

B

BACON, FRANCIS, SIR (1561–1626)

English statesman, philosopher, and essayist. After a somewhat shaky start in the service of Queen Elizabeth, during the reign of James I Bacon advanced from knight (1603) to the offices of attorney general (1613) and lord chancellor (1618). In 1621, however, his position collapsed when he was forced to plead guilty of charges of taking bribes; he then retired to study and write. In the philosophy of science Bacon has become identified, sometimes simplistically, with the method of induction, the patient accumulation of data to reach conclusions. Recent research, however, has shown that this stereotypical picture of a skeptical, essentially modern figure is distorted and anachronistic; Bacon's interest in experiment is in fact rooted in magical, alchemical, and esoteric traditions. Although the notion that he wrote Shakespeare's plays is now discounted, his aphoristic *Essays* (1597–1625) are a stylistic achievement in their own right.

Evidence for Bacon's erotic predilection for young men in his employ comes from two seventeenth-century writers, John Aubrey and Sir Simonds D'Ewes. The latter even states that there was some question of bringing him to trial for buggery. A letter survives from Bacon's mother chastizing him for his fondness for Welsh boys. His marriage, which was childless and probably loveless, took place at the mature age of 46. Sir Francis Bacon seems to have moved entirely in a masculine world. In accord with Greco-Roman and Renaissance predecessors, his essay "Of Friendship" confines itself to relations between men. "Of Beauty" discusses the

matter exclusively in terms of male exemplars. Also significant is his Machiavelian commendation of dissimulation; the best policy is "to have openness in fame and opinion, secrecy in habit, dissimulation in seasonable use, and a power to feign if there be no remedy." The need to "edit" one's persona thus recognized is of course one facet of the closeted life, though Bacon's caution may have been reinforced by sensitivity regarding his occult and magical interests, which were scarcely popular among the masses.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Fulton Henry Anderson, *Francis Bacon: His Career and His Thought*, Los Angeles: University of Southern California Press, 1962; Paolo Rossi, *Francis Bacon: From Magic to Science*, London: Routledge, 1968.

✓ BAILEY, DERRICK SHERWIN (1910–1984)

British theologian and historian; Canon Residentiary of Wells Cathedral from 1962. After World War II Bailey joined a small group of Anglican clergymen and physicians to study homosexuality; their findings were published in a 1954 Report entitled *The Problem of Homosexuality* produced for the Church of England Moral Welfare Council by the Church Information Board. As part of this task Bailey completed a separate historical study, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition* (London: Longmans, 1955). Although this monograph has been criticized for tending to exculpate the Christian church from blame in the persecution and defamation of homosexuals, it was a landmark in the history of the subject, combining scrutiny of the Biblical evi-

dence with a survey of subsequent history. Bailey's book drew attention to a number of neglected subjects, including the **intertestamental** literature, the legislation of the Christian emperors, the **penitentials**, and the link between **heresy** and **sodomy**. The author's interpretation of Genesis 19, where he treats the Sodom story as essentially nonsexual—an instance of violation of hospitality—has not been generally accepted. The work of Bailey and his colleagues prepared the way for the progressive **Wolfenden Report** (1957), which was followed a decade later by Parliament's **decriminalization** of homosexual conduct between consenting adults in England and Wales.

BALDWIN, JAMES (1924–1987)

American novelist, essayist, and playwright. Born in New York City's **Harlem**, his experiences as a child evangelist in the ghetto provided a rich store of material, as well as contributing to his sometimes exhortatory style. His first novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), which derives from this world, gave him immediate fame. Following the example of fellow black author Richard Wright, Baldwin had moved to Paris at the age of 24; he was to live in France for most of the rest of his life, though most of his concerns and work continued to center on the United States.

The acclaim that he had garnered in the 1950s emboldened him to publish *Giovanni's Room* (1961), an honest novel about homosexuality sent out into a literary world that was scarcely welcoming. This book recounts the story of David, an athletic, white American expatriate who discovers his homosexuality in a relationship with a working-class Italian in Paris; although it ends tragically with the death of Giovanni, the lean, yet intense style of this book, and its candor, left a lasting impression. At the time, to be sure, critics urged Baldwin to abandon such "exotic" subject matter and return to native themes. Baldwin responded with his most ambi-

tious work yet, *Another Country* (1961), in which the sexual and racial themes are inextricably interwoven. Only partially successful, this novel presents the lives of a number of New Yorkers of varying sexual persuasions, who are linked by their friendship with a black musician.

Having successfully withstood the homophobia of the immediate post-war years, the emergence of the Civil Rights movement gave Baldwin the chance to play a role at the center of the stage. His prose work *The Fire Next Time* (1963) effectively captures the moral fervor of the Kennedy years, and Baldwin seemed the Jeremiah that the country needed. Although he continued to publish after this point, the writer seemed unable to find a balanced viewpoint, and his later novels and plays are sometimes diffuse and strident. Some of his former admirers felt that he had become too much wrapped up in the rhetoric of black liberation, with its angry indictment of white injustice; conversely, some black critics found him insufficiently militant. Try as he might, he could not convince the younger black radicals that he had not sold out to whiteness. Baldwin's estimate of the urgency of the racial crisis led him to downplay the homosexual theme. Yet as a commentator on the continuing "American dilemma" of race, Baldwin failed to deliver a message that could carry full conviction for any group. Despite his best efforts, in the view of many readers he never recaptured the crystalline precision of his earlier works. These suffice, however, to assure his reputation as a writer of compelling power, a sensitive observer not merely of blackness and gayness, not merely of America and Europe, but of the inherent complexities of the human condition.

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Fred L. Standley, *James Baldwin: A Reference Guide*, Boston: G. K. Hall, 1980; Carolyn Wedin Sylvander, *James Baldwin*, New York: Frederick Ungar, 1980; W. J. Weatherby, *James Baldwin: Artist on Fire*, New York: Donald I. Fine, 1989.

Wayne R. Dynes