

ist school. He settled in New York in 1951, working for the Museum of Modern Art, where he organized exhibitions of contemporary art. O'Hara wrote books of art criticism (*Jackson Pollock*, 1959; *Robert Motherwell*, 1965), and also sought the collaboration of artists in his own creative endeavors. He believed that the support of painters in particular was useful to him in escaping the suffocation of the reigning academic tradition in poetry.

His plays, which were often produced in avant-garde theatres, included *Love's Labour*, *Awake in Spain!*, and *The Houses at Fallen Hanging*. He published only six small collections of poems; others were found only in letters to friends or written on a hoarded scrap of paper. During his lifetime, however, O'Hara enjoyed an extensive word-of-mouth reputation, and his inclusion in anthologies began to bring him to a wider audience. On the morning of July 24, 1966, he was accidentally struck by a beach buggy on Fire Island, the gay resort where he spent his summers, and died shortly thereafter.

Like his older contemporary Wallace Stevens, O'Hara was influenced by the French avant-garde poets; indeed his relation to his favorite painters recalls that of Guillaume Apollinaire and the Cubists. Yet O'Hara tempered his mandarin sources of inspiration with eclectic infusions of popular culture and the kaleidoscope of the New York scene. His use of everyday-speech rhythms recalls the beat cult of spontaneity. Less observed by many critics is the fact that many of his poems are sophisticated transcriptions of the bantering "queens' talk" common among gay men at the time. After his death O'Hara's work did much to free American poetry from the domination of a fading academic tradition. At the same time however, his fondness for ephemeral, campy, and trivial motifs restricted the scope of all but a few poems.

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## OLD TESTAMENT

This conventional term is the Christian name for the Hebrew Bible, which the Church incorporated into its own scriptural canon. The **New Testament** constitutes the additional scriptures of Christianity, and some churches supplement the Hebrew Bible with the Deuterocanonical (or Apocryphal) books. Jewish tradition divides the Old Testament into three parts: the Law (the first five books ascribed to Moses), the Prophets (most of the historical books and all of the prophetic writings except Daniel), and the Writings (all the other books including Daniel). For Jews it is the first five books, the Torah, that are authoritative; and in the third of these the death penalty is explicitly prescribed for male homosexuality (Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13). Although there is scant evidence for the actual enforcement of this law by Jewish courts, it is known that in later Christendom it cost the lives of thousands of homosexual men from the later **Middle Ages** to modern times.

*Negative Texts.* The Old Testament itself is an intricate body of literature, varied and complex; each of the literary units is a product of its own time and place, and a great deal of it is not easily understood without extensive delving into the languages and cultures of the principal nations of the ancient Near East that influenced the nascent monotheism of Israel and the later Jewish community in the Persian Empire. Genesis, the opening book, contains in chapters 18 and 19 the infamous story of Sodom. This narrative never actually says that the Cities of the Plain were destroyed because of homosexuality, but indicates that their sins "cried to heaven for vengeance." In the story the male inhabitants of Sodom are shown attempting to commit gang rape on two

visitors who have taken shelter in the house of Lot, and the Biblical tradition made Sodom proverbial for its inhospitality and injustice toward strangers. For most cultures of the ancient world, according to the surviving sources, consensual homosexual activity entailed no stigma or penalty; the subject rarely finds mention unless prominent persons or extraordinary circumstances are involved. And even in such circumstances the homosexual element is not deemed worthy of emphatic mention. For example, a midrashic source tells us that Joseph in Egypt was bought by Potiphar for pederastic purposes (cf. Genesis 37:36 and 39:1). The *New English Bible* translation finds this theme explicit in the text itself, but other versions ignore it.

The outrage at Gibeah (Judges 19–21) begins, it is true, with an attempt at homosexual gang rape but is diverted into a heterosexual one in which the Levite's concubine is violated and killed. The outcome is a tribal war against the Benjaminites, who are overwhelmed and massacred. Two curious episodes in Genesis merit discussion. First, there is the epilogue to the Deluge narrative in which Ham "saw the nakedness of his father" (Genesis 9:22), an action interpreted in the Talmud as an assault on Noah's masculinity. The second is the scene in which Sarah encounters Ishmael "playing with Isaac her son" (Septuagint of Genesis 21:9), with overtones of a homosexual initiation rite. Both have puzzled or eluded modern commentators who cannot admit the overt aspects of male-male sexuality in cultures of antiquity.

*Positive Figures.* That Naomi and Ruth had a lesbian love affair has been, improbably, derived from the text by some (e.g., Jeannette Foster in *Sex Variant Women in Literature*, new ed., Baltimore, 1975), and the surmise that David and Jonathan had not merely a strong friendship but a homosexual liaison has long been popular. While it is true that Naomi and Ruth make one of the strongest declarations of fidelity ever written (Ruth

1:16–17), not much else attests the claim, since the purpose of the narrative is to authorize the acceptance of converts into the "house of Israel." In the case of the men there is more evidence. The book of Samuel relates that "Jonathan and David made a covenant because he [Jonathan] loved him as his own soul. And Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that was upon him and gave it to David, and his garments even to his sword, and to his bow, and to his belt" (I Samuel 18:3–4). From other Eastern Mediterranean heroic love affairs armor is known as a pledge of affection from the more important member of the duo to the lesser. Jonathan often speaks of his concern for David, and there is a scene of intense emotion and probably sexual release between them. After Jonathan's death David sings in his lament that Jonathan's love for him "was wonderful, passing the love of women" (II Samuel 1:26).

Modern Westerners tend to view homosexuality in other times and places in the light of the way in which it has been understood (or misunderstood) in their own culture. The Israeli anthropologist Raphael Patai cautions against such an approach, arguing that "male homosexuality was rampant in Biblical times and has so remained in the Middle East down to the present day. It may not have been as general as it was in Greece, but the folk mores certainly did not regard it with any degree of disapproval."

References to men in the ancient world who engaged in homosexual activity may generally be assigned to three categories. First of all, there was the military or virile type, such men usually bonded with another, similar male: examples are Gilgamesh and Enkidu, Achilles and Patroclus, and David and Jonathan. A second group of references mention the passive-effeminate male who took the "female" role in sexual intercourse. Such men might wear women's clothes; they might engage in sacral prostitution (the *kādēsh*) or its commercial counterpart. Other texts

mention a type of male, a third type, who patronized the second category described above.

*Cultic Prostitution.* Difficult for the modern religious consciousness to understand is that male cult prostitutes, specifically homosexual prostitutes, with both erotic and mantic functions, were part of the religious life of Syria and Palestine, including pre-exilic Israel (i.e., from about 1200 to 587 B.C.). References to their activity are found in I Kings 14:24, 15:12, 22:46, II Kings 21:2, 21:11, 23:7, the Septuagint of II Chronicles 35: 19a, Isaiah 2:6 and Job 36:14, as well as in place names such as "En-mishpat [Spring of Judgment], which is Kadesh" (Genesis 14:7). The references in Kings cover a period of some 400 years, so that the custom survived down to the reforms of King Josiah. Ten years after his death the Temple was destroyed and the Jews were carried off into captivity in Babylon. (See also *Kadesh Barnea*.)

*Later Prohibitions.* Under Persian rule (beginning in 538 B.C.) the Jewish community reestablished itself in Palestine. The Persians proved more tolerant than previous conquerors, allowing the Jews and other subject peoples to run their own affairs, but they did not tolerate homosexuality. In the Persian period the male cult prostitutes no longer functioned in the rebuilt Temple in Jerusalem or in the province of Judea. There is good reason to assume that at this time—under the influence of *Zoroastrianism*—the verses Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 were added to the Holiness Code of Leviticus 12–20, forbidding male homosexuality under pain of death.

All forms of male homosexual behavior were odious to later Jewish religious thinkers and apologists, both those who wrote in Hebrew or Aramaic and those, such as *Philo* and *Josephus*, who were Hellenized and composed their works in Greek. Persian rule ended with the capture of Jerusalem by *Alexander the Great* in 333; but the Greek rulers who followed him (except for *Antiochus*

*Epiphanes* in the brief period from 168–65) and the Romans in later times allowed the Jews to enforce the norms of their own cult. Hence the Levitical laws stood and became an integral part of the Judaic moral code.

There may be an allusion to the homosexual aspect of the slave trade in Joel 3:2, to homosexual rape in Lamentations 5:13 (cf. St. Jerome's version), and in other passages that have been claimed as relevant. It is safe to conclude that by the end of the Persian period Judaism officially reprovved all expressions of male-male sexuality. Although it might be argued that some distinctly modern forms of homosexuality, including *androphilia*, were not an issue in Old Testament times, one has no grounds to assume that they would be regarded as permissible.

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## OLYMPIC GAMES

For over 1000 years, the Olympic games helped mold a common Hellenic outlook linking sports and religion with the art of the great temples and statues that adorned the precincts of Olympia in the northwestern Peloponnesus.

The Olympic Games in honor of Zeus, traditionally founded in 776 B.C., were held every four years thereafter. Eusebius of Caesarea preserved Julius Africanus' list of winners from the founding to A.D. 217. It was probably the tyrant Phaidon of Argos in the seventh century who, seizing the site from the Elians (who Plato in the *Symposium* claimed practiced pederasty in a more uninhibited physical manner than did other Greeks), reorganized the games from one-day contests in