

See also **Black Gay Americans; New York City.**

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Ward Houser

HARTLEY, MARSDEN (1877-1943)

American painter, poet, and essayist. Born Edmund Hartley in Lewiston, Maine, he was raised there and at his father's home in Cleveland. While working as a clerk in a marble quarry, he started formal study of art at the Cleveland School of Art. A scholarship sent him to New York City to complete his training. In 1904 he began an important friendship with Horace Traubel, the biographer of Walt Whitman. After producing a number of impressionist and neoimpressionist paintings, he launched his public career as an artist under the name of Marsden Hartley (Marsden was his step-mother's maiden name). Through Alfred Stieglitz, who gave him his first one-person show at his 291 gallery, Hartley gained entrée into New York's avant-garde.

After experimenting in the style of Picasso, Hartley went to Paris (1912), where he became an intimate of Gertrude Stein. He also absorbed Central European influences, including the abstractionism of Franz Marc and Vassily Kandinsky. In 1913 he settled in Berlin, entering into a love affair with Lieutenant Karl von Freyburg. His lover was killed in battle on October 7, 1914, and Hartley created several of his finest paintings to memorialize the relationship. These works, which feature regalia of the German officer corps, did not stand him in good stead when he returned to New York in 1915. In the fall of 1916 he began to share a house in Provincetown with Charles Demuth, an artist of a similar modernist style who was well acquainted with the gay scene of New

York and environs. Hartley also was friendly with the lesbian writer Djuna Barnes.

In 1921 he returned to Europe, where his book *Twenty-Five Poems* was issued by Robert McAlmon's Contact Publishing Company in Paris. The Great Depression forced Hartley to return to the United States, though a Guggenheim Fellowship enabled him to spend 1932 in Mexico, where he became close friends with Hart Crane. After learning of Crane's suicide, Hartley painted *Eight Bells; Folly*. In the mid-thirties he supported himself in New York through participation in the Public Works of Art Project. He struck up a friendship with the Francis Mason family in Nova Scotia, and he was to live with them for much of the rest of his life.

Hartley's work is now seen to belong to a native American current of expressionism in which he was a pivotal figure. During his lifetime, however, his seeming shifts of style, combined with the relative immaturity of the American art world, prevented him from receiving full recognition. This neglect augmented a loneliness that his shyness about his homosexuality induced in him. In 1980, however, a full-scale retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York restored his reputation.

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Wayne R. Dynes

HELOGABALUS (ALSO KNOWN AS ELAGABALUS; 204-222)

Roman Emperor from 218 to 222. Born at Emesa in Syria as a descendant of the royal family of King Samsigeramus, he became priest of Elagabal in that city in 217. His grandmother Julia Maesa arranged to have him declared emperor by the Tenth Gallican Legion on April 14, 218. The legions sent against him deserted and killed their commanders, and as sole ruler of the

Empire he traveled to Rome in the winter of 218/19. Here he reigned in a style of luxury and effeminacy unprecedented even in the history of Rome. He sent out agents to comb the city for particularly well-hung partners for his couch, whom he made his advisers and ministers. His life was an endless search for pleasure of every kind, and he had his body depilated so that he could arouse the lusts of the greatest number. His extant portraits on coins suggest a sensual, even African type evolving through late adolescence. The refinements which he innovated in the spheres of culinary pleasure and of sumptuous interior decoration and household furnishing are mentioned by the historians of his reign as having survived him and found emulators among the Roman aristocracy of later times. For what Veblen called "conspicuous consumption" he set a standard probably unequaled until the Islamic middle ages.

His sexual personality cannot be reduced to a mere formula of passive-effeminate homosexuality, although this aspect of his erotic pleasure-seeking is the one stressed by his ancient biographers. He loved the role of Venus at the theatre and the passive role in his encounters with other men, yet he was married several times and even violated a Vestal virgin, but remained childless. This facet of his sexual life has enabled the more dishonest classical historians to write of him as if he were just another heterosexual ruler, when in fact he seems to have desired an operation that would gratify his fantasy not of changing into a member of the opposite sex (transsexual in the modern sense) but of becoming truly androgynous—having the functioning genital organs of both. As high priest of the Syrian deity Elagabal he sought to elevate the cult of the latter to the sole religion of the Empire, yet he did not persecute the Christians. Family intrigues ultimately cost him the favor of the soldiers who murdered him and his mother on March 11, 222. Unique as he was in the history of eroticism and of

luxury, he has inspired writers from the third-century biographer Aelius Lampridius in the *Scriptores Historiae Augustae* through the later treatments of Jean Lombard, Louis Couperus, and Stefan George to Antonin Artaud and Alberto Arbasino.

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Warren Johansson

HELLENISM

This trend in Western civilization is part of a larger preoccupation with idealizing a privileged era of the past as a source of cultural norms for the present. Sometimes this idealization engenders utopian longings. In this case classical antiquity, or a portion of it, occupies the place of honor as model and guide. Examples of prescriptive precedents from ancient Greece include the three orders in architecture (Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian), Platonism in philosophy, and Homer as a pattern for epic poetry.

Permutations of the Hellenic Image. Although Christianity retained selected elements of Greek culture and philosophy, it tended to treat the whole phenomenon as part of the discarded pagan model of human development. Clearly unsalvageable, the institution of pederasty figured as one of the most reprehensible survivals of the Hellenic heritage. This rejection persisted for a thousand years after the adoption of Christianity as the state religion of the Roman empire in the fourth century of our era. Hellenism as a norm reemerged during the Italian Renaissance; although this word is modern, it captures the central notion of rebirth of classical ideals and standards of beauty. The Renaissance also saw the first tentative beginnings of an apologetic literature for homosexual behavior. The Florentine thinker Marsilio Ficino (1433–1499), who contributed to this apologetic endeavor,