of race and discrimination in works such as *Animal Logic* (1996), they tend to remain at the level of superficial observation. The sensual language and the accessibility of the subject matter have made Yamada a favorite of young readers, but the combination of a racialized gaze and the desire to be sexually dominated (although Shinobu in *Kneel Down and Kiss My Feet* is a dominatrix, she does it as a profession) have stimulated criticism among some Japanese critics but especially among Western academics. The complex interweaving of sexuality and race in her writings raises many questions, but it is also what elevates her writing above soft-core sexual fantasy.

### Biography

Born as the eldest daughter of a middle-class Tokyo family in 1959, Yamada began her career as an author of *manga* (Japanese visual narrative comics) in the early 1980s. After working at jobs such as club hostess, nude model, and adult video actress, Yamada turned her own experience of living with a black American soldier on a U.S. Army base outside of Tokyo into her first novel, *Bedtime Eyes* (1985). Her subsequent works, *Jesse’s Backbone* (1986) and *The Bound Feet of the Butterflies* (1987), were both nominated for the prestigious Akutagawa Literary Award.

FAYE YUAN KLEEMAN

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## YAOHU YANSHI [THE VOLUPTUOUS HISTORY OF FOX DEMONS]

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Seventeenth-century Chinese novel

This novel in twelve chapters, intended for a readership fond of eroticism and craving for cheap entertainment, is not easier to identify than most novels of the same kind. It most likely dates back to the first half of the Qing dynasty (1644–1911). Its author is assuredly not Xu Lin (1462–1538), the poet to whom it was attributed, even though the set of pseudonyms displayed may suggest so. Incidentally, this is also the case for the *Taohua yanshi* [*The Peach Blossom Fantasy*], another short novel of similar construction which may well have been put together in the same publishing studio.

The *Yaohu yanshi* is known to us only through the single surviving copy of a version that could actually be a shortened one; at least, the roughness of the narrative leads one to imagine that such is the case. Only the first part of the novel is clearly erotic; as for the second, it's entirely devoted to some edifying entertainment blending various aspects of Chinese literature in vernacular language, as if it were intended to make amends for the aberrations of the first one. The

narrator, it is true, doesn't skimp on his effects: he unceremoniously throws the hero, Mingmei, a deceptively naive and inexperienced young man, into the lustful hands of two she-fox demons, who, for quite some time—five centuries, in fact—have been regenerating their power by pumping sexual energy out of their lovers. After both vixens have taken the appearance of irresistible beauties, the first one gives in to Mingmei's every playful whim, while the other sets to watch two young he-foxes cavort about and enjoy sodomite pleasures. A while later, the four demons gather around Mingmei, who soon becomes aware of his decrepitude and, as terrified as he is incredulous about the whole thing, has to witness their trial's proceedings led by the deity in charge of the creatures of the great Beyond: while the male demons are straightaway slain, the female ones are sentenced to two centuries of inactivity. Once relieved of such baleful company, Mingmei stumbles across yet another she-fox spirit, who, fortunately for him, turns out to be closer to immortality than his earlier acquaintances. With the help of her mentor, Hu the Immortal, she sends him back to the human

world and will from then on protect him and his folks under all circumstances.

For, while Mingmei was away his father fell into the clutches of two villains, whose nasty plans do not work out because both human justice and divine wisdom are on lookout. One of Mingmei's neighbors, a former serf who intended to take advantage of the situation, is punished as well. Still under the secret support and protection of the Immortals, Mingmei brilliantly passes the mandarin examinations, an achievement that brings him to the attention of an influential minister. The latter, confident in his might and disregarding a previously sealed union, compels Mingmei to marry his daughter. But, once again, this hideous crime is soon punished. Unfailing support from the spirits eventually eases a happy conclusion for the hero, who will end up marrying two brides, while it precipitates the tragic fate of the disloyal minister whose concupiscence finally leads him to his death. In short, it is success and happiness for the deserving ones, who managed to right the helm in time, and expiation and violent death for those who let themselves get carried away by vile thoughts.

Beyond the moralizing speech that the novel conspicuously develops and its resort to countless overused set phrases which are typical of literature in vernacular Chinese, the true originality of the *Yaohu yanshi* lies in the importance taken on by fox spirit characters. While the male spirits appear particularly dubious and malicious, as they seem solely concerned with the satisfaction of their own needs, the vixens present two diametrically opposed facets of this eerie creature, which has been haunting Chinese fiction ever since the early days. On one hand, we thus have a succubus who tries to take advantage of the vital energy of her victim, and on the other we have a grateful and protective she-fox spirit who even shows the ability to give way to a mere mortal woman. These vulpine characters also refer to other readings, such as the *Zhaoyang qushi* [*The Lascivious History of Zhaoyang*], to name but one.

As regards the sex scenes, they diffusely echo other works too. Some are duly quoted, such as the *Ruyi jun zhuan* [*The Lord of Perfect Satisfaction*] and the *Nongqing kuaishi* [*A Joyful History of Passion*], about the mischiefs of Emperess Wu Zetian (624–705) with her sensual entourage. As for the scenes involving the two sodomite foxes,

they implicitly refer to collections of tales which used to flourish in Hangzhou during the late Ming (1368–1644). But whereas those would promote such practices, our novel here firmly condemns them while simultaneously taking pains to depict them in great detail. The bantering tone that punctuates the protagonists' successive exchanges thus gives way to a warning against what is here presented as a deviance, a base instinct one should be wary of and try to guard one's children against.

Nevertheless, this novel above all remains a farce. The endpaper of the sole surviving old edition mentions "laughter guaranteed as soon as the book is opened" ("Kaijuan yixiao"). Except for the spirits, deities and demons, all the characters in this novel come from a low- or middle-class background in Confucian society; and to the reader, they appear as puppets at the mercy of the author's fancy, the latter obviously taking great pleasure in showing us their flaws and foibles.

Another outstanding and unusual feature is the depiction, in the first chapter, of an erotic theatre which appears quite unlikely insofar as, contrary to the rules of Chinese dramatic art, it shows rather than suggests love relationships and the complementarity of the sexes: "On the first stage 'Ximen Qing Wreaks Havoc Under the Vine Arbor' was being performed, and on the second one they were playing 'Wen Leiming Meets up with Miss Luan.' On both sides, the actors in the title roles were wearing skin-tight outfits: both male and female leads sported trousers made of some see-through gauze which would cling to their legs so well that one could have thought they were naked, incidentally displaying the boys' stiff penises on either stage. The girls' little golden lotuses could also clearly be seen, as they were resting on their partner's shoulders. Tenderly entwined, sex organs against each other, the bodies were banging away as vigorously as a hen pecks about or a pestle hits the bottom of a mortar. Their stage business left none cold."

PIERRE KASER

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# YAOI

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“Yaoi” is an acronym for *yama nashi, ochi nashi, imi nashi*: “no climax, no point, no meaning.” It is amateur homoerotic literature based on the young male characters in Japanese manga (comics) and anime (cartoon animations). In Japan, Yaoi comprises mostly *dōjinshi* [fan-produced manga], while in the West it is usually found as stories and artwork on the Internet. The majority of Yaoi creators are young women. The creation of Yaoi is a popular activity in many world regions.

Yaoi stories portray characters overcoming obstacles, often internal, to be together. Many Yaoi works are sexually explicit. Many are not, but as sex underlies romantic love, it is present as a means of giving urgency to desire. In Japan and the West, Yaoi transgresses societal boundaries. Besides same-sex eroticism, these can include relationships between a minor and an older partner, between siblings, among multiple partners, and with authority figures, such as teachers. Sexual acts may be nonconsensual, violent, or carried out in public spaces.

The end of many Yaoi works is idealistic, belying the acronym. Yaoi authors use the tension of crossing boundaries to explore issues central to sex and love. The genre allows young people to redefine the adult-created media characters of their childhood and to express erotic desire publicly, free of editorial constraint and parental control.

Yaoi is a visible activity in Japan. In 2002 almost 400,000 people, most of them young women and teenage girls, attended Tokyo’s Comiket, a twice-yearly fan-organized event, to buy or sell *dōjinshi*, much of it Yaoi-themed, created by small circles of friends. Comiket grew rapidly from its 1976 start; since the mid-1980s it has occupied Japan’s largest exhibition center. There are smaller similar exhibitions in cities such as Osaka, which attract tens of thousands, and there are stores which sell *dōjinshi* commercially and informal fan networks to exchange *dōjinshi* via mail.

In the West, Yaoi is an activity mostly on the Internet and at events such as Yaoi-Con, a convention held yearly in the United States since 2001. Authors post stories to thousands of websites and online journals, as well as to fan-fiction archives, at least one of which, <http://www.fanfiction.net>, had close to a million works of all types archived in February 2005, many of them Yaoi stories.

Those unaware of Yaoi may encounter it when searching the Web for anime or manga. One example is a North American boy’s e-mail to a Yaoi site in 2000 asking if it was true that his favorite character, the 15-year-old Duo (one of a quintet of space pilots in the popular commercial anime *Gundam Wing*), is gay, as his schoolmates had claimed upon coming across Yaoi illustrations on the Web. The site owner’s response marks a discourse between the young and adults around same-sex erotics among the young. In the West this tends to be via LiveJournals, blogs, comments to website guest books, posts to discussion groups, and comments on Yaoi works stored on archive sites; in Japan it is also via letters to printed magazines, especially the popular commercial genre of homoerotic “boy love” [*shōnen-ai*] manga, which arose a few years before Yaoi.

The *dōjinshi* authors of *Rappori Yaoi Tokushū Gou* [*Rappori: Special Yaoi Issue*] (1979) coined the acronym because their work was a collection of episodes with no overarching structure. The story features two youths in a suggestive but not sexually explicit relationship. There were Yaoi parodies of Gundam in the early 1980s, but it was the popularity of a *dōjinshi* in 1985 based on *Captain Tsubasa*, a manga about boys’ soccer, and another in 1987 based on the manga *Saint Seiya* which put “Yaoi” into the Japanese vernacular. The early Yaoi works reflect three attributes which have come to distinguish the genre: (1) amateur products outside of commercial editorial controls (2) based on known characters and settings (so far, not so much unlike the



## YAOI

“Tijuana Bibles” well known to connoisseurs in the West) and (3) whose characters are depicted as ordinary teenage boys or young men in their twenties, the same age group as many Yaoi fans.

Yaoi has encountered controversy in Japan. A moral panic occurred in 1989 after a manga fan (not a Yaoi aficionado) murdered four children. Police arrested about 80 amateur manga artists, almost all teenagers or in their twenties, and confiscated thousands of *dōjinshi* from Tokyo stores. In 1992, a debate took place in the feminist magazine *Choisir* after a gay-identified man complained that Yaoi characters had nothing to do with “real gay men.” Readers responded that Yaoi was a way to critique and overcome heterosexist gender norms. One said there was no reason why one’s sex should determine the gendering of the subject or object of one’s desire—a position which agrees with the critique of identity offered by queer theory, which emphasizes the processes of identification through which identities are formed, rather than identity as an ontological given. Neither incident seems to have diminished Yaoi’s popularity.

Yaoi’s popularity in the West is due in part to the increasing amount of anime shown on commercial television for children as well as the Web as an easy-to-use and pervasive dissemination medium for fan-written stories and artwork. A notable factor in Yaoi’s cross-cultural popularity is the dissimilarity of Western and Japanese cultural contexts. The representation of male adult/adolescent eroticism [*nanshoku*] has been prevalent in Japanese cultural products since about 800–850 CE, ending only with Japan’s adoption of Western psychosexual theories in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Gender ambiguity has been a topos in Japanese culture since the publication of works such as the widely read 12th-century story *Torikaebaya* [*Changelings*]. Sexually explicit depictions have been common since the advent of inexpensive prints produced by woodblock printing in the Edo period (c. 1600–1868) and continue today in manga.

Many Yaoi works resemble fairy tales, in that they show the protagonist(s) triumphing against the odds. Unlike Western literary fairy tales, which started as didactic stories designed to uphold the status quo, Yaoi stories are about desire. As such, they usually explore, not circumscribe, possibilities.

As yet there are no formal published surveys of Western Yaoi creators. Some resist labels,

including “queer,” even in its sense of being unable to signify gender monolithically. They report different reasons for why they like Yaoi. Key seems to be erotic attraction to the characters coupled with freedom: Yaoi transcends gender roles and finds young male bodies attractive. Another common reason is that Yaoi provides a relatively safe place from which to explore sex and desire.

Thematically, Yaoi is similar to the works Western women and some men have created about male characters from TV programs, movies, and books (see *Slash Fiction*). The U.S. generation of the 1930s and 40s had Tijuana Bibles: cheap, vest-pocket fuck comics featuring the cherished, cherubic characters of the mainstream funny papers. A difference in Yaoi is the younger age of the media characters and the fans. Yaoi shares with commercial romance fiction and fan-written *gen* (nonsexual) fiction the idea of imagining a different social state; unlike them, Yaoi’s discourse appears to be less accepting of gender roles as scripted in the cultures in which it is produced. A smaller genre derived from Japanese anime and manga, *yuri*, denotes fan works about relationships, often represented explicitly, between girls or women.

MARK MCHARRY

*See also Manga; Slash Fiction*

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## YASUNARI KAWABATA

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1899–1972  
Japanese novelist

### *The House of the Sleeping Beauties*

Yasunari Kawabata’s *The House of the Sleeping Beauties* is a unique 20th-century Japanese erotic novel. Like many of Kawabata’s novels, it was initially serialized in literary journals and then published in book form. *The House of the Sleeping Beauties* was serialized intermittently in the literary journal *Shinchō* from January to June of 1960, and from January to November of 1961, the publication being interrupted by two trips abroad to the United States and Brazil. It was later published as a single book in 1961 by the publisher Shinchōsha and has since appeared in numerous reprints and various editions. It has been translated into many languages, including English, French, Italian, Chinese and Korean. E. Seidensticker’s English translation is used as the base text for quotes in this essay.

Reading Yasunari Kawabata’s *The House of the Sleeping Beauties* is an intense, hypnotic, and

yet somewhat disturbing experience. Readers familiar with Kawabata’s spirited earlier short story *The Izu Dancer* or the more ethereal novels *Snow Country*, *A Thousand Cranes*, and *The Sound of the Mountain*—which reflect upon nature and the fragility of human nature—will no doubt be taken aback by this airless and constricted narrative world that is cloistered in a secret chamber. To appreciate this chillingly beautiful poetic meditation on the twin themes of sexuality and death, the reader must surrender his daily reality to a world of imagination and fantasy. The work also demands that we investigate our understanding of eroticism in general and erotic literature in particular. What charges eroticism? Is there a fundamental structure of eroticism that is viable and effectual cross-culturally? Is the eroticism of this novel derived from the naked bodies of beautiful young virgins; or is it the highly sexualized memory of the old man Eguchi unleashed in the artificial, cloistered realm that ignites both his and our erotic fantasy? What are the relations between sexual eroticism and violence, death and old age? Where is the thin line between

eroticism and perversity? The novel seems to beget more questions as one reads on.

### Structure

*The House of the Sleeping Beauties* begins with the old man Eguchi, who is persuaded by a friend to visit a mysterious house of sleeping beauties. In this secret club, economically and socially successful older men who are sexually impotent come to spend a night sleeping next to a beautiful naked virgin who has been drugged into a deep slumber and is completely unaware of the encounter. The novella documents five such visits by the protagonist Eguchi, from his totally unanticipated first trip to an abrupt and shocking ending involving the death of one of the young girls. There are only two active characters in the narrative: the old man Eguchi and the proprietor of the secret club, a middle-aged woman who speaks with polite but distant deference. The narrative thus consists of the sparse dialogues between the two characters that serve as a frame narrative, while the greater part of the novel transpires in the old man's head, focusing on his observations of the six young virgins, his recollections of the past, and the dreams and nightmares triggered by the young girls lying naked beside him.

Eguchi's fantasies of the six sleeping virgins and his drug-induced, dreamlike meditations on the pivotal females he encountered in his life composes the core of this internalized narrative. Many readers are struck by the lack of action in the narrative and the absence of interaction between characters other than the laconic, businesslike dialogues between the old man and the proprietor. Kawabata uses a complex layering of textual space and time to tell a story essentially occurring within the physical space of a small secret chamber. There are five interactions between the old man and the proprietor woman and five silent interior monologues of the old man, each set in motion by the contours, colors, and smells of the different naked bodies while Eguchi is in a semiconscious, dreamlike, drugged state. The most revealing images, however, are Eguchi's reminiscences of his own past (sexual) encounters with women who left a mark on his life. In these hallucinatory states, the past is invoked and past losses are reexamined. Thus this is not only a novel about an uncanny encounter between the old and the young, the

waking and the sleeping; it is also a pathology of Eguchi's sexual autobiography.

### Motif of the Virgin Maiden

Kawabata's obsession with young maidens started with his first work *The Izu Dancer* (1927) and lasted all through his long and prolific career. Rumor has it that his suicide may have been related to his infatuation with a young maid working at his house at the time of his death. That aside, the eternally youthful, pre-adolescent girl has become one of the most important tropes in Kawabata's literature. In *The Izu Dancer*, a young college student on a sentimental journey to a hot spring area encounters a troupe of itinerant performers, who in those days were looked down upon as outcasts. The buoyancy and liveliness of one precocious 14-year-old dancer in particular, Kaoru, catches his fancy and they strike up a quick friendship as he travels with the group. Though he enjoys the homey comfort he has with the troupe, there is an unspoken sexual tension, as the protagonist wonders whether the dancer will be forced to service the hot springs clientele sexually, as female itinerant performers often did in those days. The protagonist's anxious suspicions are relieved the next morning, when he sees the young dancer waving innocently from afar, naked, beckoning the protagonist to join her in the hot spring. The young man is elated to see her child-like body, not yet a woman, and realizes that his sexual fantasy and tension was misplaced and all is well.

These images of virginal females, kept safe by their inaccessibility to male desire, form a recurring motif in Kawabata's later writings. The young dancer of Izu transformed into the two opposite feminine ideals in his most celebrated work, *Yukiguni* [*Snow Country*] (1937), as the fiery, passionate geisha Komako and the serenely ethereal Yōko. The trope of female purity continues to resurface in his postwar masterpieces: in the mysteriously refined yet distant Yukiko in *Senbazuru* [*Thousand Cranes*] (1952), the forever youthful Kikuko who rejuvenates and comforts her father-in-law Shingo's dreary existence in *Yama no oto* [*The Sound of the Mountain*] (1954), and later in a darker variant in *The House of the Sleeping Beauties*.

In all the novels mentioned above, while the male protagonists progress and mature in

conjunction with the author's own life experience, the idealized female is forever frozen at that initial virginal stage of purity, ethereal and untainted by the outside world and thus remaining youthful forever. In contrast to this untainted feminine innocence, what is perceived as ugly, repulsive, and undesirable in femininity is always related to maturity and aging. Madame Ōta in *The Sound of the Mountain*, a worldly, middle-aged seductress who was the mistress of the protagonist Kikuji's father and now resurfaces to meddle in his life, is depicted as dangerous and threatening. In *Birds and Beasts*, a misanthropic man who lives a lonely and isolated life with his many birds and dogs visits his old lover, who is a dancer of Japanese traditional *buyō* dance, at her recital. Ten years ago, the woman dancer, against the protagonist's advice, gave birth to a child, thus shattering the virginal quality of the protagonist's ideal woman. This time, the male protagonist notices the aging of the dancer and her dance which he describes as "degenerated. . . . Form had gone to pieces with the decay of her body" (146). Beauty for Kawabata exists only in an elusive and precarious liminal moment between girlhood and womanhood, and his literature is forever trying to capture that glint of innocence verging on sensuality. Thus, in Kawabata's narrative, the eroticism lies not in direct sexual contact and physical intimacy but rather in the emotions aroused by the distant and inaccessible object of desire. In fact, a rather counterintuitive drive away from actual physical consummation becomes the force that propels Kawabata's narrative movement. It is the sensuality, not the sexuality, informing the male gaze and imagination that interests Kawabata the writer.

In *The House of the Sleeping Beauties*, the precise description and almost clinical details of the six virginal bodies, all different yet equally alluring, form the main trope of the narrative. Describing the first girl he encounters, Eguchi focuses on her upper limbs: "Her right thumb was half hidden under her cheek. The fingers on the pillow beside her face were slightly curved in the softness of sleep, though not enough to erase the delicate hollows where they join the hand. The warm redness was gradually richer from the palm to the fingertips. It was a smooth, glowing white hand. . . . He caught the scent of maidenly hair. After a time the sound of the waves was higher, for his heart had been taken captive"

(18–19). Here, Kawabata uses a technique that is seen, for example, in Ozu Yasujirō's films, in which Ozu alternates close shots and long shots in a seemingly random manner, juxtaposing unrelated images in order to highlight and accentuate the object that he is presenting. After Eguchi is aroused by the smell of the girl's hair, the intensity of the sexual desire is deflated somewhat by the insertion of the natural sound of the waves. The technique of intercutting intense erotic descriptions with nature (be it landscape, seasons, or audio effects) keeps the carnality in the narrative under the author's tight reign. Kawabata's writing, like his beloved young virginal figures, is always demurely seductive and suggestive.

The virginal quality is pushed to its limit in *The House of the Sleeping Beauties* when Eguchi seeks solace from sleeping virgins who are not able to respond to his aesthetic yearning. The virgins here become mere objects of desire and admiration, but not real living human beings who could provide an old man with emotions ranging from sexual gratification, joy, or comfort to disappointment and rejection. The safe haven of the house of the sleeping beauties, a secret chamber shielded from the outside world, provides Eguchi with unbounded access to these young girl's bodies but never their minds. After the first visit, Eguchi had thought that he would not visit the place again, but an irresistible impulse drives him to the house again and again. The inanimate naked female bodies that satisfy the old man's insatiable gaze become fetish objects for the spectator—he refers to them as "living dolls." This voyeuristic micro-description repeats itself five times, each time focusing its attention on different aspects of the bodies, from meticulous descriptions of their physicality to the milky scent and "music of love" exuded by their young bodies (21). Through contact with these bodies, the old man revives memories of his past sexual encounters with various women in his life. In short, these beautiful, sensual, youthful bodies became the medium, or portal, to the sexualized memories embedded in the precarious realm of the old man's subconscious that are about to fade away due to old age and impending death.

Kawabata pushes this fetish theme even further in the short story *Kataude* [*One Arm*] (1964), written several years after *House of the Sleeping Beauties*. This surrealistic story depicts a man

spending a night with a woman's arm that he borrowed from her. The erotically and symbolically charged story, with the man caressing and frolicking with the arm, suddenly turns ominous when he wakes up from his dream and realizes, to his horror, that the girl's arm is attached to his body. In *One Arm*, the fetishism of the *object petit* (the part of the body ambivalently related to the person's somatic totality because it appears detachable) turns into revulsion when he realizes that he cannot remain a detached spectator. A similar realization also underlies the *House of the Sleeping Beauties* when the romanticized bliss Eguchi enjoys is abruptly disrupted by the sudden death of the fifth young girl.

### Homosocial Bonding, Aging, and Death

The secretive nature of eroticism in *The House of the Sleeping Beauties*, a private club for successful (but sexually impotent) older men, reveals a social dimension of eroticism that is distinct from the aesthetic dimension discussed so far. The clandestine sexual activity permits these men to indulge their sexual fantasies in a secure environment secluded from the prying eyes and questions of normative society. In a society where virility and masculinity are intimately linked to one's sense of self, aging and impotence are taboo subjects. However, Eguchi hides a more perilous secret: he is in fact still virile and capable of breaking the house taboo on sexual intercourse with the sleeping girls. Though warned repeatedly by the proprietor "not to do anything in bad taste," Eguchi is tempted on several occasions to act out his fantasies of sexual transgression. His thoughts of violent, even sadistic, aggression against the girls as a way to avenge all the humiliation he and his male comrades have endured due to their old age in a sense consolidates a satiated and privileged masculine position. The ending is ambiguous, and the reader is left to wonder whether Eguchi did in fact unconsciously strangle the dark-skinned girl.

Though eroticism is the central focus of the narrative, *The House of the Sleeping Beauties* is often mentioned with another contemporary masterpiece, *Fuden rōjin nikki* [*The Diary of an Mad Old Man*] (1965) by Tanizaki Junichirō, as the two apexes of "old-aged literature" [*rōjin bungaku*], a distinctive subgenre in Japanese

literature that depicts the travails of aging. Just like Tanizaki's 77-year-old Utsugi, whose spirits are buoyed by a growing erotic obsession with his daughter-in-law, Eguchi's residual libidinal drive is similarly aroused by youthful femininity. Though Eguchi's fear of death and aging is diminished by the comfort he receives from spending time with these young girls, the "ugliness" of age is not wholly elided. He notes his "lonely emptiness" and "cold despondency" and contemplates that the chamber of his fantasies would also be "the most desirable place to die" (93). Eguchi finally confronts death on his last night spent at the inn, when he encounters two girls, one with white skin, and the other dark. The night brings back primordial memories of his mother as the first woman in his life and the miserable way she had died when he was only 17 years old. The young girls' breasts merge with an image of his mother's faltering chest, and when he wakes up to reality, the dark-skinned girl is dead.

*The House of the Sleeping Beauties*, unlike Kawabata's more traditional works, is a difficult text and has aroused controversy. The reception of the text has shifted recently. Early admiration for Kawabata's visual precision, the subtle eroticism created by his pure and refined language, and the extraordinary detail in his depictions of male lust and female sensuality has given way to a more pathological exploration of the text employing feminist and gender-critical theories. The critics point to the inhuman objectification of the girls as "living dolls," the unrelenting intensity of the male gaze, and the precarious boundaries separating his aestheticism from pedophilia or even necrophilia. No matter how one reads it, *The House of the Sleeping Beauties* is sure to invoke in its readers complex and contradictory senses of awe and bewilderment.

### Biography

Born in Osaka. One of the founding members of the avant-garde literary movement known as the Neo-Sensualist school [*shin-kankakuha*]. In the 1920s Kawabata dabbled in experimentalism as a pioneer modernist writer of fiction and the newly nascent art form of cinema. Despite his early incarnation as a modernist, Kawabata later turned to a more realistic and lyrical style, gradually moving toward subject matter concerning traditional culture and aestheticism.

Combining a laconic lyricism, a heightened sensitivity to nature, and Zen-like plot structures, his short stories, most notably the hundreds included in the collection *Palm-of-the-hand Stories*, read more like poetry than narrative. Kawabata also created a rich body of novels, including *Snow Country*, *The Sound of the Mountain*, *Old Capital*, and *A Thousand Cranes*, masterpieces that epitomize traditional Japanese pathos and aestheticism. Together with Tanizaki Jun'ichirō and Mishima Yukio, he is regarded in the West as the quintessential Japanese writer, who captures the illusory essence of a feminized Japanese sensibility for beauty. Kawabata received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1968, the first in Japan to have received the honor and only the second Asian writer after India's Tagore to have been awarded the coveted prize. He committed suicide in his studio in Kamakura.

FAYE KLEEMAN

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## YEATS, WILLIAM BUTLER

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1865–1939

Irish poet and playwright

To an extraordinary degree the work of William Butler Yeats reflects the dual influence of his parents. His mother seems to have induced a strong inclination in Yeats for the sensuality of the Irish countryside and the mysterious, not to say mystical, beliefs of Irish country folk. This was kept at bay until Yeats's young manhood,

however, by his father's vigorously assertive rationalism. Yeats came of age in an era as much marked by the contention between scientific materialism and religious authority as it was by the tensions of Irish nationalism, and these dynamics were quintessential to the development of Yeats's work. He notes in his autobiography that at about the same time that his father was immersing him in poetry, reading aloud from Shakespeare, Scott, Shelley, Blake, Byron, and

others, he was having adolescent erotic dreams that took the form of romantic narratives. In these dreams he first encountered the urges of sexuality confronting the spiritual desire to transcend physicality, describing a binary paradigm that would take various forms persistently through his life and mark the pattern of erotic preoccupations that informed both his life and his work.

This counterpoint induced his concept of a divided consciousness that is especially elaborated in *A Vision* by the symbol of the gyres. These interpenetrating spirals or cones form a vortex where subjectivity and objectivity are “intersecting states struggling one against the other.” Such antitheses are generative and imply an existential dialectic between beauty and truth, value and fact, particular and universal, abstract and concrete, life and death, etc. They seem to derive from William Blake’s theory of contraries in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. And they also have an obvious sexual symbolism, which Yeats construed as a sign of the grounding of his theory. In the early work *The Wanderings of Oisín* (1889) he is not so at ease with the sexual extension and seems somewhat bemused by the prospect that Oisín might have sexual as well as psychic intercourse with his beloved. A few years later, however, in an 1895 essay titled “The Moods” he declares of the artist that “the only restraint he can obey is the mysterious instinct that has made him an artist, and that teaches him to discover immortal moods in mortal desires, . . . a divine love in sexual passion.” He confirmed this synthesis the following year when he took rooms of his own for the first time in order to consummate an affair with Olivia Shakespeare. Still, in 1898 he thought of himself as a symbolist romantic and identified with writers “all over Europe” who are “struggling . . . against that ‘externality’ which a time of scientific and political thought has brought into literature,” and joins Arthur Symonds’ call for “a poetry of essences . . . because of an ever more arduous search for an almost disembodied ecstasy.”

But as he continued the ruminations of his erotic dialectic, attempting to synthesize the competing claims of sexuality and spirituality, disembodied ecstasy became problematic. In “No Second Troy” (1910) he’s once again distraught about Maud Gonne, but in comparing her to a composite Agamemnon/Helen figure he

hit upon a mythological key to his aesthetic, if not his personal problem. Much of his work, motivated by Irish nationalism, revived or reinvented Irish folktales and mythology, such as the Cuchulain legends. In *The Green Helmet*, for example, Yeats gestures toward an integration of sexual and spiritual love when Cuchulain, supposing that he is about to sacrifice his life, tells his wife that she is beautiful and smart and that she will be better off without him, as in his travels he has been unfaithful. “Live, and be faithless still,” she replies. While this evokes a love that transcends the carnal, it rather leaps over the conflict than resolves it. “No Second Troy” did not solve the problem, but it did expand Yeats’s frame of reference to the conspicuous promiscuity of the Graeco-Roman heroes, gods, and goddesses. He had, of course, always had the Bible at his disposal, and in 1916, possibly just before Maud Gonne rejected his last proposal of marriage, he evoked Solomon and Sheba in “On Woman.” Contemplating Sheba’s interrogation of Solomon’s proverbial wisdom and imagining a tryst, a “shudder that made them one,” Yeats prays that God grant him to “live like Solomon / That Sheba led a dance.” It is perhaps the only poem in which Yeats plays humorously, if only slightly, with his erotic sensibility.

In *The Tower*, published when Yeats was 63 and, as he said, in a rage at his advancing age, “Sailing to Byzantium” seems to mark Yeats’s withdrawal from the sensual aspect of the erotic dialogue. Byzantium is the symbolic repository of the soul, and that is where the old man is going, “Into the artifice of eternity.” That would seem to be the myth of the spirit, a closeted refuge from the relentlessly “sensual music” of life. Still, in the title poem, Yeats identifies with his character Hanrahan, “Old lecher with a love on every wind,” even as he himself faces decrepitude fondling “memories of love . . . of the words of women.” As always, however, his erotic imagination not only revealed his psychic landscape but scanned mythologies for cosmic revelation. “Leda and the Swan,” in that same volume, almost lubriciously evokes the lust of gods engendering Western culture and racial memory, apparently synthesizing his old antitheses of body and spirit. But the “Crazy Jane” sequence of the early 1930s subtly gives priority to the body, though the dialectic continues as such, summed up when “Crazy Jane Talks with

the Bishop,” a virulently holy man: “Love has pitched his mansion in / The place of excrement; / For nothing can be sole or whole / That has not been rent.” Crazy Jane’s disposition had been anticipated in the *A Woman Young and Old* sequence of 1929, where sex and its pleasures are also made the existential requisite for love and its transcendence.

Yeats was particularly, and idiosyncratically, concerned in his later years to explore the communion of the spiritual and material worlds in general as well as his own distinctive erotic dialectic. Dorothy Wellesley, his close friend and voluminous correspondent, observed in her memoir of Yeats’s final year: “Sex, Philosophy, and the Occult preoccupy him. He strangely intermingles the three.” This is confirmed in *Last Poems*, which were written in his last three years. The sexual motif is especially prominent in “The Three Bushes” and a sequence of “songs” that accompany it. The incident of the poem derives from the Abbe Michel de Bourdeille’s “Historia mei Temporis” and concerns a lady who sends her chambermaid to lie disguised by dark with her lover in order to preserve her own chastity and yet satisfy him. The lover is thus deceived for a year, at which point he dies in an accident, whereupon the lady, whose love was unconsummated, dropped dead as well, “for she loved him with her soul.” The chambermaid tends their adjoining graves and eventually confesses to her priest, who, when she dies, buries her also “beside her lady’s man” where the three are blessed and commune via a common rose bush. The lady’s songs, like the longer poem, reflect a conventional eroticism, where she dubiously forfeits the pleasures of the body to enhance those of the soul. The chambermaid’s songs are earthy but, were it not for the context of the poem’s spiritual sanction, would leave the dialectic up in the air, where the lover’s “bird . . . for the womb seed sighs.” It is as if eroticism and its dynamics vexed him to the end. As he said in “The Spur,” also in 1938, “You think it horrible that lust and rage / Should dance attention upon my old age; / They were not such a plague when I was young; / What else have I to spur me into song?”

### Biography

William Butler Yeats was born in Dublin in 1865 to Susan Pollexfen Yeats and John Butler Yeats.

His mother was a Protestant country woman, and his father was an assertively skeptical intellectual who declined the religion and Church of Ireland ministry of his father as well as a career in law to become an artist of some reputation but with little business acumen. Consequently the family income was irregular. William absorbed a lifetime love of nature, the countryside, and the supernatural from his mother, but it was the intellectual vigor and poetic appreciation of his father that constituted W.B. Yeats’s most sustained influence.

The introspective isolation and awkwardness of his childhood plagued him throughout life, but at 15 his erotic dreams swept him into a sexual awakening, and it was in this passionate intensity that he began experimenting with verse and romantic aesthetic theories. Even as Yeats entered the literary and political life of Ireland, he carried with him the teenage residue of sexual anxiety manifest in a tension between sexual and spiritual desire that he feared was unnatural. Still wrestling with this moral dichotomy, in 1889 Yeats met and promptly fell in love with Maud Gonne, who became the symbolic icon of his life, though she did not reciprocate his passion.

Now living in London, Yeats was immersed for the next several years in the esoterica of Theosophy and Rosicrucianism and at the same time intensified his involvement with Irish nationalistic literary and political movements. He had written *The Countess Cathleen* (1892) for Maud Gonne, and its production in Dublin in 1899 effectually inaugurated the Irish National Theater, which he founded with Lady Gregory, George Moore, and Edward Martyn. The *fin de siècle* decade produced his first significant works, including *The Land of Heart’s Desire* (1894), *Poems* (1895), and *Wind Among the Reeds* (1899), as well as several prose and editorial works.

In 1908 he first met Ezra Pound, the American expatriot poet who was to influence Yeats’s poetry in more modernist directions. This was especially manifest in *The Wild Swans at Coole* (1917) and such subsequent books as *Michael Robartes and the Dancer* (1921) and *The Tower* (1928); in such later works as *The Winding Stair and Other Poems* (1933) and *Last Poems* (1939) he recuperated traditional styles. In 1917 he married Georgie Hyde-Lees, a longtime friend and colleague in mystical and literary endeavors



## YEATS, WILLIAM BUTLER

whose adeptness at automatic writing helped Yeats articulate the long-elusive mystical system of *A Vision* (1926). In 1922 he became a senator of the Irish Free State. And in 1923 he was awarded the Nobel Prize for Poetry in Stockholm.

*A Woman Young and Old* (1929), *Words for Music Perhaps* (1932), *A Full Moon in March* (1935), and *Last Poems* (1936–1939) all featured poems evoking distinctly erotic themes and images, a substantive motif especially in Yeats's later work. He declined denouncing fascist and Nazi regimes on the ground that governments were uniformly despotic. Meanwhile his friends and allies were dying—Lady Gregory in 1932, George Russell in 1935—and his own health was in steady decline. Shortly after his last visit from Maud Gonne in September 1938, he was reconciled with his wife. He died on January 28.

PETER MICHELSON

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# Z

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## ZAYAS, MARÍA DE

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Spanish novelist  
1590–c. 1661

The Spanish Baroque author María de Zayas's erotic imagination is a troubled and troubling one. In the nineteenth and early twentieth century she was reviled by scholars for her “shameless indecency” and her “libertine histories.” However, from the late 1930s onward, she has been more celebrated for her woman-oriented, realistic tales of amorous (mis)fortune and her “fine sensuality.” Although she wrote sonnets and a verse play (*La tracion en la amistad* [*Friendship Betrayed*]), she is best known for her two volumes of short stories (containing ten stories each). The sensational *Novelas amorosas y ejemplares* [*Amorous and Exemplary Novels*, also called in English *The Enchantments of Love*] was so popular that Zayas published a darker sequel: *Parte segunda del sarao y entretenimientos honestos* [*Second part of the entertaining and honest soiree*]; in modern editions it is often titled *Desengaños amorosos* [*Love Undeceived*, or *The Disenchantments of Love*]. These stories are all either positive or negative “exemplars” about sexual desire, but the majority end

ambiguously or negatively. That Zayas was suspicious of men (and conventional ‘happy endings’ resulting in marriage) is definite; that she was an unequivocal proto-feminist (as some modern scholars have suggested) is more open to question. Clearly she found female erotic desire natural, empowering, and ubiquitous—but also fraught with negative and sometimes gruesomely tragic consequences.

Biographically, we do not even know if Zayas was married or single. We believe her to have been born in 1590 into Madrid aristocracy, but we have no evidence even of her date of death, and allegations that she may have lived much of her life in various other cities of Spain and Europe rely solely on textual descriptions. Her sexual orientation is also in question; Lope de Vega compared her talents to those of Sappho, and other contemporary commentators spoke (perhaps jokingly) of her manly, or even whiskered, appearance and her apparent inability to secure a husband. That she was a passionate advocate for women’s intellectual and literary ability, and that she was indeed taken seriously as a writer even in her own repressive era is not in doubt. After the exemplary novels of Miguel

de Cervantes, those of Zayas were the best known in Western Europe in her day, and paradoxically Cervantes himself was erroneously given credit for writing three of them.

As in Cervantes, there are numerous examples of cross-dressing female characters in Zayas's work. On the stage, of course, this device was used (as Samuel Pepys notes in his *Diary*) so male audiences could be titillated by the forbidden sight of female legs in tight male breeches. Normally any hint of "butch" lesbianism is dispensed with because the female character often resorts to masculine garb solely in order to pursue a male love object, or to protect herself in a male-dominated society. For example, in "The Judge in Her Own Case" and "Aminta Deceived," Claudia and Aminta dress as men in order to have the freedom to pursue their male lovers, for reunion or for revenge. In "Venturing and Losing," Jacinta dresses as a shepherd in order to protect herself from robbers. In her *Disenchantments of Love* volume, Zayas presents us with two transvestite males (which was *not* a common literary convention). In "The Most Infamous Revenge," don Juan avenges his sister Octavia's seduction by dressing as a woman to gain entry into the house of the seducer's wife Camila. Upon doing so he proceeds to rape Camila before announcing his true (male) identity to one and all. In "Love for the Sake of Conquest," a young man disguises himself as a woman in order to befriend a woman he intends to seduce—to the point that he truly seems to transform himself from Esteban into "Estefanía" (and is comically but earnestly pursued by Laurela's father). These tales seem bizarre and emasculating until the reader remembers that in Golden-Age Spain, a woman of good breeding would never have been allowed to be left unchaperoned with a male who was not an immediate family member; thus, cross-dressing as an "unthreatening" female often led to successful heterosexual seduction. However, the best life for a woman, according to Zayas, may have been to evade permanent sexual possession by a man; she comments of her heroine Lisis's resorting to convent life that "Hers is not a tragic ending, but rather the happiest that could be given her, because while being both desiring and desired by many [males], she became subjected to none of them."

In "Love for the Sake of Conquest," Zayas discusses the possibility of love between women.

Although eventually she rejects the possibility in that story (after having one of the characters, a transvestite man, claim "The power of love also extends between women, as between a lover and his lady"), she raises it again in "Marrying Afar: Portent of Doom" in which two women, each badly treated or neglected by their men, find solace in their (platonic?) love for each other. (In this story Blanca's husband is eventually caught by his wife *in flagrante delicto* with his beloved sixteen-year-old pageboy.)

Zayas is also known for her "phallic women" and her creation of castration anxiety in men (as Margaret Greer reminds us). In her daring stories we also find instability of gender definition ("Judge Thyself"), female characters' dreams of erotic desires ("Venturing and Losing"), and unflinching depictions of sexual violence against women ("Everything Ventured"). She also writes (sometimes in veiled terms) of incest ("Too Late Undeceived"), interracial passion ("Forewarned but Not Forearmed"), narcissism ("Everything Ventured"), sex magic ("Innocence Punished"), male sexual miserliness ("A Miser's Reward"), and even hermaphroditism ("Love for the Sake of Conquest" and "Disillusionment in Love and Virtue Rewarded"). However, even as Zayas probes the mysterious origins of sexual desire (from her very first story, "Everything Ventured"), she cautions that women who are the active, desirous pursuers of men are usually destined to become victims of their own lust. Despite many feminist suggestions and stances, sexual aggression, which is rampant among Zayas's female characters, nevertheless seems to be the proper province of "lion-like" men in these tales (see Jacinta's dream in "Everything Ventured"), notwithstanding Zayas's sly gender-role subversion and episodes of female autonomy in "Slave to Her Own Lover" and "Judge Thyself."

It can be argued that for Zayas, sexuality is a cruel, multilayered masquerade in which the verbally-expressed erotic interests of both genders inexorably lead to the ruin of women, regardless of their courage, ingenuity, or intellectual capacity. Or that she presages Lacanian theory in her endless repetition of insatiable Need, Desire, and Demand. Or that she hints at a Utopian vision wherein women withdrawn into a convent-like realm become thus blessedly free of the dangers, desires, and depredations of men. Yet some of her stories (in her first collection) have conventionally

“happy endings,” replete with wedding bells and beautiful progeny. Given how little we know about the historical María de Zayas Sotomayor, her own true sexual desires, intents, preferences, and ideals need remain a matter of speculation.

### Biography

María de Zayas Sotomayor was born into the Spanish aristocracy the 12<sup>th</sup> of September in 1590 in Madrid. She probably spent most of her life in this city, which was the epicenter of her literary activity, but she may have lived with her father in Naples for a period of time, and she may have had sojourns in Zaragoza, Seville, Granada, or Barcelona. Her parents were María de Barasa and Fernando de Zayas y Sotomayor. Her father was allegedly a military officer and/or knight in the service of the count of Lemos. She wrote (“flourished”) in the 1620s and 1630s (her *Novelas ejemplares y amorosas* was published in 1637 and her *Desengaños* was published a decade later). It is not known for certain if she were married or single. It is possible that she ended her life in a convent, but nothing is known of her for sure after 1647. Scholars posit that she died between 1647 and 1661.

C.A. PRETTIMAN

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## ZHANG ZU

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657–730

Chinese scholar, novelist, and poet

### *Visiting the Fairy Cave*

Such is the title translated by Robert van Gulik from the Chinese *Yu xianku*, but the English

translation by Howard Levy uses a different grouping of the three characters, *Yuxian ku*, or *The Dwelling of Playful Goddesses*, based on the traditional Japanese interpretation. In fact, the author does claim to make an unexpected visit to some quite hospitable creatures: rather than fairies or goddesses, the two girls are human beings

of prestigious lineage turned into immortals, but of a “real” sort as they do not simply vanish instantaneously but dwindle slowly out of sight at the end of the encounter. It is the first Chinese “novelette” and the only surviving example of this subgenre of Chinese fiction which was soon supplanted by a new genre of longer short stories in a freer style. It was probably composed at the beginning of Cheng Tsu’s career, around 680, when the movement for a return to antique prose came into full swing. The *Yu xianku* is written in a mixture of poetry and prose in parallel style, which quickly fell out of fashion. It is unusually lengthy and told in the first person, a rare case in traditional Chinese fiction. The narrator tells how on an official mission he came to a dwelling somewhere in the Northern province of Gansu where he was greeted by two witty and attractive girls, Lady n°10 and Sister-in-law n°5, both widows. After tirelessly exchanging jokes, puns, and poems with both of them, and being entertained with singing and dancing, he is most willingly left to spend a torrid night with Lady n°10, rather cursorially described in no more than hundred and fifty characters out of nine thousand devoted to the whole tale, still enough for a translator in modern Chinese to have skipped them. It may explain why the text disappeared from China and would have remained unknown there, had it not been discovered in Japan by Chinese envoys around 1880. We may well imagine how such a style would have taken the fancy of the Japanese court in its infancy as well as later, when both sexes mingled in aristocratic society. We know for sure that manuscripts of the tale reached Japan shortly after or even before Zhang Zu’s death. Later, a great number of printings testify to the high level of appreciation of this text in written Chinese.

The core of the story, visiting a fairy cave, is hardly a new theme. Liu I-ch’ing (403–444) in his *Youming lu* [*Records of the Otherworld*] noted the still famous story of two fellows, Liu Zhen and Juan Zhao, who spent a month with two attractive immortals, and, returning home, learned that seven generations had since succeeded. But here nothing of the sort is mentioned. It is a tale celebrating the pleasures of courtship and making love out of marriage, of the sort reproved by the Confucian orthodoxy

of late imperial China. Equally censurable was the sprinkling of colloquialisms. In Japan, on the contrary, it added to the attractiveness of the text in a readable classical Chinese for cultured people.

The author’s reputation for frivolity is probably as unreliable as the idea, circulated in Japan, that he wrote the story to court the favors of the Empress Wu Zetian, who reigned as Emperor of China from 690 to 705. But it is not unlikely that the text is full of contemporary allusions we have no way to decipher.

The authorship of *Yu hsien-k’u* has been contested and unconvincingly assigned to an obscure contemporary of Zhang Zu.

### Biography

Born in 657 in Shenzhou (southern Hunan), Zhang Zu graduated and entered the civil service in 679. His career was marred by the personal enmity of the Great Councillor Yao Chong (651–721). He enjoyed a high literary reputation in his time. Korean and Japanese envoys carried back several of his works. However, in China his fame soon declined. Historians still value his *Records of Affairs Within and Outside the Court*. He died in 730 after having attained a prominent position in the central imperial bureaucracy at the capital.

ANDRÉ LÉVY

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## ZHAOYANG QU SHI

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The earliest extant edition of *Zhaoyang qu shi* bears the date 1621. Adopting the plot of *Zhao Feiyan wai zhuan* [*Unofficial Biography of Flying Swallow*], which is attributed to Ling Xuan (first century BCE), the novel depicts the sexual adventures of Flying Swallow (Zhao Feiyan, ?–1 BCE) and her sister Combined Virtue (Zhao Hede, ?–?), two women of humble upbringing who became queen and imperial concubine, respectively, during the reign of the Cheng Emperor (32–7 BCE) of the Han dynasty.

The story begins in a mountain of the Taoist mythic realm, where a fox spirit has been cultivating herself for several thousand years to attain divinity. One day, as she instructs her followers in the technique of collecting yin and yang, she recognizes that the lack of Pure Yang has formed an obstacle to her goal. Thereupon, she leaves her mountain and transforms herself into a beautiful woman, intending to lure a man for his Pure Yang. Meanwhile, a lustful swallow spirit also leaves his mountain and transforms himself into a man, aiming to acquire Pure Yin. He encounters the fox spirit and takes her home, but it results in his loss of Pure Yang during their mating. The swallow spirit leads his clan to attack the foxes, but a Taoist deity passing through the region captures both of them and sends them to the Jade Emperor. The Jade Emperor punishes each of them with a life in the human realm, where the spirits shall be reborn as sisters and become members of the imperial family.

In the mundane world, a handsome musician, Feng Wanjin, is kept by his master Zhao Man as a catamite. Feng, however, conducts an illicit affair with Zhao's wife, the Princess of Gusu, who has been neglected by her husband. As a consequence, the princess becomes pregnant and secretly gives birth to twin daughters in her maternal home. The girls are sent to Feng, who raises them outside the Zhao household.

The two sisters grow into unparalleled beauties. The elder one is nicknamed Flying Swallow and the younger one is named Combined Virtue. When both Feng and the princess die, the girls become homeless and wander to the

capital, Chang'an, struggling for a living by making straw sandals. In the capital, a young man nicknamed Bird Shooter often helps them with daily supplies and becomes the lover they share. Zhao Lin, an attendant gentleman, adopts both of them and trains them in singing and dancing. One day, he presents Flying Swallow to the Cheng Emperor, who is immediately captivated and soon dethrones the queen and designates Flying Swallow as the new queen.

Fan Yi, a lady-in-waiting, mentions the beauty of Combined Virtue to the emperor. The emperor summons her to an imperial audience, but she replies she will enter the palace only under her sister's command. Fan Yi, therefore, tricks both sisters in order to bring Combined Virtue to the emperor, who is enticed by the new girl at once and gradually alienates Flying Swallow. To relieve her distress, Fan Yi arranges for Bird Shooter to enter the palace to satisfy Flying Swallow's sexual desires.

Flying Swallow fascinates the emperor once more when she sings and dances for him on a jade serving plate during a voyage on a lake. It becomes a problem, however, that she has not conceived. Trying to become pregnant, she seeks foreign remedies and further engages in sexual activities with Bird Shooter, a court musician, and sixteen youths Fan Yi secretly brings into the palace. The emperor senses her pursuit and intends to execute her, but Combined Virtue calms his anger. She visits her sister and advises her to stop. Flying Swallow, in great fear, sends the youths away. But soon she obtains a substitute, a new attendant, with whom Combined Virtue also has sex.

One day, the emperor spies on Combined Virtue bathing and becomes greatly aroused. Learning about the incident, Flying Swallow also bathes in front of the emperor. However, remembering his queen's lustful affairs, the emperor leaves in silence. Flying Swallow, in distress, continues to satisfy herself with Bird Shooter, and soon she reintroduces him to Combined Virtue to rekindle their old affair. Yet, the sisters still don't conceive. Flying Swallow decides to pretend

she is pregnant. At the end of the tenth month, she accepts a suggestion to bring an infant into the palace, pretending it is hers, but the scheme fails and she announces she has lost the child. Combined Virtue, on the other hand, puts a baby of a lady-in-waiting to death to prevent the possibility of the emperor designating an heir that is not her son. The childless emperor finally installs the King of Dingtao as the crown prince. In the meantime, Bird Shooter's health declines, and he begs Flying Swallow to let him go. He finally leaves the palace and becomes a monk. The emperor, who is becoming impotent, takes an aphrodisiac from an alchemist, but Combined Virtue overdoses him for her pleasure and the emperor finally dies of over ejaculation. In fear of the punishment she has to face, Combined Virtue dies by coughing blood. Flying Swallow commits suicide a few years later, when the new emperor also dies. The spirits of Flying Swallow and Combined Virtue return to the court of the Jade Emperor. Having being punished for their sinful previous lives, they are allowed to continue their spiritual cultivation in the mythic realm.

*Zhaoyan qu shi* is a good example of seventeenth- to nineteenth-century Chinese erotic fiction: it presents a popular mythic framework and a standard combination of fabricated stories and official history. The use of aphrodisiacs is a stock feature of this genre, and death caused by over ejaculation is also common in erotic fiction after *Zhaoyan qu shi*, most notably in *Jin ping*

*mei*. Like all other works in this genre, *Zhaoyan qu shi* was repeatedly banned in imperial China. Modern editions are not widely available, and in-depth study is certainly underdeveloped.

### Biography

Gu Hang Yan Yan Sheng [Gorgeous Student of Ancient Hangzhou] is the pseudonym of an anonymous Chinese writer of the sixteenth or seventeenth century. In addition to *Zhaoyan qu shi* (*Pleasure History of Zhaoyan Palace*), he edited *Yufei mei shi* (*Seduction History of the Jade Consort*).

I-HSIEN WU

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## ZHULIN YESHI [UNOFFICIAL HISTORY OF THE BAMBOO GROVE]

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*Zhulin Yeshe*, a novel in sixteen chapters, takes place in the distant past, about 600 BCE, during the "Spring and Autumn" period. It is about the daughter of the Duke of Cheng, Su E. When she reaches puberty, she meets a Daoist adept in a dream who initiates her into the secrets of sexual intercourse, particularly the way to absorb the male vital essence and nourish her own, known

as "the Plain Girl's Method of Reaping the Results of Battle." He explains to her that through this method she will be able to stave off old age and continually rejuvenate herself. The *sunü* "plain girl" is the Yellow Emperor's interlocutor in the foundational medical text, *Huangdi Neijing*, [*The Yellow Emperor's Classic*]. Su E's name, also meaning "plain girl," evokes

the discourses of the “plain girl,” both canonical and “secret,” and frequently on the topic of sex and medicine.

Su E teaches her maid, Hehua, this method of sexual combat, and the two women set out on a sexual odyssey to nourish their *yin*, through sexual practices that essentially suck the life out of their partners. Su E is given in marriage to the son of Duke Ling of the neighboring state of Chen. In his mansion there is a bamboo grove named Zhulin where Su E sports with her young husband. Soon after she has borne him a son, her husband dies of exhaustion. On his deathbed, he entrusts his widow and infant son to the care of his friend, the minister Kong Ning. Su E establishes sexual relations with Kong and also with his friend, the minister Yixing. In order to safeguard his own position, Kong arranges a meeting between Su E and her father-in-law, Duke Ling. Thereafter, the Duke joins in the sexual orgies in the Bamboo Grove, in which the maid Hehua also takes an active part. Twenty years later, Su E and Hehua still look like young women but their three lovers have become old and weak. One day Su E's son, who has grown to be a strong warrior, overhears the Duke and his two ministers joking about which of the two fathered Su E's son. The young man rushes inside and kills the Duke. The two ministers escape and take refuge in the enemy state of Chu. The king of Chu had long planned an attack on Chen and now the murder of the Duke provides him with a good pretext. Su E's son is killed in battle and Su E herself taken captive. Kongning and Yixing plan for her to seduce the King of Chu but the ghost of Su E's son haunts them. Before they can carry out their plan Kong becomes insane. He kills his own wife and children and then himself. Yixing, in despair, ends his life by drowning.

At the court of Chu there is a minister named Wuchen, also an expert in the Daoist methods of strengthening the vital essence through sexual intercourse. He immediately recognizes in Su E a fellow-student and resolves to marry her so that they may practice this art together. The King, however has in the meantime given Su E in marriage to a common soldier. In the process, she has become separated from her maid, Hehua. An elaborate interstate intrigue follows which is described with considerable skill. In the end Wuchen becomes a minister of the state of Chin and is united with Su E and Hehua. These

three experts in Daoist “sexual vampirism” need young victims to supply their vital essence. Wuchen seduces a young nobleman of Chin and gets him and his wife to join in their orgies. The Bamboo Grove is thus re-established in the state of Chin—this time with two men and three women. A servant betrays them and denounces them before the king, who has the mansion surrounded by his soldiers. The nobleman and his wife are arrested, but Su E, Hehua and Wuchen have already absorbed so much vital essence as to complete their “inner elixir.” Transformed into Immortals, they disappear into the sky shrouded by a cloud of dust.

Though medical manuals and pamphlets of the Ming period seem to have been in general agreement, arguing against the possibility or advisability of prolonging life by nourishing the vital essence, the fact that they emphasized the inherent *danger* of sex, be it too much conservation or too much dissipation almost without exception is an important supplement to the preservation of sexual myths and metaphors in literature. The fact that medical manuals and pamphlets still addressed the supposedly outdated notion of nurturing the essence, even if only to debunk it, shows that the subtext of medical texts and that of erotic literature were essentially the same and that it was part of the popular imagination. Whether for procreation, life extension, or recreation, neither medical nor literary texts questioned the power and danger inherent in the sex act; a power and danger exacerbated by the concept of exchange.

This novel, though also obscene, is less coarse than the *Xiuta Yeshe* and has a carefully constructed plot. Nonetheless, it was also banned by name, twice listed as a forbidden book in the second half of the Qing Dynasty, in 1810 and 1868. Although neither *Zhulin Yeshe* or *Xiuta Yeshe* are illustrated, both novels seem to have been popular during the time of their authors and influenced by or exerting influence on, erotic picture albums, and the print culture of the late Ming dynasty.

### Biography

The work is anonymous, supposedly of the early Qing period (mid-seventeenth century), although some believe that the author was a member of Lü Tiancheng's literary group.

ANDREW SCHONEBAUM



ZILLE, HEINRICH

See also **Jin Ping Mei**; **Hong Lou Meng**

### **Editions and Translations**

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# ZILLE, HEINRICH

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1858–1929

German author and film maker

Today Heinrich Zille is best known for his humorous drawings of children and his portrayal of everyday life of working class people in Berlin at the turn of the century. Zille followed in the footsteps of his teacher, the renowned artist Theodor Hosemann, who is regarded as the father of typical Berlin humor. In his commentaries and short dialogues, which he added to his cartoon-like drawings, Zille used authentic Berlin slang. Although his drawings and sketches did not idealize Berlin and its population, he was very sympathetic towards the milieu he depicted. Zille's works, their amusing overtones notwithstanding, overtly criticize the horrific social standards of lower-class people. Unfortunately, Zille has not been properly appreciated for the sociocritical aspects of his oeuvre.

Aside from being a prolific draughtsman, Zille was also a gifted writer, who often made use of Berlin slang in his prose. In his *Zwanglose Geschichten und Bilder* [*Unconstrained Stories and Pictures*] (1919), he particularly emphasizes the utterly despicable living conditions in run-down tenement houses. In the story titled *Spezialitäten* [*Specialties*], Zille writes about Thusnelda, a young woman, who works as a performance artist before she becomes a singer in a cabaret. She lives with four other singers, who are rehearsing naked when a young mail boy delivers their mail. As in most of Zille's erotic pictures, the women are apparently overweight. Zille's fascination with buttocks is especially evident in his book *Die Landpartie*

[*A Country Outing*] of 1920. Here, on almost every picture, Zille's characters lie sleeping in their beds, covered except for their bare buttocks, with thick feather blankets. In his later works, Zille focused on depictions of oral sex and he also alluded to sodomy in his picture *In der Sommerfrische* [*During Summer Vacation*]. These aspects of his work, however, have rarely been mentioned by art critics.

In 1925, Zille's picture *Modelle im Atelier* [*Models in a Studio*] was heavily criticized by influential men in Stuttgart, who called the artist's work pornography. The case was brought to trial and although the defence relied on the testimonies of reputable expert witnesses, Zille was sentenced to a fine of 150 Reichsmarks. It is rather bewildering that despite widespread tolerant attitudes during the Weimar Republic the artist was indicted on grounds of one very harmless lithograph.

### ***Hurengesprache***

Aside from making a living as a draughtsman of humorous drawings for various Berlin magazines, Zille wanted to be appreciated as an original artist. Besides making lithographs, Zille created a series of etchings titled *Zwölf Kunstlerdrucke* [*Twelve Artistic Prints*] in 1905. In order to archive recognition from his colleagues at the Berlin Secession, he produced a number of highly crafted prints. His subsequent, extremely erotic lithographic series *Hurengesprache* [*Conversations among Prostitutes*] was particularly original. Zille published *Hurengesprache* in 1913 under the pseudonym W. Pfeifer, as he

feared censorship. However, insiders of Berlin's artistic scene knew that the *Hurengesprache* were in fact Zille's work. Fairly recently discovered sketches of this particular series of lithographs demonstrate various stages in preparation of the book. Although the highly erotic pictures depict several prostitutes having intercourse with their customers, the book does not limit the reader's role to that of a mere voyeur. As the title suggests, eight prostitutes speak about their everyday lives and how they actually became prostitutes. Zille's talent as a socially critical writer is evident when one reads about the often times tragic life stories of his eight protagonists. While growing up, Pauline had sex repeatedly with her brother before she was raped by a neighbor. After her father abandoned Pauline and her family, they had to live on the streets of Berlin. In order to survive, Pauline became a prostitute. In her thick Berlin accent she wonders if her life would have been different had her parents not been as devastatingly poor. Rosa's first sexual relationship was also incestuous, as her father's sexual appetite did not decrease when her mother was incurably sick. As a child, Rosa was always in the same room when her parents had intercourse, as the family could not afford more than one room. Now the sick mother had to witness the incestuous encounters between her husband and her daughter. While Rosa gave birth in a delirious state, she unintentionally disclosed the name of her child's father. As a result, Rosa's father was brought to trial but he insisted that it was his paternal right to engage in a sexual relationship with his daughter. Zille, who was repeatedly involved with prostitutes, paints a vivid picture of the harsh lives of his protagonists. He does not condemn prostitution as morally wrong, nor does he depict prostitutes as nymphomaniac seductresses, who derive great pleasure from their overactive sex lives. Rather, in *Hurengesprache* he sympathetically portrays prostitutes as fairly ordinary women trying to make ends meet.

### Biography

Born in Radeburg near Dresden, 10 January 1858. Educated at Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Berlin, main advisor Theodor Hosemann, 1872–1875; apprenticeship at printing company. First exhibition of drawings at the Berliner Secession, 1901; publications of drawings and lithographs in *Simplicissimus*, *Lustige Blätter*, and *Jugend: Illustrierte Wochenschrift für Kunst und Leben*. Military service, 1880–1882. Married Hulda Frieske in 1883 (died 1919); three children. Worked for the Photographische Gesellschaft, 1877–1907. Founding member of the "Freie Secession," 1913; elected into the Preußische Akademie der Künste, was awarded an honorary professorship, 1924. Directed various films, 1925–1929. Died in Berlin-Charlottenburg, 9 August 1929.

GREGOR THUSWALDNER

### Selected Works

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## ZINOV'EVA-ANNIBAL, LIDIJA DMITRIEVNA

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1866–1907

Russian prose writer, dramatist, critic

### *Thirty Three Abominations* [*Tridtsat' tri uroda*]

Published in 1907, this novella is written as a diary of a young woman, and spans 4–5 months. The nameless protagonist is living with an older, famous dramatic actress named Vera. The diary entries reveal that underlying the relationship between the two women is Vera's worship of the protagonist's physical beauty. At the beginning of her diary the young woman is completely subsumed by Vera's personality, and Vera fashions her young lover into an orientalized ideal—the young woman's room is furnished with carpets and pillows, and Vera wraps her in beautiful cloth clasped at the shoulders and falling softly down to the ground.

As she writes her diary, the protagonist reflects back on her life. She has been raised by an authoritative grandmother, doesn't know her mother, and her presumed father is a homosexual dandy. She meets a young man who is willing to marry her despite her strange background. However, as she attends the theater on the night before her wedding, Vera, who sees her while acting on the stage, whisks her away from her family and fiancé, who was once Vera's lover, saying that they are not worthy of such beauty. Just as she earlier lived completely subsumed by her grandmother's will, the young woman starts living in Vera's house, subsumed by Vera's will and worship. Throughout the diary, the young protagonist sees her own beauty through Vera's eyes, and uses Vera's words to describe herself. Symbolically, the word *vera* means faith in Russian. Eventually, Vera, obsessed by her lover's beauty puts her on the stage, since she feels that she must share this beauty with the public. At the same time, Vera

is jealously protective of the young woman, and initially refuses a famous painter's request to paint her portrait. In a show of will, the protagonist agrees on her own to pose for another painter. Jealous, Vera beats her lover. The protagonist feels she lives in a gilded cage and often fantasizes about her own and Vera's death. Eventually, Vera, realizing that she cannot keep this beauty all to herself, agrees to have members of the Association of Thirty Three Artists to paint her lover. Vera fears that she and her lover will succumb to old age and to ugliness, and she hopes that the portraits will preserve her lover's beauty. As Vera meditates on losing her lover to art and to public contemplation, she delves more and more into her theater work, becoming obsessed with her dramatic roles. Finally, the day of posing for the artists' association arrives, and the protagonist poses nude. Like Narcissus, she sees her body in the mirror and falls in love with it. She imagines herself as an undine. However, when she and Vera look at the completed paintings, they see thirty three fragments, thirty three abominations. The protagonist eventually realizes that these images are a part of her real self, and goes back to pose for the artists of her own volition. However, Vera can't get over the thirty three images, stops acting, and goes mad. The protagonist takes on a lover from among the thirty three artists, and her visits in the studio are described in hallucinogenic terms. She decides that she is reflected better in the paintings than in Vera's eyes. At the end of the diary, Vera commits suicide. The diary ends abruptly as the protagonist tries to understand what she is and how she would go on living without being reflected in Vera.

This novel, as well as Zinov'eva-Annibal's other writings, came out of her adherence to the Dionysiac cult of the ecstatic co-existence of flesh and soul, which was the mainstay of the Tower literary salon. Zinov'eva-Annibal

saw herself as sharing her husband and his art with others. To that extent, she also felt that their intimate life must be shared with others, particularly with the poet Sergei Gorodetskii and with the wife of the poet Maksimilian Voloshin, Margarita Sabashnikova. The practical failure of these ideas resonates in *Thirty Three Abominations*.

Critical reception of this story was negative and moralizing. The critic Amfiteatrov derided it as an anatomical lesson passing for a literary work, and Novopolin, in his study of the pornographic element in Russian literature, wrote that no female writer before Zinov'eva-Annibal fell so low as to exalt the supremacy of sexual perversion. Significantly, Novopolin refused to deal with the spiritual portions of the novel, concentrating instead on the erotic details, writing that they were scarce even in the works of the nineteenth-century sexologist Krafft-Ebing. Famous writers, like Andrei Bely and Valerii Bryusov, skewered Zinov'eva-Annibal for writing a piece of base erotica, and the writer Zinaida Gippius wrote in a review that she pitied Zinov'eva-Annibal, "a simple and nice woman." Unlike Mikhail Kuzmin's novel of homosexuality, *Wings*, to which *Thirty Three Abominations* is often compared, and which is more optimistic in its sexual exuberance, *Thirty Three Abominations* explores the tragedy of love, beauty, art, guilt, and belief. Significantly, Zinov'eva-Annibal dedicated this story to her husband, Viacheslav Ivanov, and published it shortly before her own death. Later critics saw in it an acknowledgement of the tragedy of her own "giving" of the poet to others.

Late twentieth-century critics read *Thirty Three Abominations* from the perspective of Zinov'eva-Annibal's failed attempts to create a salon for women where they could transcend the mundane. As a critic herself, Zinov'eva-Annibal

was particularly taken by the writings of the French actress and essayist Georgette Leblanc, from which she derived her idea of a women's collective intended to propagate corporeal beauty and freedom. *Thirty Three Abominations* and Zinov'eva-Annibal's other writings were finally republished in Russia in the 1990s, for the first time since the Bolshevik Revolution.

### Biography

Lidiia Dmitrievna Zinov'eva-Annibal, born in Kopore in 1866, is famous in the literary history of the Russian Silver Age as a co-host of the symbolist literary salon The Tower with her husband Viacheslav Ivanov. She started publishing in 1889, mostly in literary periodicals, wrote several plays and stories, and died prematurely of scarlet fever in Zagor'e in 1907.

RUTH WALLACH

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## ZOLA, ÉMILE

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1840–1902

French novelist, dramatist, and journalist

Émile Zola (1840–1902) published 29 novels, several volumes of short stories, and a number of plays. He wrote countless, often polemical newspaper articles dealing with a wide range of subjects, from art to politics, and was the leading proponent of literary Naturalism. At the height of his career in the 1880s he was the most famous French novelist of his day. Zola's most important work is his twenty-volume novel cycle *Les Rougon-Macquart: histoire naturelle et sociale d'une famille sous le Second Empire* [*The Rougon-Macquart: the natural and social history of a family during the Second Empire*] in which he charts the lives of five generations of the Rougon-Macquart family. All his central protagonists descend from the family's founding matriarch, Tante Dide, and all inherit from her a kind of mental instability or *fêlure* [crack]. Although this instability manifests itself in different ways, it is frequently linked with excessive or perverse sexual desire. As well as Zola's most depraved heroine, Nana, Maxime in *La curée* [*The Kill*], Serge in *La faute de l'abbé Mouret* [*Father Mouret's Sin*], and Jacques in *La bête humaine* [*The Human Beast*] all engage in non-conventional sexual acts. For Zola, any preference for non-reproductive sex is an inherited flaw—failure to control these 'unnatural' (because non-reproductive) desires ultimately leads to the downfall of the character.

Although none of Zola's works can be described as erotic in the proper sense, his novels in particular deal often explicitly with human sexuality, which he considered—with money—to be the driving force behind society. Zola's treatment of human sexuality stems from his commitment to literary Naturalism. The primary aim of Zolian Naturalism,—a literary movement which had its roots in the Realism of Honoré de Balzac and Gustave Courbet—, was, according to Zola, to 'tout voir, tout savoir, tout dire' [see everything, know everything, say

everything]. The novelist's quest to shed light even on the most troubling aspects of late nineteenth-century society was greeted with widespread condemnation. Even though, as Zola was at pains to demonstrate, all the details of his novels came from his observations of reality, he was considered by many to be both immoral and dangerous. His use of precise anatomical detail in descriptions of sex, and his unwillingness to avoid reference to taboo subjects, angered his critics who were uneasy about being presented with harsh truths whose existence they would rather ignore. They failed to see that it was the Second Empire society depicted by Zola, rather than the author himself, which should be condemned as immoral. Zola did not necessarily condone the behavior he described (indeed he often criticized it), but his aim was to force French society to confront its own, sordid, guilty, and hidden realities. It is not surprising then that Zola's novels contain many frank references to sex. As well as conventional heterosexual sex (on which the continuation of the family depends), and adultery (which is almost as common), he depicts rape (*La terre* [*The Earth*]), oral sex (*L'Argent* [*Money*]), lesbianism (*Pot-Bouille* [*Piping Hot*]), incest (*Le Docteur Pascal*), sadism (*Son excellence Eugène Rougon* [*His Excellency Eugène Rougon*]), castration (*Germinal*), sexually motivated murder (*Thérèse Raquin*, *La bête humaine*), and prostitution (*Nana*). Zola's most sexually active protagonists are ruled by their bodily urges: rather than acting on reflection, they act on impulse, being driven by their instincts, their passions, their appetites. An almost animalistic desire for sexual fulfilment is the motivating force behind the narratives of a number of novels, most notably *Thérèse Raquin*, *Nana*, and *La bête humaine*.

Although Zola was never tried for obscenity in France, the translator and publisher of a number of English translations, Henry Vizetelly, was twice prosecuted under the Obscene Publications Act. In October 1888, he was fined, and in May 1889, he was sentenced to three months imprisonment.

### *Thérèse Raquin*

*Thérèse Raquin* was Zola's first overtly 'naturalist' novel, and his preface to the second edition can be read as something of a naturalist manifesto. *Thérèse Raquin* is the story of the eponymous heroine's sexual desire for her husband Camille's friend and colleague Laurent. Unable to ignore their mutual passion, Thérèse and Laurent engage in a lustful adulterous affair before plotting to kill Camille. After the murder, Thérèse and Laurent are eventually married. However their guilt at what they have done is so strong that soon any physical contact is repulsive to them. Their most erotic moments paradoxically become their most dreaded as the drowned corpse of Camille seems to lie between them in bed. Their increasingly violent and abusive relationship is symbolized by the scene in which Thérèse engineers a miscarriage by presenting her belly to Laurent as he beats her. The novel ends with a dramatic double-suicide in which the lovers kill themselves instead of killing each other.

### *Nana*

*Nana*, the ninth novel in the *Rougon-Macquart* cycle, is arguably Zola's most erotic novel. The novel charts the life of the eponymous heroine from her strip-tease-like appearance (all-but-naked in the role of Venus) on stage at the *Variétés* Theatre, through her rise to infamy, to her death from smallpox. *Nana*, a working-class prostitute whose childhood is recounted in *L'Assommoir* [*The Dram Shop*], sees the wealthy men who desire her as a resource to be selfishly exploited. She takes no real pleasure with them, merely using them as a way of increasing her status. She has utter disrespect for their bourgeois values, and delights in exposing their hypocrisies and wrecking their marriages. All the men she encounters are in some way destroyed, either financially, physically, or emotionally, by the end of the novel. Zola describes *Nana* as a 'golden fly,' a filthy parasite who infests everyone she touches with the sordid dirt of her working-class existence. In one emblematic scene, *Nana* and her lesbian lover *Satin* delight in sullyng their outwardly respectable companions with tales of their debauched childhood. The novel demonstrates above all the dangerous power of the female body, whose erotic

charms can pose a threat to the very fabric of society by seducing and enthralling even the most morally upright of citizens.

### Biography

Born in Paris, April 12, 1840, moved to Aix-en-Provence, 1843. Educated at the Pension de Notre-Dame, Aix, 1847–1852, the Collège Bourbon d'Aix-en-Provence, 1852–1858, and the Lycée Saint-Louis, Paris, 1858–1859, twice failed the *Baccalauréat*, 1859. Worked as a clerk in the Customs House in Paris, 1860–1862 and then as the director of publicity for the publisher Hachette, 1862–1866. Published his first collection of short stories in 1864. Left Hachette to become a freelance journalist, 1866. Married Gabrielle Alexandrine Meley in 1870. Moved from Paris to Médan, 1878. Began an affair with a young servant, Jeanne Rozerot, 1880; one son and one daughter. Elected President of the *Société des Gens de Lettres*, 1891. Awarded the rank of officer in the *Légion d'honneur*, 1893. Tried for slander and sentenced to a year's imprisonment after publication of *J'accuse*, 1898, and obliged to flee to London where he lived in exile, 1898–1899. Died from asphyxiation in his apartment in Paris on 29 September 1902. His remains were transferred to the Panthéon in 1908.

HANNAH THOMPSON

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