

poem in a historical period rich in homoerotic connotations (such as the credo: "Hellas eternally our love"), even using a female persona or pretending to demean or satirize homosexual attachments. Yet in his work the passion between males is always named "love," never disguised as mere "friendship," but at the same time discretely merged with heterosexual "love," or with the asexual "love" of Christian theology. In some passages masculine and feminine signals alternate in an androgynous pattern, leaving the reader to divine what is intended.

The taboo on overt manifestation of homosexuality in late nineteenth-century Germany obliged George to devise for self-expression to a discerning minority a complicated code that utilizes masks and symbols inherited from previous literary epochs, while cherishing the dream of a "new world" of male beauty and comradeship. The very notion of the "secret" is tantamount to the forbidden, the homoerotic—as it was objectively in the culture of George's time—but it is the "secret" that perceptive critics recognize as the clue to all of George's life and work, however veiled these may be to the profane reader. George remains the outstanding representative of a literary school, forbidden to express homosexual feeling and experience openly, that conveyed its message by a complex linguistic code which united form and content with enduring aesthetic mastery.

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### GERBER, HENRY (1892–1972)

American gay rights pioneer. Born in Bavaria, Gerber arrived in the United States only in 1914, and the following year joined the U.S. Army under a provision admitting aliens. From 1920 to 1923 he

served in the American army of occupation in the Rhineland, where he discovered the German homosexual movement in full bloom. The upshot of this experience was that on his resettlement in Chicago Gerber founded the Society for Human Rights, inspired in name and purpose by the Liga für Menschenrechte. On December 10, 1924, the State of Illinois granted a charter to the society—the first documented homosexual rights organization in the United States. It saw as its task the combatting of the "almost wilful misunderstanding and ignorance on the part of the general public concerning the nature of homosexuality," and the forging of an organized, self-disciplined homosexual community. Like its German predecessors, it focused on the repeal of the laws—in this case those of Illinois—that penalized homosexual acts. It managed to issue two numbers (now lost) of a periodical named *Friendship and Freedom*, again after the German *Freundschaft und Freiheit*, before Gerber and several of his associates were arrested, and he lost his job and his savings. Although the members of the society were finally acquitted, Gerber remembered this failure with the bitterness of one who went unaided in his hour of trial.

Between 1928 and 1930 he contributed three articles to homosexual periodicals in Germany, and in 1932, under the pseudonym "Parisex," he published what was for the time a bold defense of homosexuality. In the same period he produced two mimeographed journals in which he printed several essays on homosexuality. Through an advertisement for pen-pals in one of these he began a correspondence with Manuel Boyfrank, who had ideas, impractical at the time, for a homosexual emancipation organization. Gerber conceived its structure and purposes in a manner that notably anticipated the Mattachine Society in the earliest phase of its existence. In the 1940s his activities took the form of correspondence and of translating into English several chapters

of Magnus Hirschfeld's *Die Homosexualität des Mannes und des Weibes* (Male and Female Homosexuality), which were later published in *ONE Institute Quarterly*. After the founding of the *Mattachine Society* he joined its Washington chapter, but took no prominent role in its functions, fearing a repetition of the catastrophe that had befallen his first venture. Like Karl Heinrich Ulrichs in Germany, Henry Gerber was a lone pioneer—one of those who came before their time, but had the vision which others would later realize and bring to fulfillment.

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### GÉRICAUT, THÉODORE (1791–1824)

French romantic painter. Like most artists of his day, Géricault was trained in the Neo-Classic style with its didactic foundation in studies from the male nude. Unlike other artists who moved into a romantic style, Géricault never evinced a complementary interest in the sensuality of the female form. Indeed, some of his drawings and paintings show an almost torrential response to the virility and force of the male body, which in his military scenes extends to highly charged scenes of comradeship. In other works his response to the human body is more conflicted. His most important work, the vast canvas of *The Raft of the Medusa* (Louvre; 1819), shows a group of shipwrecked people in their last extremities before being rescued. Géricault had an affinity for grisly and harrowing subject matter, and toward the end his life, when he was suffering from the effects of a nervous breakdown, he painted a series of portraits of the insane, in which an element of self-identification is unmistakable.

Speculation about his personal homosexuality has been fueled by the apparent absence of a romantic interest in the artist's life. Recently, however, it has been discovered that Géricault conducted a clandestine affair with a maternal aunt by marriage, Alexandrine-Modeste Caruel,

who became the mother of his illegitimate son. For those given to simple either-or thinking, this would seem to settle the question. But as Edward Lucie-Smith has pointed out, the matter is more complex. The question of what is homosexual art is still in flux, but it seems clear that it cannot be resolved by a straightforward litmus test stemming from the known facts of the artist's life. The work tells its own story, and in the case of Géricault there are strong elements of homosexual sensibility, regardless of what he may have done in bed. Admittedly, it is different from the sensibility of twentieth-century gay artists, but has more in common with such Renaissance masters as Michelangelo and Cellini. As our studies of art as expression of the complexities of gender identity become more subtle, greater understanding of the riddle of Géricault's powerful oeuvre is likely to emerge.

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### GERMANIC LAW

See *Law, Germanic*.

### GERMANY

Since, historically speaking, there is no unambiguously defined territory named "Germany," the following article concentrates on the geographical area included in the present Federal Republic of Germany (Bundesrepublik Deutschland) and the German Democratic Republic (Deutsche Demokratische Republik).

*The Middle Ages*. In medieval German literature male homosexuality is seldom mentioned, lesbianism never. In the *Passion of Saint Pelagius* composed in Latin by Roswitha (Hrotswith) of Gandersheim, there is the story of the son of the king of Galicia in Spain who, captured by the Moslem invaders, was approached by Abderrahman with offers of the highest