

that McAlmon was tougher, more courageous, and a better writer than Hemingway.

McAlmon kept his distance from the French homosexuals. From parties, bars, and cafés he knew Jean Cocteau, Raymond Radiguet, René Crevel, Louis Aragon, and others. While his French may not have been sufficient to follow their writings, Dada and Surrealism left him completely cold. His ties were closer with artists Francis Picabia and Constantin Brancusi, but McAlmon saw in Europe only "the rot of ripe fruit."

John Glassco, who arrived as a teenager in Paris with his best friend and who received financial favors from McAlmon, claims that he and his friend did not have to put out for the older man because "he was more vain of being seen with young men than actually covetous of their favors." McAlmon's preferences for men are not entirely clear: he found Marsden Hartley too old. McAlmon liked bullfighters who (like himself) had tight, lean bodies. A Paris bartender describes McAlmon's impassioned speech defending Plato, Michelangelo, and other creative geniuses who celebrated the masculine form. "I'm a bisexual myself," McAlmon shouted, "like Michelangelo, and I don't give a damn who knows it." (A similar speech is credited by other sources to Arthur Craven, Mina Loy's lover, who claimed to be Oscar Wilde's nephew and was a professional boxer.) In the 1950s, McAlmon wrote, "There are no real homos, male or female, but there is the bi-sex, and in more people than know it themselves." The "real abnorms" were the men who swagger "with virility."

How can one explain McAlmon's lack of success? He had little appreciation, but Fitzgerald and Hemingway were ruined by too much acclaim. He drank plenty and enjoyed drugs, but so did Joyce, Cocteau, and Crevel. Coming into money may have been corrupting, but H. D. thrived with the Ellerman wealth. Perhaps he was too far ahead of his time. When Allen

Ginsberg with his poetry or Jack Kerouac with his prose made "first thought best thought" an axiom, McAlmon was dead. Moreover, his precise rendering of gay bar talk in *Distinguished Air* (1925) may be too advanced even now. He uses terms like "blind meat" (uncircumcised hard cock whose foreskin does not pull back), "rough trade," and "auntie."

McAlmon wrote very little after 1935; he was interested in radical politics but found little support among the expatriates. He was caught in France by the German occupation, came down with tuberculosis, and escaped through Spain to the United States, where he joined his brothers in a surgical supply house in El Paso. He died at Desert Hot Springs, California, in 1956.

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## McCARTHYISM

The political tactics of the United States Senator from Wisconsin Joseph R. McCarthy (1908-1957) have since the 1950s been labeled McCarthyism. They consisted in poorly founded but sensation-ally publicized charges against individuals in government service or public life whom McCarthy accused on the Senate floor of being Communists, security risks, or otherwise disloyal or untrustworthy. Senator McCarthy's campaign did not spare "sex perverts in government," and so it made homosexuality an issue in American po-

litical life for the first time since the founding of the republic.

*Emergence of the Tactics.* Elected in the Republican landslide of 1946, McCarthy attracted little attention as the junior Senator from Wisconsin during his first three years in office. But in a Lincoln's Birthday address delivered in Wheeling, West Virginia on February 9, 1950, he catapulted himself into national fame by claiming that he had "in his hand a list of 205" active members of the Communist Party and members of a spy ring in the State Department. With attention now focused on possible "security risks in government," Under Secretary of State John Peurifoy testified on February 28, 1950 that most of 91 employees dismissed for "moral turpitude" were homosexuals. On March 14 McCarthy himself raised the alleged case of a convicted homosexual who had resigned from the State Department in 1948 but was currently holding a "top-salaried, important position" with the Central Intelligence Agency; he would divulge the name of the accused only in executive session, but demanded his immediate dismissal: "It seems unusual to me, in that we have so many normal people . . . that we must employ so many very, very unusual men in Washington." After the head of the District of Columbia vice squad told a Senate committee that thousands of "sexual deviates" worked for the government, the Republican floor leader, Kenneth Wherry of Nebraska—a minor demagogue in his own right—demanded a full-scale investigation. In June 1950 the full Senate bowed to mounting pressure and authorized an investigation into the alleged employment of "homosexuals and other sex perverts" in government.

*Apogee and Decline.* The subcommittee headed by Senator Clyde Hoey of North Carolina consisted of 4 Democrats and 3 Republicans; it was to deliver its report in December 1950, thus after the mid-term Congressional elections. Hoey, a conservative on many issues, neverthe-

less had stood his ground against right-wing attacks on civil liberties until then. But the Report of the subcommittee—in contrast with an earlier finding that McCarthy "had perpetrated a monstrous fraud and a hoax on the Senate"—was a bloodless victory for the senator from Wisconsin. The subcommittee found that homosexual acts were illegal and that those who committed them were "social outcasts," and more relevantly, that fear of exposure made homosexuals subject to **blackmail** for espionage purposes. The only evidence that it could present to bolster this assertion was the case of a homosexual Austrian counter-intelligence officer (Alfred Redl) who had committed suicide in 1913 after he was discovered to be receiving payment for information that he furnished to the intelligence service of Tsarist Russia! The far more interesting—and politically embarrassing—Harden-Eulenburg affair that had occurred a few years earlier in imperial Germany was never mentioned. The subcommittee discovered, moreover, that the laws against sexual perversion in the District of Columbia were inadequate—in other words, that homosexual acts in private were *not* a crime, and that individuals arrested by the vice squad were allowed to disappear after posting trivial sums of money as surety. Its recommendations were to correct these shortcomings in the law and its administration so that no one would escape identification and punishment. The vicious circle of reasoning involved in such a policy was lost on all concerned, simply because the traditional attitudes toward homosexuality precluded a rational approach to the matter. It is also noteworthy that the danger of blackmail which Magnus Hirschfeld and his Berlin Scientific-Humanitarian Committee had used as an argument for the repeal of Paragraph 175 was now turned against homosexuals to deny them employment in the name of "national security." This factor and others worked so strongly in McCarthy's favor that despite bitter opposition he was

reelected in 1952 in the Eisenhower landslide that brought the Republican Party back to the White House after 20 years of Democratic rule.

Once the Republicans had become the majority party for a brief time, McCarthy's tactics became a source of embarrassment to them, and in 1954 a campaign was launched against him in the Senate which included the (true) accusation that a young University of Wisconsin graduate employed in his office in 1947 to handle veterans' affairs had been arrested as a homosexual and then promptly fired, and the (probably false) accusation that McCarthy himself was a homosexual, which Senator Ralph Flanders of Vermont included in his denunciation. However, it was alleged that McCarthy's marriage in 1953 at the age of 45 was motivated by his need to squelch the rumors of his own sexual deviation; the marriage remained childless, though the couple did adopt a little girl. What is significant in retrospect is that Roy Cohn, a young attorney who was one of McCarthy's chief aides during his heyday, was a lifelong homosexual who died of AIDS in 1986. Censured by the Senate in 1954, McCarthy thereafter faded in political importance, and when he died in 1957 no great wave of emotion went through the ranks of either his friends or his enemies.

*Aftermath.* The policy of denying employment to homosexuals on moral grounds and as security risks, however, remained long after McCarthy himself. It was only in the 1970s that concerted efforts were begun to combat the exclusionary measures that had cost many hundreds of homosexuals and lesbians their jobs in the Federal Government—often in positions where no element of security was involved. Given the absence of any organized gay movement in the United States in 1950 and the defensive on which McCarthy's unprecedented accusations had put the Democratic administration, homosexuals were the most exposed of his targets.

*Broader Perspectives.* Fairness requires one to note that the left has also sometimes employed its own variety of McCarthyism. During the 1930s the young Whittaker Chambers was a clandestine member of the Communist Party of the United States who cooperated with others in securing information for the Soviet Union. By the 1950s, having become more conservative, he denounced his former companions and their ideas. His testimony was of central importance in the conviction of Alger Hiss for perjury. In their turn his erstwhile friends began a word-of-mouth campaign based on the claim that his information was tainted because he was a homosexual and therefore untrustworthy by nature. While Chambers was in fact homosexual, the way his opponents used the allegation amounted to a homophobic smear campaign. In France, after André Gide published his negative reflections on his trip to the Soviet Union in 1936–37, he was attacked by his former Communist associates as a *pédé* (faggot).

These recent events are in fact the newest episodes in a long history. The sexual aspect of McCarthyism has an ancestry going as far back as Aeschines, Cicero, and the Byzantine Emperor Justinian (r. 527–565), whose laws against sodomites forged the "crime of those to whom no crime could be imputed," a weapon for political intimidation and blackmail that even the enlightened twentieth century has not deprived of its cutting edge.

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### **McCULLERS, CARSON (1917–1967)**

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