

such activity is calumniated and persecuted. He left behind his book, a monument of scholarship in its time. As idiosyncratic, romanticized, idealized—and dated—as its apologia for Greek love may be, it is a testament to an irradicable strain in human experience, one of the many facets of homosexual love: the love of a man for a youth and of a youth for a man.

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Warren Johansson (1934-1994)

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Warren Johansson was, quite simply, the most extraordinary person I have ever known. Although a good number of our other pioneers in the homophile movement combined keen intellect and passionate commitment with various forms of eccentricity, none, in my opinion, matched Warren's mélange of brilliance, erudition, generosity, and mystery. As all who knew him well can attest, he was a gay cabalist par excellence, a labyrinth of profundities and secrets. I spent much time with him for almost a decade, during the last half of which he lived in my house, yet for years I did not even know his real name. To this day, eight years after his death, he remains a fascinating enigma.

Born Peter Joseph Wallfield in Philadelphia, February 21, 1934, Warren early on exhibited a genius for linguistics. In time he mastered every modern European language except Basque (unrelated to any other known language) and the Finn-Ugrian (Siberia-derived) tongues. He read Greek and Hebrew in their multifarious forms, and although I am a professor of medieval history, a field noted for its Latinists, I've never met anyone who equaled Warren's facility with ancient, church, and modern scholarly Latin. These skills gave him access to the wellspring of true historical scholarship: original texts and their mutations. He could read them all. More than anyone, perhaps, he really *did* read them all, including, while he was still an undergraduate, the entire twenty-three-volume set of the *Jahrbuch Für Sexuelle Zwischenstufen* (*Yearbook for sexual intergrades*), the world's first periodical to publish articles on homosexuality by experts in numerous fields, edited by the legendary Magnus Hirschfeld in Berlin between 1899 and 1923. Warren was, perhaps, the leading American authority not only on Hirschfeld but also on all Germanic and Slavic writers on homosexuality. His reach extended far beyond that, how-

ever. He mastered, for example, the papyrological antecedents of important biblical passages. From all of this flowed a vast knowledge of history, philology, and etymology, which he applied to uncovering nuances of homosexual experience since ancient times. Indeed, Warren documented historical evidence from many obscure foreign language sources that would have remained unknown to us but for his tireless efforts. His passion to look things up and track details down assisted countless academics and journalists throughout the world on myriad projects concerning the gay and lesbian past.

But Warren didn't confine himself to scholarship. He belonged to many activist groups, often as a founding member, including the NYC Gay Liberation Front of 1969, GLAAD/NY, the NYC Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights, ACT UP, Queer Nation, and Gay and Lesbian Americans. His first contribution to the queer cause came in 1955, when he mixed scholarship with activism in sending an obscure but crucial statement by Sigmund Freud to the Wolfenden Committee, the parliamentary body that initiated the decriminalization of sodomy in Great Britain and subsequently throughout most of that nation's former empire. The statement, made in an interview with the editor of the Vienna newspaper *Die Zeit* and printed in the issue of October 27, 1905, was Freud's earliest published advocacy for tolerance for homosexuals. It had been overlooked until Warren called it to the Wolfenden Committee's attention. Prompted by the prosecution of a professor who had had sex with two young men whom he had hired to pose for photographs, the statement read, in part:

[L]ike many experts, I uphold the view that the homosexual does not belong before the bar of a court of justice. I am even of the firm conviction that the homosexual cannot be regarded as sick, because the individual of an abnormal sexual orientation is for just that reason far from being sick. Should we not then have to classify many great thinkers and scholars of all ages, whose sound minds it is precisely that we admire, as sick men? (reprinted in the *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*, 1990, p. 434)

Warren later provided expert testimony to the legislative bodies and policymakers of several countries that were considering the reform of laws that affected gay people.

Warren's "guru" was Walter Breen, a world-renowned numismatist who, with Warren's extensive assistance, authored the "bible of the pederasts," *Greek Love* (1964), under the pseudonym J. Z. Eglinton. In fact, Warren virtually co-authored the book, which today still remains the starting point for the study of the cultural history of pederasty and pedophilia and a vital

source of information; many scholars have mined the footnotes and followed their pioneering clues. A groundbreaking survey of boy love in the Western world from ancient Greece to modern times, *Greek Love* naturally contained a number of errors that increasingly were recognized as knowledge in the field burgeoned. Eglinton and Warren intended to put out an expanded second edition to correct the errors but could not agree on a vital point: Eglinton insisted on advocating no age limit for sex with boys, while Warren backed a cutoff of fourteen.

Warren contributed important articles to a journal, published by the Scholarship Committee of New York's Gay Academic Union, which appeared under three different names: *Gai Saber* (1977-1978), *Gay Books Bulletin*, and *Cabirion* (1979-1985). "The Etymology of the Word *Faggot*" (*Gay Books Bulletin*, 6, 1981), definitively showed that "faggot . . . is purely and simply an Americanism of the 20th century" (p. 16)—not, contrary to a popular gay myth, derived from a practice of using homosexuals as kindling to burn witches at the stake in medieval times. With characteristic authority and clarity, Warren wrote:

On a conscious level it [the notion that "faggot" as a pejorative term for gays entered the language because homosexuals were thought to have been used as fuel for witch-burning] serves as a device with which to attack the medieval church, by extension Christianity in toto, and finally all authority. On another level, it may linger as a "myth of origins," a kind of collective masochistic ritual that willingly identifies the homosexual as victim. (p. 16)

In another article, "Whosoever Shall Say to His Brother, *Racha* (Matthew: 5:22)" (*Cabirion*, 10, 1984), Warren trained his formidable philological acumen on a biblical passage to undermine another myth, widely believed by both straights and gays, that Jesus "never mentioned homosexuality." In a subsequent version of the article, he concluded:

What the text in Matthew demonstrates is that he [Jesus] forbade acts of violence, physical and verbal, against those to whom homosexuality was imputed, in line with the general emphasis on self-restraint and meekness in his teaching. The entire passage is not just a legalistic pastiche of Jewish casuistry, but also a polished gem of double entendre and irony. (*Encyclopedia of Homosexuality*, 1990, p. 1093)

Warren also provided indispensable editorial contributions to three quite significant books assembled under the direction of Wayne R. Dynes: *Homolexis: A Historical and Cultural Lexicon of Homosexuality* (1985),

which contained Warren's "The Sodomy Delusion: A Typological Reconstruction"; *Homosexuality: A Research Guide* (1987); and the prizewinning two-volume *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality* (1990). With me he co-authored *Outing: Shattering the Conspiracy of Silence* (1994), and he offered utterly essential assistance with my *Pederasty and Pedagogy in Ancient Greece* (1996), as well as with numerous book reviews, articles, and anthology chapters, including "Homosexuality" in *Handbook of Medieval Sexuality* (1996) and "Homosexuals in Nazi Germany" in *Simon Weisenthal Center Annual VII* (1990).

The *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality* was an important vehicle for transmitting Warren's findings to a larger public. Unfortunately, a leftist-feminist cabal attacked the volume for failing to propagate their "revolutionary" views. Among other complaints, this group disapproved of the pseudonym Evelyn Gettone, employed (along with Ward Houser) by both Warren and Wayne Dynes. For more than a century pseudonyms had been in common use among gay scholars and activists. Generally, male names had been used by women and female ones by men.

In 1995 the cabal used the controversy to accomplish its aim of suppressing the *Encyclopedia*. With professed outrage over the name Evelyn Gettone having been used by men, and wielding threats of boycotts, they persuaded Garland Publishing to withdraw the *Encyclopedia* despite the fact that no significant inaccuracies had been detected. Now unavailable for purchase, the work, with many signal contributions by Warren Johansson, can still be consulted in many libraries.

Despite his learnedness and dedication, Warren never sought the limelight. In fact, he often published pseudonymously, and most of the rest of his work saw print as collaborations with other writers who usually received top billing on the title page, often the only billing. This reflected two major components of Warren's personality, to which I've already alluded: a spectacular capacity for generosity, and a general secretiveness deployed to such a degree that it could be fairly termed a fetish.

The aforementioned Wayne Dynes met Warren in the early 1970s, a time when gay studies had not yet become an established academic discipline, and the very notion of queer studies would have been considered science fiction. I, and many others, hold that there have been three phases in the recent studies of homosexuality and lesbianism. The first phase, labeled the homophile phase, might be called an apologetic one: homosexuals are here to stay but are nice people; the second or gay studies phase held that gay is good and society should accept this as a fact of life; the third or queer studies phase is an unapologetic, assertive, in-your-face attitude using the tactics of street theater. No formal system then existed to codify knowledge of homosexuality's significance; to be a student of the subject perforce made one an

autodidact. But Dynes observes that those lucky enough both to know Warren and learn from him got the rough equivalent of a graduate school education in the history of same-sex eros. He was, in short, a mentor for gay intellectuals. Besides Dynes, those who benefited from his tutelage included Gene Rice, John Lauritsen, David Thorstad, Jonathan Katz, James Steakley, Steve Alt, a host of others, and, as must by now be clear, me.

It's worth noting in passing that although Warren worked on a dissertation on the gay Russian poet Alexander Pushkin, under the direction of the distinguished Columbia professor Ihor Sevcenko, for whom Warren also served as an assistant, he never received a PhD. His advanced degrees were limited to an MA in Slavic languages and a certificate in Sovietology from Columbia's Harriman Institute. But then, Warren wasn't inclined to pursue a conventional academic career, possibly because it would have entailed too much scrutiny of his personal life.

More broadly, regarding his generosity, Warren was unstinting in sharing his knowledge and research skills with almost anyone. Friend or stranger had but to ask him a question—on a huge range of topics—and he either would deliver a comprehensive discourse on the spot or head for the appropriate library. C. A. Tripp, author of the acclaimed best-seller *The Homosexual Matrix*, recalls that Warren helped him resolve a dispute with Paul Gebhard, a senior associate of Alfred Kinsey, after Gebhard had objected to a passage in Tripp's book that addressed certain Jewish traditions of family members kissing the penises of newly circumcised boys. "You picked that up from Kinsey, didn't you?" Gebhard had asked Tripp.

"Well, yes, I certainly did," Tripp replied. "What's the matter?"

Gebhard declared, "I checked it with the local rabbi, who walks by my house every day, and he said he'd never even heard of this penis-kissing business. I think Kinsey made it up."

The very idea incensed Tripp, who himself had been closely associated with Kinsey. He said, "Kinsey did not *make things up*." To settle the matter he turned to Warren, who said with his customary pixieish alacrity, "I'll be back to you in two days" (Tripp, 1999).

Warren proceeded to find references that fully corroborated the passage in Tripp's book. Tripp was delighted. "So I then sat down, *armed by Warren*, and wrote a sharp letter to Gebhard. He wrote back saying, 'Well, you've certainly won *that* argument.'" Tripp also notes that as eccentric as Warren was, he always wrote with superbly balanced perspective: "His personal oddness never crept in" (Tripp, 1999).

A lot of people won arguments with Warren's help, for nothing pleased him more than to ferret out the most recondite underpinnings of an intellectual controversy, particularly if he could expose falsities in conventional or superficial thinking. As seen previously in the discussions of "faggot" and

"racha," he loved to demystify; to challenge myth was a kind of crusade. It is, then, no small irony that he chose to mystify quite thoroughly all who knew him when it came to the topic most central to his own life: Warren himself.

To impart a sense of just how slippery a character Warren was with regard to his identity and background, one must begin with his appearance, style of living, and habits. His narrow shoulders and ample tummy made him pear-shaped, a fact somewhat disguised by his unvarying custom of wearing a jacket and a tie in settings both public and private. His bushy beard gave him a rabbinical aura; Wayne Dynes remembers that when Warren was marching in one of New York City's Gay Pride parades, a spectator approached him and exclaimed, "Ah, Rabbi, what an honor to have you here!" The salutation pleased Warren, for he enjoyed projecting a sense of cultivated authority. Dynes thought he resembled Karl Marx; Warren, fastidious in such matters, preferred to be likened to Friedrich Engels. Warren's self-image, which sprang from complex depths, wasn't merely a question of vanity. He saw himself as conforming to the ideal of the Talmudic scholar, a role with ramifications: in exchange for dispensing wisdom to his community, he expected food and lodging free of charge. This Warren took to amazing lengths, which indeed his circumstances obliged him to do, for as far as anyone could tell, he never held even one paying job after he gave up his graduate school assistantship at Columbia.

In consequence Warren literally was homeless for extended periods of time. He often stayed overnight in various New York City libraries, particularly those affiliated with Columbia. For hygiene and, probably, sex (although on this point as with so much else about his life, no one really knows), he frequently relied on gay bathhouses. Food he scrounged from hors d'oeuvres tables at art gallery openings or academic receptions and from the largesse of friends such as Wayne Dynes, Gene Rice, and me. A gourmand as well as a gourmet, Warren was something of a scandal when taken out to restaurants: he often would order two full courses or sometimes as many as four or five entrées. Dynes used to remark that he was like a camel, able to eat so much at a single sitting that he could go for days on very little. I have never seen anyone eat such quantities and enjoy it so much. When he lived with me in Boston during the last five years of his life, countless roasts traveled from my stove to the dining table and down his gullet—goose, lamb, beef, ham, with all the accoutrements; he didn't disdain lobster, shrimp, and crab. In line with his self-image as a Talmudic sage, one to whom certain deferences must be accorded in recognition of his contributions, he never helped with cooking, washed dishes, or even took his plates back to the kitchen. That bothered me not a bit, for I never had any doubt that Warren's contributions were priceless and unique. During those last

years he grew immensely fat, approaching 300 pounds until cancer struck him, after which he slowly wasted away to almost nothing.

Earlier, in New York City, where Warren lived most of his life, Wayne Dynes, Gene Rice, Steve Alt, and others saw to his welfare, but with the exception of Alt, with whom he stayed for about three years, they didn't house him on a regular basis, hence his reliance on libraries and bathhouses. One might wonder how, under such circumstances, Warren maintained his uniform of jacket and tie. The answer is that he wore the same set of clothes until they nearly decayed, then replaced them. The only known repository for his personal effects was a rental locker at Columbia, hardly a place to keep a wardrobe. The locker, incidentally, became the subject of lore: Warren intimated that he kept fabulous treasures in it, without ever quite specifying what they were. Whatever the contents were, a custodian threw them out after one of Warren's benefactors forgot to pay the locker fee.

In short, Warren did not always present the tidiest of appearances. Dynes remembers that Warren's ties tended to become "symphonies of squalor," casualties, among other things, of his gourmandizing ways. They accumulated months of dietary history that a forensic expert no doubt could have reconstructed—an idea Warren would have found deeply alarming.

For reasons never satisfactorily explained, Warren had a horror of anyone reconstructing *anything* about his past. He refused to be photographed, for example, and would go to great lengths to avoid it. I have but two pictures of him, one the photo in his passport (which he never used to go abroad), the other a small detail blown up from somebody's snapshot of a Gay Pride parade. We know that he wrote under three pseudonyms in his articles for the *Encyclopedia of Homosexuality* alone, but do not know, and never will, how many other literary aliases he used elsewhere. About his family and upbringing he maintained the strictest silence, except to claim that his father was a gentile emigré from one of the Baltic states, that his mother was Jewish, and that some twenty-odd relatives had attended either the University of Pennsylvania or Columbia. I assumed that many of these relatives were rabbis, but Warren wouldn't confirm or deny that. In fact, he not only refused to talk about his family, but he also, as far as we know, had absolutely no contact with even one member since shortly after his mother's death during his graduate school years.

Some of the few details I've gleaned about his family came from his high school classmate and academic rival, Howard Reilly. Howard was my classmate at Princeton, a Rhodes scholar, and a Harvard Law School graduate. He went on to practice law at an exclusive Denver firm until a gay sex scandal quite completely wrecked his career; rumors had it that he was reduced to waiting on tables in Mafia-connected restaurants. When I contacted him,

against Warren's repeated and emotional forbiddings, he was working a modest legal-aid job in upstate New York, and losing a war with AIDS.

Howard told me that Warren's mother had been a schoolteacher, his father a druggist "who worked seven days a week and saved his money," and that both parents had strongly supported Warren's scholarly endeavors in high school. The father's job situation struck me as descriptive of the many Jews whom prejudice and quotas had kept out of medical school, and I wondered if Warren had fibbed about his father being a gentile.

Just recently I learned that Warren had indeed misrepresented his father's religion. A man called my house out of the blue and asked for Joseph Wallfield. The caller identified himself as Roger Nyle Parisious. He said that he'd met Warren at Columbia in 1958 and had stayed in touch with him off and on, but never had learned that his old chum from graduate school days had changed his name. However, he knew facts about Warren's past that Warren painstakingly concealed from his gay-movement friends, among them the brutal 1957 murder of his father in Philadelphia.

Jacob Wallfield, Warren's father, died at age seventy-five of a shotgun blast to the abdomen during an attempted robbery of his pharmacy. The fact that the shooter and his two accomplices were fifteen-year-old blacks, coupled with Jacob's status as a beloved pillar of his community, made the story big news in the then racially charged atmosphere of the city. Parisious recalls that when he first met Warren about a year after the murder, Warren insisted on showing friends a sheaf of clippings from newspaper articles on the tragedy. He would proffer the clippings with reverent intensity, "smiling at them in a chilling, even terrible fashion"; his father's passing and the manner of it clearly tormented him. That isn't so very remarkable, of course. What *is* remarkable is that, years later when Warren entered his prime as a gay intellectual, he never once mentioned his father's death to any of his activist friends. Why did he erase an event that he had freely disclosed to friends in the late 1950s? Why did he conceal the fact that his father was indeed Jewish?

Whatever the reasons, he remained obsessed with the history of the Jews, whose intellectual capacities he naturally admired, but whose homophobia and superstition he despised. Indeed, he spent most of his life attacking the Judaic homophobic tradition. It's possible, I suppose, that he felt a degree of self-loathing both about being Jewish and about being gay.

Warren proceeded to abandon his Pushkin dissertation, and at this time also became close to J. Z. Eglinton. Warren once told me that Eglinton "saved" him and hinted that his guru helped him stave off a nervous breakdown. Another factor transformed his life as well: he inherited \$5,000 from his father, the equivalent of about \$50,000 today. Warren went on a spending spree, indulging in bespoke suits and expensive meals at the very best res-

taurants. When his mother died a couple of years later, in 1959 or 1960, she much to his surprise left him a large sum, the equivalent of perhaps half a million today, and Warren's extravagances correspondingly expanded. The inheritance must have been the source of another of Warren's mysteries: his "trust fund," to which he made cryptic allusions from time to time even into the early 1990s.

None of us ever saw any proof of such a fund. When he died the only bank account we found, in New York City, contained just \$1,500, which I had paid him. (As he left no will, and had no known relatives, it went to the state.) But when Charley Shively first met him at a "New Left Gathering of Tribes" in Atlanta (August 1971), Warren had arrived in a Mercedes, wearing a black suit with tie, which he never loosened in the hot Georgia sun. As the gay tribal contingent changed into women's dresses and called for the straight men to come out of the closet, Warren remained to one side. He nonetheless made friends with Lee Stone, a young, half-nude, dancing street boy revolutionary hustler, and they slipped away to a nearby motel.

Years after Warren's death, Ihor Sevcenko, his Pushkin dissertation advisor at Columbia, lunched with me at the faculty club at Harvard (where he then taught) to discuss the mystery of Warren's name change; we didn't settle it, needless to say. Ihor mentioned that "Joseph," as he couldn't help calling Warren, often spoke of taking his nephew out to dinner at the finest New York City restaurants. I was amused by what I thought to be Ihor's naïveté, for I assumed that this "nephew" was one of the ephebe types that Warren courted—but was even more amused by the eminent professor's remark, delivered with great indignation, "And you know, he never once invited *me* out!" However, I recently learned that Warren did indeed have a nephew, a football star at the University of Pennsylvania, on whom he may well have doted.

By his middle New York City years, he had no apparent income. That fact, coupled with his other oddities and his penchant for attending every gay event to gather all available literature, generated a persistent rumor among New York City activists: "This Johansson weirdo has to be an undercover police agent."

I always found that idea preposterous. Dynes observes that, politically speaking, Warren veered from the far left to the far right and abhorred the comfortable middle. He was something of a mugwump, however, reluctant to take a stand on volatile issues, and he rarely spoke up at meetings unless he was specifically addressed. Furthermore, because he never mentioned his sex life, Warren made it easy for acquaintances to construe him as a

deeply conflicted closet type. To many, in those justifiably paranoid times, this presented the profile of an informant.

As to Warren's sex life, almost no one with whom I've discussed the matter seems to have met any of his tricks. He always professed to be an ephrophile, attracted to late adolescents, but with a guru such as Eglinton—author of the "bible of the pederasts," cowritten with Warren—well, who knows? John Lauritsen recounts to this day with astonishment how he and Warren once were invited by Eglinton to meet for dinner at a good New York restaurant. When they arrived, Eglinton already was seated, outfitted from head to toe, for reasons he didn't explain, in a Santa Claus costume. He proceeded to dine, drink, and converse as if there were nothing out of the ordinary about his apparel.

Later, a couple of years before Warren's death, Eglinton was sentenced in California for activities with two brothers of nine and eleven—not, I think, his first brush with the law, but his first imprisonment. I said to Warren, "A little money goes a long way in prison. Why don't I send him some?"

To my surprise, Warren became terribly agitated, more upset than I'd ever seen him. He exclaimed, "We could get in trouble!"

I replied, "But I've never done anything felonious." (Except sodomy, of course.) Warren was so perturbed, however, that I broke off the conversation. When I again brought up the subject several days later, he was equally adamant, and I dropped it. His fearfulness made me wonder if his name change, refusal to be photographed, estrangement from his family, and secrecy about his erotic encounters might stem from legal trouble, possibly for underage sex. At some point or another, had Warren himself played "Santa"?

The question wouldn't be significant or even interesting if Warren's life weren't very much both of those things, but it is, which to my mind justifies subjecting all of his secrets to speculation. Not a day passes that I do not think of him, for I loved him and still miss him more than anyone I have ever lost. Daily, too, I curse the illness that took him from us when he had so much yet to contribute, and which, as if manifesting the bleakness that underlay Warren's mordant sense of humor, provides an uneasy coda for a world-class linguist who loved to eat and hated to talk about himself: Warren Johansson, a lifetime nonsmoker, died of cancer of the tongue in 1994. I wish he were still feasting at a laden table. I wish he were still reclining in his chair, belching with contentment, confident that others would bear his plates back to the kitchen.

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