



United Kingdom II: 1900 to the Present

by Richard G. Mann

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By the end of the nineteenth century, a visible gay male subculture and a somewhat less visible lesbian subculture had emerged in the United Kingdom, but almost all expressions of male homosexual desire were illegal, and both gay men and lesbians were regarded as pariahs. Moreover, with the medicalization of same-sex desire, many manifestations of same-sex affection, which had previously been regarded as benign, had become suspect.

During the twentieth century, efforts to reform the law and public opinion in regard to homosexuality met with mixed success, each apparent advance seemingly followed by reactions of oppression and persecution. However, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, somewhat surprisingly given its history of resistance to glbtq demands for equality, the United Kingdom emerged as a leader in recognizing the human rights of its homosexual citizens.

Sexual/Gender Liberation Movements in the Early Twentieth Century

The suffrage movement attracted the support of women-identified women through varied political efforts to remove many different kinds of barriers to women's full participation in society. Among the women openly involved in the suffrage movement was composer Ethel Smyth (1858-1944), who composed the suffrage anthem, *The March of the Women*. Also open about her identity, Ciceley Hamilton (1872-1952) wrote the lyrics to Smyth's anthem, as well as numerous feminist treatises and plays for performances at feminist events, including the highly successful, humorous *Votes for Women* (1909).

Yet, despite the significant involvement of lesbians, feminist organizations generally did not encourage explicit public discussion of lesbian issues. Among the few published discussions of homosexuality in the context of the feminist movement was a series of articles that appeared in the progressive *Freewoman* in 1912. Although notable for its sympathetic treatment of the topic, the series was focused on male homosexuality and included only one specific reference to women's relationships.

Scholars are only beginning to reconstruct the emotional lives of lesbian women of the era, but some attention has been given to a few notable couples, such as Christopher St. John (1873-1960; name legally changed from Christabel Marshall, before 1899) and Edy Craig (1869-1947), who lived together for forty-eight years, beginning in 1899. Although each had separate careers (St. John as a theater designer and Craig as journalist), they collaborated together on several writing projects. Their relationship was public knowledge, and it was even noted in St. John's obituary in the *Times*.

Unifying their personal and professional lives, Agnes Hunt (1867-1948) and Emily Selina Goodford (b. 1856) founded in 1911 Baschurch Hospital for Cripples, which offered innovative, comprehensive care to disabled individuals.

Despite such notable examples, many lesbians felt isolated and lonely in the first decades of the twentieth century. A surprising number of them wrote for advice and emotional support to Edward Carpenter,

especially after the publication of his *Intermediate Sex* (1908), in which he discussed lesbian relationships positively. His interest in lesbianism and his endorsement of women's suffrage distinguish Carpenter from many male homosexuals of the era, who seem to have been at best indifferent to women's causes.

Male Homosexual Subculture before World War I

Concern about the moral threat of male homosexuality intensified in the years leading up to World War I. Thus, the Vagrancy Act of 1898 was revised by the 1912 Criminal Law Amendment Act, which established a mandatory sentence of six months imprisonment upon conviction of male-male sexual solicitation, whether cash exchange was involved or not; flogging was mandated for a second offense.

Fear of punishment and social disgrace continued to encourage furtiveness in homosexual liaisons. Full of explicit details, the diaries of Sir Roger Casement (1864-1916), a prominent Irish patriot, describe extensive but secretive sexual encounters with working-class youths, who were usually remunerated financially by him. After executing Casement for treason, the British government deliberately leaked the contents of his diaries in a successful effort to tarnish his reputation. Implying a connection between homosexual acts and treason, the revelation of the diaries reinforced among homosexual men an awareness of the need for secrecy in the conduct of their personal lives.

According to Jeffrey Weeks, Casement was typical of British upper-class homosexual men, who tried to retain public respectability by confining their homosexual dalliances to anonymous (often paid) encounters. The fascination of upper-class homosexuals with crossing social class barriers through casual sexual encounters is also evidenced in writings by J. R. Ackerley (1896-1967), E. M. Forster (1879-1970), and other prominent British literary figures throughout much of the twentieth century.

In the years between 1900 and 1914, the home of Carpenter and Merrill served as a meeting place for many involved in progressive political movements. Carpenter's optimistic vision of the fusion of the personal and political in an egalitarian society was appealing to many involved in the labor and feminist causes.

From the perspective of queer history, Carpenter's effort to incorporate sexual issues into the labor movement is of special significance. Both in the United Kingdom and abroad, he fostered groups of workers dedicated to the discussion of sexual matters. Carpenter's ability to gain support within labor organizations for sexual reform was exceptional; for the most part, the labor movement in Britain allied itself with conservative moralizing positions.

In 1913-14, Carpenter helped to found and served as the first president of the British Society of Sex-Psychology, the first public forum in Britain for the scientific discussion of sexual matters. The Society sponsored an ambitious series of lectures and pamphlets for the general public and also tried to encourage medical professionals to deal more objectively with sexual matters. Because the British Library would not allow access to materials with controversial sexual content, such as Carpenter's publications, the Society established a small library of fundamental works for members.

Including many ardent feminists in its membership, the Society emphasized the links between the oppression suffered by homosexuals and by women. To avoid attracting police investigations, the Society prefaced its publications on homosexual themes with extensive notes of caution, but these nonetheless made clear the compelling scientific rationale for reform.

Others worked more secretly to promote the concerns of homosexuals. By 1897, Charles Cecil Ives (1867-1950) had founded the Order of Chaeronea (named after a battle of 338 B. C. E. in which the Sacred Band of Thebes was slaughtered), which became an international organization by the beginning of the twentieth century. Inspired by Masonic practice, this underground society utilized elaborate rituals and

codes to prevent outsiders from penetrating its activities.

As proclaimed in the *Commentary on the Rule*, members pledged to work surreptitiously to improve legal and social conditions for homosexuals, and it is known that some utilized their social positions to advocate the "Cause" to politicians and to influence positive images of homosexuals in the arts. Although its specific achievements are hard to reconstruct in detail, the Order is historically significant as the first organization advocating the position that reform of homophobic laws could only be achieved by a cohesive organization, composed solely of homosexuals.

While providing an emotionally supportive environment for its largely upper-class members, the society officially discouraged use of meetings for sexual contacts. Many of the known members, such as writer and artist Laurence Housman and architect-designer C. R. Ashbee, seem in any event to have preferred sexual affairs with working-class men, rather than with members their own social class. Such relations were justified by Ives as means to a fundamental transformation of society.

Bloomsbury

The Bloomsbury group challenged the restrictive gender and sexual categories that otherwise seemed to dominate British society in the early twentieth century. Beginning in 1906 and continuing until about 1930, this influential circle of writers, artists, and intellectuals met regularly in the houses of Clive and Vanessa Bell and of Vanessa Bell's siblings, Adrian and Virginia Stephen (known as Virginia Woolf after her marriage to Leonard Woolf in 1912). Many of the male participants in the group had been members of the Apostles while at Cambridge, including novelist E. M. Forster, writer Lytton Strachey, and economist John Maynard Keynes. Other prominent figures involved in Bloomsbury included the painters Dora Carrington and Duncan Grant, art critic Roger Fry, publisher Leonard Woolf, and hostess Ottoline Morell, among others. Many of the individuals in the group made significant contributions to twentieth-century culture.

No single political or intellectual creed dominated the group, which was suspicious of political dogmas, whether of the left or right. In deliberate opposition to restrictive Victorian morality, members of the group exuberantly discussed all kinds of sexual matters. The openly homosexual members of the group--Strachey, Forster, Keynes, and Grant--found strong support from other participants.

Many of the members of the group developed relationships that defied simplistic categories of homo/heterosexual. For instance, Strachey had an affair with Grant between 1905 and 1906, but after that relationship ended he developed a close and supportive (though not sexual) relationship with Dora Carrington, while remaining avowedly homosexual. By 1917, Strachey and Carrington began to live together, and they continued to do so until Strachey's death in 1932, even after Carrington married the heterosexual Ralph Partridge in 1921. During her marriage to Partridge, Carrington had affairs with both men and women, and she began to identify herself as a lesbian by 1923. Despite her other involvements, Carrington committed suicide after Strachey's death because she could not envision life without him.

After his affair with Strachey, Grant developed a relationship with Keynes, which lasted until 1912. After many years as an active homosexual, Keynes fell in love with and married dancer Lydia Lopokova in 1925. From 1913 until 1961, Grant shared a house with Clive and Vanessa Bell. Though openly homosexual, Grant was seduced on one occasion in 1918 by Vanessa Bell, who became pregnant with his daughter, Angelica.

The fluidity of gender and sexual categories manifested in these relationships was explored in the writings of Virginia Woolf. Dedicated to Vita Sackville-West, with whom Woolf developed a passionate relationship, *Orlando* narrates the life of a character who changes from man to woman over the course of three hundred years from Queen Elizabeth's reign to the time of the publication of the book (1928). After becoming a woman, Orlando continues to dress as a man, though s/he marries and gives birth to a child. In *Mrs.*

Dalloway (1925), Woolf dealt with the life of a married woman who recollects her lesbian love.

During the years of his most intense involvement with Bloomsbury, Duncan Grant most often publicly exhibited abstract works, and, in 1913, with Bloomsbury critic Roger Fry, he founded the Omega Circle, which emphasized the importance of good design in objects used in everyday life. However, throughout his career, Grant also produced homoerotic figurative sketches and paintings.

Grant's private drawings were his most graphic works, but he exploited major public commissions as opportunities to glorify the strength and beauty of the male body, as he did, for example, in his murals *Football* and *Bathing* (1911) for the dining hall of the Borough Polytechnic in South London. The Byzantine stylizations of the figures and background may have made the homoeroticism palatable. Although the *Spectator* praised Grant's evocation of the joys of athleticism, the *Times* worried that the murals could have a degenerate influence on working-class youths. During the 1950s, in murals created for a chantry in Lincoln Cathedral, he based the handsome, bare-chested figure of Christ on his young lover, Paul Roche.

World War I: Queer Men in Battle

Strongly contradictory attitudes toward homosexuality were revealed during the Great War. On the battlefield, brutal conditions helped to bring out protective and romantic feelings between men that would have been condemned in other contexts. The homoeroticism that infused the experiences of many soldiers on the battlefield was glorified in poetry by Siegfried Sassoon (1886-1967) and others who served in the war.

Despite their intensity, most of the erotic impulses felt by the soldiers may not have been realized physically. Certainly, the lack of privacy must have hindered engagement in sexual acts. The military code mandated prison sentences for homosexual acts that ranged from a minimum of ten years to life for anal intercourse and two years for oral sex. During the war, 22 officers and approximately 270 soldiers were court-martialed for sodomy.

The *Black Book*

On the home front, the British public became obsessed with the perceived threat of homosexuality to national security. Working to enflame mass hysteria, Independent politician Noel Pemberton Billing claimed in an article published on January 26, 1918 in his newspaper *Imperialist* (subsequently renamed *Vigilante*) that the Germans had knowledge of a *Black Book* with the names of 47,000 British male and female homosexuals. According to Pemberton, the Germans planned to use that source to obtain sensitive military information from homosexuals in high positions.

In an article published in February 1918, Billing further maintained that several thousand of the people in the *Black Book* were members of the private Independent Theatre Society, which was planning to stage Oscar Wilde's banned *Salome*. Fearing that she was, at least implicitly, exposed as a lesbian, prominent Canadian actress Maud Allen, who planned to star in the production, sued Billing for libel. During the highly publicized trial, held in May, Allen was given little opportunity to present her case. Instead, under the direction of homophobic Justice Darling, attention was focused primarily upon testimony of defense witnesses who claimed to have read copies of the *Black Book*. It is indicative of the mood of the times that it took the jury less than an hour to exonerate Billing of the charge of libel.

Women during the Great War

The outbreak of World War I provided women with opportunities that were not available to them in peacetime. Thus, in 1914, Mary Allen (1898-1964) helped to found the first police force for women in Britain, the Women Police Volunteers. Among the many other lesbians who made significant contributions to the war effort, Barbara Lowther and Norah Desmond Hackett established in 1917 a corps of volunteer

ambulance drivers in France. Their correspondence from the 1930s reveals that they were lovers while they undertook this adventurous initiative.

Like some other publicly visible lesbian women of the era, Allen and Lowther revealed their lesbianism by incorporating male signifiers into their public personas, including short, cropped hair, a monocle, and a police uniform worn on all occasions. In appropriating these stereotypically male elements, lesbians affirmed their sexuality by acting out the implications of the conception of homosexuality as the inversion of biological gender. Working-class women who adopted more thorough male drag in an effort to enlist in the armed forces were arrested and often imprisoned.

Policing Queer Desire in the Interwar Years

By the 1920s, many queer men had congregated in London, Birmingham, Glasgow, and other major metropolitan centers. In these cities, local authorities consistently emphasized their dedication to enforcing laws against homosexual offenses, but the level and intensity of surveillance of homosexual acts fluctuated. Patterns of policing in London have been studied in greatest detail, but they correspond generally with trends throughout the United Kingdom.

In London between 1922 and 1927, over eighty men were arrested per year for homosexual solicitation, but arrests dropped to fifteen in 1928 and ten in 1929. The notable decrease in arrests probably was a consequence of the resolution of the case brought against national war hero Frank Champain, arrested in a public urinal in London in 1927. After a widely publicized trial, Champain was acquitted because the jury was disgusted with the methods that the police had used to entrap him. For the next two years, Metropolitan Police were reluctant to engage in surveillance of public urinals and other cruising spots.

Angered by the decline in cases against homosexuals, moral crusader and eugenicist Mrs. Neville-Rolfe instituted a public campaign that encouraged the police to reinstitute surveillance of homosexual activities. As a result, there were 113 arrests for homosexual acts in London in 1930, and there continued to be a similarly high number of arrests for the remainder of the decade.

Police efforts tended to be concentrated primarily on certain locations and on certain types of individuals. In the interwar years, over half of the arrests in London for homosexual acts were made in just nine public urinals in the West End. Social class was a factor, as working-class men were more likely to be arrested than men of middle and upper classes. In particular, police focused their attention primarily on effeminate men.

Moving to London in 1931, Quentin Crisp (1908-1999) was one of the working-class men who challenged rigorous gender conventions by adopting effeminate manners, hennaed hair, lipstick, and unconventional clothing. Supporting himself through a variety of jobs (illustrator and commercial artist, tap-dance teacher, and prostitute), he often hung out with friends at the Black Cat on Compton Street in Soho, a cafe that tolerated camp young men. However, outside this supportive environment, he was often subject to abuse. Crisp's experiences became widely known through his autobiography, *Confessions of a Naked Civil Servant*, published in 1968.

Awareness of police "blind spots" undoubtedly served to encourage middle-class queer men to cultivate a conventionally masculine public persona to avoid detection. Within certain sophisticated upper-class circles (for instance, at the universities at Oxford and Cambridge), a degree of tolerance was extended to homosexuality as long as it was kept implicit and not visibly expressed.

Despite the potential dangers of arrest by police and of "poof rorting" (queer bashing), many men of all social classes found sexual encounters in latrines and "cottages" (public washrooms) exciting. To protect themselves against arrest, men developed a complex system of coded gestures and phrases, and they

collaborated in shielding sexual acts from view by patrolling washroom entrances and other means. Open spaces, such as Hyde Park and Hampstead Heath in London, also served as major centers of queer public life. Although police made significant efforts to reduce homosexual activity in these open spaces, men generally were able to elude detection by retreating into secluded areas, especially at night.

Those who could afford to do so took advantage of tearooms, taverns, nightclubs, and other commercial establishments that catered primarily to homosexual clients. In the Criterion in Piccadilly and other bars that were recognized as gay friendly, many men flirted and chatted with others. Among other establishments, the Lyon's Coventry Street Corner House was particularly famous throughout Britain as a welcoming venue.

During the 1920s and early 1930s, police in London tended not to harass landlords of gay-friendly establishments, especially those who paid bribes. However, following strong complaints by the Canadian Military and Admiralty in 1936, the Metropolitan Police invoked a neglected licensing act of 1839 to raid establishments with homosexual clients and held proprietors legally responsible for the "obscene" behavior of their customers. The crackdown on gay-friendly establishments intensified in the later 1930s, although some prominent venues, such as Lyon's Coventry Street Corner House, remained largely unhindered in their operations until the 1950s.

The increasingly inhospitable climate for homosexuals in the United Kingdom in the 1930s was a contributing factor in the decision of several leading young writers--most notably, W. H. Auden and Christopher Isherwood--to emigrate.

The Law and Lesbians in the Interwar Years

In 1921, a Criminal Law Amendment Bill was introduced that would have classified any "act of gross indecency between female persons" as a misdemeanor, punishable in the same manner as comparable male acts under the Labouchère Amendment. On August 4, 1921, the House of Commons passed the measure by a vote of 148 to 53. However, the bill was rejected by the House of Lords on the grounds that insufficient evidence had been presented to indicate the necessity of the act.

Although sexual acts between women were not criminalized, the obscenity trial of 1928 concerning the distribution of Radclyffe Hall's *The Well of Loneliness* in the United Kingdom indicated the limits on the public expression of lesbianism. Clarence Dane and other authors who dealt previously with lesbian themes avoided prosecution for obscenity by emphasizing the suffering of lesbian characters. From the beginning, Hall intended *Well* to present lesbianism to the public sympathetically, and, to this end, she arranged for Havelock Ellis to write a preface, emphasizing the sociological worth of the book.

Although *The Well of Loneliness* was banned in the United Kingdom, copies printed in France and the United States became available, and, in the short interlude before the obscenity trial, favorable reviews appeared in a number of publications, including the *Sunday Times*. Although it affirmed the ban on the book, the trial helped to call public attention to lesbian issues, and it established the *Well* in the queer canon. Further, Hall took great pride in the letters that she received from other women (up to 10,000 per year, according to her account), who emphasized that publicity about the novel helped them to become aware that their own homosexual inclinations were shared by other women.

Opportunities for Women's Socialization

The role of a husband in enabling women to attain economic security and social respectability made it difficult for many middle-class and lower-class women to realize (or perhaps even to conceive of) lives structured around lesbian relationships. Nevertheless, diaries, letters, and other documents reveal that

some women of all classes established emotionally intense friendships with other women. During the interwar years, most of the women who engaged in sexual relationships with other women probably did so secretly, juggling these with their commitments to husbands.

In contrast to the situation for gay men, there were no public commercial spaces catering primarily to lesbians. Nevertheless, wealthy lesbians found a welcome during the 1920s in bohemian nightspots such as London's Cave of Harmony and the Orange Tree. By 1921, Enid Chambers had developed detailed plans for a lesbian center in London, but, despite the help of Carpenter and other friends, she was unable to secure sufficient funding for the project.

In mid-1930s, Alice Williams (1863-1957) attempted to redress the lack of a lesbian social center through the foundation of the Forum Club. This socially exclusive establishment at Hyde Park Corner in Knightsbridge provided its members with many of the functions of traditional men's clubs: accommodation, food services, and opportunities for intellectual discussions on a variety of topics. Although not advertised as a lesbian club, it was widely perceived as such, and a very high percentage of its members self-identified as lesbians, according to Emily Hamer.

For women of the middle and working classes, the Women's Institutes (established 1915), the National Union of Townswomen's Guild (NUTG, established 1928), and other women's organizations were important in fostering unity and in keeping alive the spirit of feminism, even after suffrage had been achieved. At least some of the women involved in these organizations, such as Alice Franklin (1885-1964), honorary secretary and treasurer of NUTG, were relatively open about their sexual orientation and their distrust of men.

Increasing Oppression of Homosexuality at Mid-century

During the fifteen years following the outbreak of World War Two, the number of recorded indictable homosexual offenses increased dramatically. In 1938, the police in England and Wales dealt with 134 cases of sodomy; in 1952, 670; and in 1954, 1043. Arrests for homosexual assault increased from 822 in 1938 to 3,305 in 1955. Furthermore, in 1955, there were 2,322 recorded instances of "gross indecency" in England and Wales, in comparison with 316 in 1938.

According to accounts of queer veterans, the difficult and exceptional circumstances of military duty helped to foster a certain degree of tolerance within the ranks for casual same-sex acts, as long as there was no explicit indication of homosexual identity. Nevertheless, military authorities became increasingly concerned about homosexual activities as the war progressed. During the first twelve months of the war, 1939-40, forty-eight men were court-martialed for "indecent behavior between males"; in the final twelve months, 1944-45, the number of court-martials for homosexual acts had increased to 324. During the course of the war, there were more British men court-martialed for homosexual acts than for any other category of offense.

Among the prominent military personnel accused of sodomy was Sir Paul Latham, a wealthy Conservative Member of Parliament, who, though exempted from service, joined the army of his own accord. In 1941, he was tried and convicted of "improper behavior" with three gunners and a civilian while serving as an officer in the Royal Artillery. Convicted of ten charges of indecent conduct, he was discharged dishonorably, imprisoned for two years, and forced to resign his seat in Parliament.

During the course of the war, tabloids increasingly featured stories claiming that military personnel stationed in British communities were in danger of corruption by predatory homosexuals. In response to the public outcry incited by these accounts, police utilized the Defense Regulations and Emergency Powers Acts to close "disorderly" premises without following standard legal protocol. Thus, for example, under authority of this Act, Sam's Café in Rupert Street, London, was closed between 6 P.M. and 6 A.M. in 1941. Further, in

1944, several prominent gay-friendly pubs (including Swiss Hotel in Old Crompton Street) were cautioned for harboring "sodomites." As the new regulations were enforced, many pubs and cafes voluntarily began to exclude homosexual patrons in order to avoid possible harassment by the police.

The intensification of the prosecution of homosexuals coincided with the appointment in 1944 of Sir Theobald Mathew as Director of Public Prosecution (a post he held until 1964). Disturbed by the recorded increase in homosexual incidents during the war years, Mathew made the suppression of homosexuality a primary goal of law enforcement agencies.

Specific targets for arrests of homosexuals were established by local police authorities, who also devised the means used to arrest homosexuals. By the late 1940s, the Metropolitan Police offered detailed training courses, preparing officers to go "underground" in homosexual milieus. Entrapment became common, and men were often arrested after performing sexual acts with policemen.

In 1951, the defection to the Soviet Union of the spies Guy Burgess and David Maclean, both known homosexuals, solidified the public impression that sexual deviance was detrimental to the well-being of the nation. In response, the British government instituted policies to weed out homosexuals in sensitive government positions.

In 1952, during this atmosphere of hysteria, Alan Turing, one of the most gifted scientists of his generation, who had cracked the German Enigma machine code during World War II and who had pioneered in the development of the modern computer, was arrested and prosecuted for "gross indecency" when he reported a burglary at his home. As a show of leniency toward someone who had contributed greatly to the war effort, Turing was given a choice between prison or "organo-therapy," a kind of chemical castration. He chose the latter, but grew depressed when the "treatment" left him impotent and caused him to grow breasts. In 1954, like many homosexuals before him who ran afoul of prejudice and stupidity, he committed suicide.

Appointed Metropolitan Police Commissioner in 1953, Sir John Nutt-Bower intensified efforts to clamp down on homosexuals with little regard for established legal procedures. Courts generally supported his endeavors, frequently overlooking infringements on the rights of individuals who had been indicted for homosexual acts.

Emboldened by the mood of intense homophobia, police did not hesitate to arrest even very prominent figures for homosexual acts and indecent behavior. Among the many men arrested in 1953 were William Field, a well-known and popular Labour Member of Parliament (MP); Ian Harvey, Tory Junior Minister; Ian Horrabin, Tory MP; and Sir John Gielgud, the prominent actor.

Convicted in October of soliciting sex in a public lavatory, Gielgud was fined ten pounds and encouraged to seek counseling. However, many men were given much more severe punishment. For instance, famous author Rupert Croft-Cooke was imprisoned for nine months after being convicted for sexual offenses with two sailors. Others were forced to undergo medical regimens, including hormone therapy and aversion therapy, as a part of their sentence or as a condition of parole or probation.

Announced on October 16, 1953, the arrest by Scotland Yard of Lord Montagu of Beaulieu and his friend film director Kenneth Hume for "serious offenses" with boy scouts provoked a frenzy of media coverage. Because of suspicion that the police had tampered with some of the evidence, the jury of the trial in December dismissed one charge and left a second unresolved, awaiting retrial. Before that could occur, Lord Montagu was arrested in January 1954, along with his cousin Michael Pitt-Rivers and friend Peter Wildeblood, a prominent journalist, for conspiring to commit unnatural acts with two members of the Air Force. The servicemen were exempted from all charges in exchange for their testimony. Found guilty at their trial in

March 1954, the three accused were sentenced to prison: Montagu, for 12 months; Pitt-Rivers and Wildeblood, for 18 months each.

Disturbed by the heavy sentences given to these highly respected public figures, the *Sunday Times* and some other leading newspapers published editorials questioning the wisdom of imposing such penalties for homosexual acts. Outside the courthouse, Wildeblood was cheered by a large crowd that clearly regarded him as a martyr. Thus, the trial of Montagu and his associates contributed to an impetus for reform.

To consider revisions to the existing laws regulating sexual behavior, the government established later in 1954 a Departmental Committee on Homosexual Offenses and Prostitution, usually called the Wolfenden Committee after its chairman, Sir John Wolfenden. The Committee consisted of fourteen men and three women, including, among others, a Member of Parliament, a psychiatrist, a Presbyterian minister, two judges, and others of impeccable moral reputation. Although copious testimony was taken from declared homosexuals, none served on the Committee.

On September 4, 1957, the Committee finally issued its report, which recommended that homosexual acts in private between two consenting adults should be decriminalized. However, the Committee made clear that it regarded homosexuality as a debilitating condition, which should be treated, if possible, with medical means (though it declined to classify homosexuality as a mental illness). Further, the Committee opposed decriminalization of public homosexual acts and recommended stiff penalties for male prostitution. The age of consent for homosexual acts was to be established at 21 rather than 16 as it was for heterosexual or lesbian sexual acts.

Given the lingering homophobia and the dynamics of the parliamentary system, which permits a recall election if a government-backed measure is defeated, it is not surprising that leading politicians delayed acting on the most significant Wolfenden recommendations. However, in 1959, Parliament enacted its proposals to make male prostitution and street solicitation (by both men and women) illegal.

To campaign for the Wolfenden proposals, a small group of straight and gay supporters of reform discreetly founded the Homosexual Law Reform Society (HLRS) in London in 1958. By 1959, the HLRS had begun to launch a nationwide campaign, although its headquarters remained in London.

Women during the 1940s and 1950s

In 1956, the pervasive official silence about lesbian sexuality was broken when the sexual assault of a woman by another woman was added to the Sexual Offenses Act. While it did not criminalize lesbianism *per se*, this revision of the legal code did serve to publicize the threat that lesbians were thought to pose to heterosexual women. Throughout the 1940s and 1950s, lesbians were subjected to significant social prejudices.

Although exact statistics are unavailable, recent feminist historians have suggested that lesbians were more impacted than other women by government regulations instituted in 1942 that required all single women to register for war work. In response to rumors of lesbianism, government publicity emphasized that women engaged in war work retained both their femininity and their interest in men.

A government commission established in 1941 investigated sexual immorality in the women's armed forces and expressed great concern about lesbianism among military personnel. However, discharges for female-female sexual acts were relatively rare. Usually, women suspected of engaging in lesbian activities were separated from their supposed partners through reposting. Despite official efforts to suppress lesbianism, many women veterans maintained that it had been relatively easy to be a lesbian during the war if one were discreet.

During the 1950s, the dominant sociological theory of functionalism provided justification for renewed emphasis on "traditional" heterosexual family roles for women. Even the Women's Institute and similar organizations diluted their political programs through a focus on conventional femininity.

During the 1950s, lesbianism was generally regarded as a curable, but potentially debilitating, psychological illness. The Maudsley Hospital, London, and other leading medical institutions used aversion therapy to treat lesbianism.

In 1949, Falcon Press issued the first British edition of the *Well of Loneliness* since the 1928 ban, and that book continued to provide many women with awareness that many others shared their lesbian desires. The cropped hair and mannish attire, favored both by Radclyffe Hall and her fictional character Stephen, remained the most obvious public indicator of lesbianism. "Butch" and "femme" camps predominated at the Gateways, a bohemian bar in Chelsea (London) that had effectively become a lesbian club by the 1950s. However, as Hamer has noted, it is difficult to know the extent to which these categories applied to most lesbian women, who maintained discreet public profiles.

Despite the dominance of heterosexual values, some prominent lesbians publicly revealed their relationships with other women. For example, the surgeon Louisa Martindale (1873-1965) discussed the significance of her partnership with Ismay Fitzgerald in her autobiography (1951). A popular middlebrow cultural critic and radio personality, Nancy Spain (1917-1964) conducted public flirtations with gay men, but she also made public, sexually-charged references to her partner, Jonnie Werner.

1960s: The Push for Legal Reform

More than 1,000 people attended the first public meeting of the HLRS held on May 12, 1960 at Caxton Hall (near Westminster). A substantial majority of those in attendance endorsed a resolution calling on the government to implement the Wolfenden proposals. Supporting the HLRS, Labour MP Kenneth Robinson introduced on June 29, 1960 a motion asking the House of Commons to enact the Wolfenden recommendations. Even liberal newspapers opposed the motion, which was defeated by a vote of 213 to 99.

In subsequent years, the HLRS undertook many different kinds of activities, ranging from advocacy of legal reforms to psychological support services for gay men. Because homosexuality was illegal, it was difficult for the HLRS to raise money openly. Therefore, in 1958, Antony Grey (pseudonym of A. E. G. Wright) founded the Albany Trust, a public charity that could channel funds to the HLRS. Despite Grey's fundraising, the HLRS often found it difficult to meet its expenses.

In 1958, the Lord Chamberlain's office lifted the ban on the treatment of homosexual topics in public theaters, and, by the early 1960s, a number of plays and films dealt with homosexual issues. Particularly important among the films that helped to promote reform was *Victim* (1961), which starred Dirk Bogarde as a barrister whose career and marriage were threatened by a blackmailer aware of his homosexual activities. In 1964, the BBC TV program *This Week* presented a sensitive, full-length documentary that compared the lives of homosexual men in the UK and the Netherlands.

Despite sympathetic films on homosexual themes, polls indicated that public opinion remained largely opposed to homosexual law reform. Newspapers consistently characterized gay men as pathetic creatures even when they acknowledged the need for the reform of oppressive laws. In the fall of 1962, public attention was focused on the blackmail of homosexuals through the highly publicized trial of William Vassall, a Foreign Office clerk, accused of providing classified information to a KGB agent who had taken compromising photographs of him.

Many local agencies devised new methods to entrap homosexual men. For example, in Hertfordshire, police

removed floor boards from the main floor of Baldock Town Hall so that they could spy on the men's room below. The recurring prosecutions of homosexual men prompted Allan Horsfall to found the North Western Homosexual Law Reform Society (NWLRS) in 1964. Under the direction of Colin Harvey, the NWLRS attracted many openly homosexual members in the Manchester area.

In July 1964, the Director of Public Prosecutions asked that all Chief Constables obtain consent before bringing charges for sexual acts between men in private. Rather than an attempt to improve the lives of gay men, however, this change probably was intended to deflect activists' objections to the uneven application of existing law.

Following Labour's victory in the 1966 general election, Richard Crossman, Leader of the House of Commons, arranged the legislative schedule to insure consideration of a homosexual law reform bill. After a great deal of political maneuvering, the Sexual Offences Bill finally was passed shortly after dawn on the morning of July 4, 1967. By continuing debate on the bill without interruption from July 3 into the morning of July 4, Crossman managed to wear down the will of opponents. At the time the final vote was taken, significant numbers of exhausted members had left the House. In fact, by this point, there were present only a few more than the minimum of one hundred members, required for a parliamentary vote. This circumstance explains the rather curious tally of 101 to 16 votes by which the hotly contested Act was passed. With the granting of royal assent on July 28, the bill became law.

The Sexual Offences Act instituted one of the primary recommendations of the Wolfenden Report: the decriminalization of homosexual acts between adult men in private. Also in accord with the Wolfenden recommendations, the Sexual Offences Bill established 21 as age of consent for homosexual acts, in contrast to 16 for heterosexual and lesbian acts.

Furthermore, the Bill established additional restrictions on homosexuals. The mandatory prison sentence for consensual sex between an adult and a person aged between 16 and 20 was increased from two to five years. In addition, prison sentences of two years were established for homosexual acts involving more than two adult males and for any male-male sexual acts in a public place. The new law applied only in England and Wales, and it specifically exempted all members of the armed forces. All male homosexual acts continued to be illegal in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Despite passage of the Act, antagonism against homosexuals remained widespread. The commercial bars and clubs that began to solicit the business of gay men more openly risked police harassment. Thus, the popular Baton Rouge Club in Manchester was raided and shut down in 1969. The government prohibited the NWLRC from establishing a network of social clubs.

The MRG and Lesbian Political Organization in the 1960s

On January 1, 1963, Esmé Langley and Diana Chapman founded the Minorities Research Group (MRG), intended to promote understanding of lesbianism. Seeking to improve the lives of lesbians throughout the UK, the MRG offered counseling and tried to foster contacts among isolated women.

Before establishing the MRG, Langley had sought to increase awareness of lesbian history through articles on various famous personalities, and she continued that endeavor in *Arena Three*, the magazine published by the MRG and distributed by private circulation. Consisting of approximately twelve typed sheets stapled together, each issue of *Arena Three* contained articles and letters on a wide variety of topics of interest to lesbians.

By March 1964, the MRG had only 36 paid members, but its impact far exceeded the small size of its paid-up membership. By 1964, MRG held regular meetings in London, which featured lively and sometimes

heated debates. At these sessions, the appropriateness of "mannish" clothing was a frequent topic and provoked a great deal of controversy. The middle-class women who predominated in the MRG membership often expressed discomfort with "butch" clothing, but they refused to endorse a prohibition on male drag at meetings, as was proposed by some members.

Responding to the need for more social opportunities for women, Cheri Ager, on behalf of the MRG, began in 1965 to try to establish a system of regional organizations. This effort was most successful in London, where the London Volunteer Committee organized lesbian groups for sports, music, and other activities.

Maintaining that Langley was socially elitist, Christina Reid and other members of the Volunteer Committee withdrew from MRG in July 1965 and established an alternative lesbian social organization, KENRIC, named after the London boroughs of Kensington and Richmond, where many of the members lived. Distancing itself from political activism, KENRIC focused primarily on social activities for women. In general, KENRIC tended to attract younger members than MRG, and many women who became involved in KENRIC found the articles in *Arena Three* dull and irrelevant.

By the end of the 1960s, there were small but viable lesbian associations established in various parts of the UK, including Norfolk and Suffolk, the Midlands, and Hampshire and Dorset. Initially established in 1965 as the Lancashire and Cheshire branch of the MRG, the Manchester-based New Group was the largest lesbian organization outside London, with more than 60 members in 1968.

The Gateways in Chelsea remained the preeminent lesbian venue throughout the 1960s, although several other clubs were established for women in London during the decade. By 1969, this members-only club had literally thousands of members, primarily lesbians but also including some gay men. Consisting only of a single room and a bar, the Gateways actually only had room for about 200 people, so it was very crowded at most times of the day. Maureen Duffy's popular novel *The Microcosm* (1966), concerned with women who frequent a lesbian club, is clearly based upon Gateways. The club became widely known to the general public when it was used as the setting of Robert Aldrich's highly successful film, *The Killing of Sister George* (1968), starring Beryl Reid. The lesbian couple that owned the Gateways and various patrons appeared in the film.

1970s: the Era of Gay Liberation

According to Home Office figures, convictions in the early 1970s for homosexual solicitation were at the same level that they had been before the passage of the Sexual Offenses Act, and police continued to utilize entrapment and similar tactics in order to arrest gay men. Yet, despite police harassment of gay-friendly establishments, the *Gay Guide*, published in 1970 by John Stamford's magazine *Spartacus*, described 60 gay venues in London and over 200 in the rest of the UK.

Inspired by developments in the United States, especially the Stonewall Riots and the New York-based Gay Liberation Front, the Gay Liberation Movement held its first meeting November 13, 1970 in a classroom at the London School of Economics. Young homosexual men and women were quickly attracted to the movement, and on November 27, the newly founded Gay Liberation Front (GLF) held its first public event, a torchlight demonstration protesting the arrest of a gay activist for solicitation on Highbury Fields.

By spring 1971, the lively GLF meetings routinely attracted several hundreds, and the GLF also sponsored popular social events and discos. Police raids on GLF events and arrests of its leaders served to solidify support for the organization among younger homosexuals. Over 2,000 people participated in the UK's first Gay Pride March, held in London in July 1972.

By mid-1973, the GLF had fragmented into distinct factions, and it collapsed by the end of the year. Despite

its short existence and its naive political stances, the GLF radically transformed gay life in Britain through its strong advocacy of the positive aspects of gay life and its insistence that significant social reforms were both necessary and inevitable.

Also helping to promote gay consciousness, the fortnightly newspaper *Gay News*, established in 1972, published a wide range of articles intended to appeal to a broad spectrum of the community. By mid-1975, *Gay News* had a paid circulation of over 7,500, even though most news agents refused to stock it. In contravention of a House of Lords ruling that advertisements for sexual acts between men were illegal, *Gay News* also published personal ads, insisting not very convincingly that these were strictly non-sexual in intent.

As the influence of GLF declined, membership in more solidly established gay political organizations increased significantly. In November 1970, when HLRS was renamed Campaign for Homosexual Equality (CHE), it had over 500 members in 15 local groups. By April 1973, when it held its first annual conference at Morecambe, CHE had more than 2,000 fully paid members.

Inspired by the radical stance of GLF, leaders of CHE now encouraged men to hold hands in public and otherwise make their sexual orientation visible. Encouraged by the return of Labour to power in 1974, CHE systematically worked with the Scottish Minorities Group (SMG) and the newly founded Northern Ireland gay rights group to achieve significant legal reform.

Founded in 1969, the Scottish Minorities Group campaigned against the criminal penalties that still applied to male homosexual acts in Scotland. Although its explicit defiance of the law put its existence in jeopardy, the SMG had more than 200 members in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Aberdeen, and St. Andrews by the end of 1971.

Although hindered by their country's devastating sectarian conflicts, gay men in Northern Ireland determined to organize to defend their rights. They founded the Campaign for Homosexual Law Reform (CHLR) in 1974, with the goal of achieving extension of the 1967 Act to their country. In 1975, CHLR was dissolved and replaced by the Northern Ireland Gay Rights Association (NIGRA).

To support their plea for immediate legal reform, CHE, SMG, and CHLR jointly sponsored a number of demonstrations, including one held in Trafalgar Square on November 2, 1974, which was attended by more than 2,500 people. Determined to influence Parliament, the three organizations publicly launched a draft Homosexual Law Reform Bill on July 3, 1975. In response, the government established the Criminal Law Revision Committee (CLRC) to review all laws relating to sexual consent. Although activists hoped for quick action, CLRC took more than six years to fulfill its brief.

In 1975, the television broadcast of the dramatization of Quentin Crisp's autobiography, *The Naked Civil Servant*, helped to foster discussion of homosexual issues. The film was produced by Thames Television after the BBC turned it down. John Hurt won several awards for his performance in the title role, and the show enjoyed great popular acclaim. According to a survey by the Independent Broadcast Authority, only three percent of viewers said they were shocked by the broadcast, and eighty-five percent maintained that they enjoyed the show.

In the second half of the 1970s, the gay community endured several significant political setbacks. Despite organized opposition by SMG, the House of Commons on November 3, 1976 enacted a bill that consolidated all homosexual offenses in Scotland into a single law, intended to expedite prosecutions. In 1977, the House of Lords overwhelmingly defeated a proposal to lower to 18 the age for male-male sexual acts. After extensive debate begun in March, the House of Lords passed on July 7, 1977 the Sexual Offenses Scotland Bill, which decriminalized sexual acts between two adult men in private. Unfortunately, the Scotland Bill

lapsed and did not become law because opponents in the House of Commons successfully prevented debate.

In January 1976, the Royal Ulster Constabulary in Belfast raided the homes of 23 gay men involved in reform issues, holding and interrogating them for several hours and seizing NIGRA materials as evidence of criminal activity. One of the men targeted in the raid, Jeff Dudgeon, submitted a case to the European Court of Human Rights, asserting that the British government was invading his privacy by refusing to legalize homosexuality.

In July 1977, the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission recommended legalization of homosexual acts between consenting adults. However, despite a declaration of support, the Government did not act on this proposal, which was vociferously opposed by the Democratic Unionist Party.

On July 11, 1977, Denis Lemon, editor of *Gay News*, was found guilty of blasphemy for publishing a poem by James Kirkup that characterized Jesus Christ as a homosexual. The prosecution of Lemon had been initiated by conservative moral reformer Mary Whitehouse, who referred to an archaic and virtually forgotten law. Readers of *Gay News* donated over £21,000 to Lemon's unsuccessful legal defense.

Worsening the situation, established gay political organizations, such as CHE, had increasing difficulty attracting and retaining members during the later 1970s. A variety of factors contributed to this situation, including the emergence of highly specialized interest groups within the gay movement and the hedonistic distractions readily available in the expanding commercial gay scenes in large metropolitan areas.

Lesbianism and Feminism in the 1970s

Although actively involved in the founding of GLF, many lesbians came to believe that feminist organizations had more relevance to them than gay rights groups dominated by men. Initially, major feminist groups were reluctant to address lesbian causes, but members of the GLF introduced lesbianism as a topic of discussion at the Women's Liberation Conference held at Skegness in October 1971. Subsequently, most British feminists came to regard lesbianism as a politically sound alternative to heterosexuality, and many women came out in the context of feminist organizations.

Despite their historic contributions to the formation of lesbian identity, both the MRG and *Arena Three* were in dire straits by 1970 as membership levels declined. Founded in 1970, the Press Freedom Group sought to promote circulation of *Arena Three* and to radicalize its content. With the winter 1970 issue, *Arena Three* began to publish erotic fiction and images, but the magazine collapsed at the end of 1971, when Langley appropriated its remaining financial assets and moved abroad.

In 1972, Jackie Foster and other women involved in the Press Freedom Group founded *Sappho*, a politically committed feminist magazine, linked to a program of social activities, including support groups for lesbian mothers and lesbian teachers. Furthermore, *Sappho* coordinated and paid for the legal defense of servicewomen accused of lesbianism, and it helped to establish the London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard in 1974.

In 1977, Maureen Colquhoun, Labour MP for Northampton, became the first publicly "out" British politician when she acknowledged the truth of widespread rumors about her relationship with another woman. Despite efforts by her local constituency to withdraw endorsement from her, she ran as the Labour candidate in the next election (May 1979), in which she was defeated by a Conservative.

An Era of Moral Retrenchment

The Conservative government, headed by Margaret Thatcher (Prime Minister, 1979-90), systematically sought to prevent further homosexual law reform and to restrict the existing rights of homosexuals. Upon taking office in May 1979, the new government announced that it would not extend the Sexual Offenses Act of 1977 to Northern Ireland, claiming that the measure was opposed by that country's elected representatives and religious organizations. On March 6, 1980, the government rejected an amendment to a Housing Bill that would have given gay and lesbian couples the security of tenure already accorded to heterosexual couples.

In April 1980, national attention was drawn to anti-gay discrimination by the case of John Saunders, who was dismissed because of his sexual orientation from his job at a Scottish residential camp for children. Following the rejection of his appeal by the Employment and Appeal Tribunal, an ad-hoc group of labor and business leaders submitted in June a petition to the House of Commons requesting that discriminatory laws be reformed.

Subsequently, Labour MP Robin Cook introduced an amendment to the Criminal Justice Scotland Bill that would decriminalize consensual sexual acts between adult males. Although every Conservative Scottish representative voted against it, the amendment was passed 203 to 80.

In a celebratory article, *Gay News* characterized Cook's amendment as an "orgy law" because it did not include restrictions regarding location or numbers of men involved. As a result, the Presbyterian Church of Scotland and other religious organizations instituted a successful campaign to persuade the House of Lords to restrict legal homosexual acts to private situations with no more than two men.

Responding to the reluctance of the Conservative government to reform sexual laws in Northern Ireland, the European Commission unanimously ruled in September 1980 that the UK violated the European Convention through its intervention in the private lives of homosexual men. However, the government refused to change the laws in Northern Ireland until the case of Jeff Dudgeon was reviewed by the full European Court.

In October 1981, the Court ruled that the UK violated Dudgeon's privacy, but it also declared that Dudgeon was entitled only to a minimal payment for legal fees because a certain (unspecified) degree of discrimination against homosexuals was permitted. On October 25, 1981, the House of Commons voted to extend the Sexual Offenses Act of 1967 to Northern Ireland.

Finally issued in 1981, the long awaited Report of the Criminal Law Reform Committee largely rejected expansion of individual sexual freedoms. However, the Report proposed that the Sexual Offenses Act of 1967 should be extended to servicemen and that the age of consent for private sexual acts between two men should be lowered to 18. However, no action was taken on these proposals.

In October 1982, the Government announced its intention to intensify prosecution of homosexual acts outside the scope of the 1967 Act. In that month, the Metropolitan Police raided a private party in West London and arrested 37 men, who were charged with engaging in homosexual acts that were "not in private."

After her landslide victory in June 1983, Thatcher emphasized her determination to secure passage of the Police and Criminal Evidence Bill (enacted 1984), which extended police powers of arrest in matters involving perceived affronts to public decency. In May 1984, a clause added to the Act specified that touching another man's genitals in a public washroom constituted an arrestable offense and that anyone even suspected of this offense could be detained for up to four days without access to a lawyer.

Even as the Bill was being debated, there was a notable increase in police activity against gay men. For example, on March 11, 1984, over 50 officers raided The Bell, a popular and cruisy gay pub in Camden (London), for a supposed infringement of the licensing laws, regulating hours of service and other aspects

of pub operations. On April 10, 1984, Customs and Excise agents raided Gay's the Word, London's only gay bookstore, and confiscated thirty percent of its stock. Police held the store's directors and manager for questioning without access to lawyers. Later in April, a similar raid was conducted against Lavender Menace, Edinburgh, then Scotland's only gay bookstore.

In November, the eight directors and the assistant manager of Gay's the Word were indicted for conspiracy to distribute obscene material, despite the fact that virtually all the titles submitted in evidence were also available in mainstream bookstores. However, all charges against the bookstore were dropped in 1985 following a high-profile campaign by civil liberties groups.

As the Conservative Party shifted to a repressive moral stance, London Mayor Ken Livingston committed the Greater London Council (GLC) to opposing discrimination against homosexuals. In 1984, the GLC affirmed gay rights as part of its anti-discrimination policy and established the London Lesbian and Gay Centre.

Labour-dominated councils in other cities, including Manchester, Southampton, and Birmingham, instituted programs similar to those of the GLC. Incensed, the Thatcher Government secured passage in Parliament of the Local Government Act of 1985, which abolished the GLC and other councils, effective March 31, 1986.

Influenced by the policies of the councils, Labour Party conferences of 1986 and 1987 supported motions to commit any future national Labour government to outlaw discrimination against gay men and lesbians. In the 1987 General Election, Conservative candidates routinely attacked Labour's pro-gay policies. Although Conservatives retained control of the government, the re-election of prominent gay activist Chris Smith as representative of South Islington and Finsbury (London), despite a lavishly subsidized smear campaign, gave hope to gay activists.

At the Conservative Party Conference held in October 1987, Thatcher expressed concern that children were being taught that gay lifestyles were acceptable. In December 1987, Conservative MP David Wilshire introduced an amendment--Clause 28--to the Local Government Bill that would prohibit government-supported institutions from teaching the normalcy of homosexuality and from making available any materials depicting homosexual relationships positively. The text of Clause 28 was written by Jill Knight, who had proposed the previous year a similar motion, which was defeated. Subsequently, Knight openly assumed leadership of the effort to pass Clause 28.

Stung by defeat in the recent election, Labour leaders initially refused to challenge this proposal, but the Party affirmed its opposition to the amendment by the beginning of March. By January 1988, the Association of Art Historians and other arts organizations expressed their opposition to Clause 28. Coming out in the course of a BBC radio interview, prominent Shakespearean actor Ian McKellen emerged as a leader of the opposition to the amendment.

Reacting to the homophobia underlying Clause 28, gay men and lesbians throughout the UK evinced a renewed commitment to political activism. Over 10,000 lesbians and gay men participated in a march in London on January 9, two days before the House of Lords debated the measure. Even larger protests were held in subsequent weeks. For instance, on February 20, a demonstration sponsored in Manchester by the Northwest Campaign for Gay and Lesbian Equality attracted a crowd estimated between 13,000 and 20,000. After the House of Commons passed the legislation on March 9, protests against Clause 28 continued, including one held on April 30 in London that attracted more than 30,000 people.

By establishing as a principle of British law the belief that homosexuality was a detriment to society, Clause 28 constituted a powerful symbol of the second-class status of gay and lesbian citizens. Nevertheless, in practice, it was easy for local agencies to circumvent the Clause because its wording was so vague. Thus, on May 25, the Department of Education issued an official policy statement advising all schools that it

would not prevent the objective discussion of homosexuality in the classroom.

Lesbian Feminism

Produced in 1981 by the Leeds Revolutionary Feminists, the book *Love Your Enemy?* has been characterized as the first major public declaration of lesbian-feminism in Britain. During the 1980s, the number of lesbian-feminists in the UK probably did not exceed 10,000, but they had a strong impact on the popular conception of lesbian identity because the media utilized stories about them as a means to attack all lesbians and feminists.

According to Hamer, throughout the 1980s, British lesbians heatedly debated a range of issues, including the morality of pornography, which proved to be particularly divisive. While some lesbian-feminists regarded the explicit depiction of sexual acts as inherently oppressive to women, others asserted that positive depictions of lesbian sexuality could be liberating.

Angered by the apparent willingness of some lesbian-feminists to work with the religious right to suppress erotic material, Elizabeth Wilson and other lesbian activists formed Feminists Against Censorship. Among other young British artists, queer activist Tessa Boffin (1962-93) created a notable ensemble of photographs and performance pieces that celebrated lesbian sexual freedom. By the late 1980s, London and other major cities had a significant number of clubs appealing to various groups of lesbians as diverse as "lipstick lesbians" and leather women.

Clause 28 probably contributed to the strong sense of solidarity apparent among queer women towards the end of the 1980s. Perhaps more significantly, opposition to the Clause also promoted awareness of the causes that linked gay men and lesbians, who began to work together more systematically to fight oppression.

HIV/AIDS

The first British case of Kaposi's Sarcoma was diagnosed in December 1981. By the end of 1983, there were 29 documented cases of AIDS in the UK. By April 1989, over a thousand individuals had died from complications of the disease. Numbers of individuals affected continued to grow; by early 1993, over 8,000 cases of AIDS had been documented. Disturbing as these statistics are, the incidence of AIDS during the 1980s and the early 1990s was considerably lower in the UK than in Spain, France, and many other western European countries, to say nothing of the United States.

Statistics tell only part of the story of AIDS. The illness and death caused by HIV and AIDS in the British gay male community during the mid-1980s created conditions resembling a wartime emergency. Intensifying the oppression of gay men during the era were smear campaigns directed against them by right-wing politicians and religious leaders, who emphasized the link between homosexuality and devastating disease. There were increasing instances of discrimination against gay men, who, for example, were refused service by taxi firms and pubs.

Faced with government inaction, members of the gay community developed volunteer organizations to deal with the HIV/AIDS crisis. Named after the first British man known to have died of AIDS, the Terrence Higgins Trust (THT), founded in November 1982, devoted its initial efforts to fund-raising for research but later developed a comprehensive range of medical and support services. Campaigning in gay discos and leather clubs in London, the Trust had developed a safe-sex education program by 1983, as did such other groups as Gay Medical Association. Outside of London, locally based self-help groups of gay men emerged in many cities by 1984.

In January 1985, Jill Knight, Chair of the House of Commons Health Committee, demanded that AIDS be made a notifiable disease and that legal steps be taken to confine AIDS patients. Reacting to a public relations campaign launched by the newspaper *Capital Gay*, Health Minister Kenneth Clarke on February 20 abandoned the proposal to make AIDS a notifiable disease, but he established powers to detain patients in hospitals. In September, THT successfully appealed to the High Court to rescind the powers that had been used to confine a man with AIDS against his will in a Manchester hospital. Appointed Health Minister in 1985, Barney Harvey, who had coordinated the raid against *Gay's the Word*, supported increased police powers against homosexual activities in a supposed effort to protect young people against disease.

Established in 1987, the Health Education Authority encouraged "mainstreaming" of AIDS information and help services, effectively distancing them from the gay organizations that had pioneered these activities. As HIV/AIDS service providers became increasingly dependent on government funding in the late 1980s and the 1990s, they tended to downplay services directed specifically at homosexual men. Thus, for example, many service centers stopped displaying and distributing explicit safe-sex materials geared to gay and bisexual men.

Feeling that many gay organizations had become less effective in dealing with HIV/AIDS through collaboration with government mainstreaming programs, a group of queer AIDS activists established a British version of ACT-UP in January 1989, and a number of new organizations emerged to encourage prevention. For instance, the MESMAC Project (Men Who Have Sex With Men Action in the Community) sought to establish a variety of outreach programs, including some directed to men who avoided labeling themselves as gay, which is particularly the case in minority communities.

The UK now has one of the highest rates of HIV/AIDS in western Europe. There has been a forty-five percent increase in infection rates among gay and bisexual men since 2000. In 2004 and 2005, men who have sex with men accounted for 79 percent of cases of HIV/AIDS acquired in the UK.

Preliminary results of research conducted by clinics in London, Brighton, and Manchester attribute this development to an increase in unprotected anal intercourse among men. To combat the spread of HIV/AIDS, gay activists are calling for safe-sex campaigns and other support services explicitly targeted to gay men, in imitation of those that were so successful in the early years of the plague.

Towards Greater Freedom

Continuing into the 1990s, concern about Clause 28 inspired numerous celebrities to come out, in emulation of the example of Ian McKellen. In May 1989, McKellen and other celebrities joined with gay and lesbian activists to found the Stonewall Group (now Stonewall UK), a professional parliamentary, legal, and media lobbying organization. One of the primary goals of Stonewall was to establish an all-party parliamentary working group to monitor gay and lesbian issues in legislation and to draft a homosexual equality bill in consultation with both politicians and gay and lesbian organizations.

From the time of its foundation, radical gay and lesbian groups have criticized Stonewall for its efforts to attract celebrity support and its willingness to compromise with the political establishment in order to achieve specific goals. Another organization, OutRage!, founded in May 1990, has opposed Stonewall on many issues. Led by activist Peter Tatchell, OutRage! often engages in civil disobedience to attract attention to gay rights causes.

Despite their differences, most queer political groups shared the common goal of further legal reform in response to the significant increases in the arrests of homosexual men in the late 1980s. In 1989, police in England and Wales recorded 2,022 arrests for "indecently between males," a number almost equal to the level of arrests made during the 1950s.

Coinciding with the rejuvenation of gay political organizations, the commercial network of cafes, bars, and clubs has been increasingly prominent in London, Manchester, and other major cities since the early 1990s. Catering to the "pink pound," trendy establishments have rejuvenated run-down neighborhoods, including Soho in London's West End and the so-called Gay Village in the vicinity of Canal Street in Manchester. In contrast to earlier British gay and lesbian venues, which tended to be discreetly closed off from the street, the new bars and cafes often have large plate windows that expose their patrons to view.

As some critics have emphasized, the bars and clubs exclude those who cannot afford to patronize them, and they often favor the young and attractive. Nevertheless, some of the businesses contribute significantly to the social and charitable organizations based in surrounding neighborhoods. Furthermore, the increased visibility of queer businesses probably contributed to the assertiveness of the queer community as a whole.

Beginning in the mid-1990s, but accelerating under the Labour government of Prime Minister Tony Blair, a series of steps towards the achievement of equality for gay men and lesbians was achieved. In February 1994, Parliament, with the support of Conservative Prime Minister John Major, voted to reduce the age of consent for male homosexual acts from 21 to 18. Some activists derided this reform because it still left the age of consent higher for male homosexuals than for heterosexuals and lesbians. Nevertheless, Major's approval of this policy marked a notable shift from the aggressively anti-gay stance of his predecessor, Margaret Thatcher.

On September 28, 1999, the European Court of Human Rights unanimously ruled that the United Kingdom's ban on gay men and lesbians serving in the military constituted a violation of the basic human right to privacy. The case before the court concerned three men and a woman, who had been discharged during the mid-1990s after their sexual orientation became known. Despite their outstanding records, their appeals for reinstatement were turned down by British courts, and they initiated a joint suit before the European Court in 1996. Utilizing arguments similar to those still endorsed by the United States government, the British government unsuccessfully tried to convince the court that the presence of gay men and lesbians depressed morale in the military and made it difficult for others to do their jobs.

In response to the decision, the British government in January 2000 ended the ban on gay men and lesbians in the military. The new code of conduct instituted at that time emphasized that same-sex (as well as male-female) sexual acts between members of the military were strictly forbidden.

Especially in the past few years, Stonewall's strategy of collaborating with mainstream political groups has proved effective in securing specific legal reforms, although leftist groups continue to oppose any compromise with mainstream perspectives.

Angela Mason, Director of Stonewall from 1992 to 2002, was instrumental in helping to secure Parliamentary support for the Adoption and Children Bill (2002), which provided same-sex couples full parental rights. In 2000, Scotland quietly abolished its equivalent of Clause 28 by an overwhelming vote. In 2003, after repeated attempts by Prime Minister Blair to repeal Clause 28 had been stymied in the House of Lords, the offensive bill was finally repealed. Also in 2003, gay hate crimes were added to the Criminal Justice Bill.

Perhaps the Blair government's most significant piece of gay rights legislation is the Civil Partnership Act 2004, which came into force in December 2005. The Act provided same-sex partners with virtually all of the rights of married heterosexual couples, including automatic legal recognition as next of kin, inheritance, and pension rights.

The most significant differences between civil partnerships and marriages are religious. Since the United

Kingdom's official state church does not approve of same-sex marriage, the government made civil partnership an entirely secular process and even restricted the places where civil partnerships could be executed to non-religious venues. In addition, non-consummation and adultery are grounds for ending a marriage but not for ending a civil partnership.

At the time of the passage of the Act, the government estimated that 22,000 couples would take advantage of the law by 2010. However, over 15,500 couples had established civil partnerships by December 5, 2006.

While the civil partnerships were regarded positively by most gay men and lesbians, some queer activists, including Peter Tatchell, emphasized that separate legal classifications (civil partnership for same-sex couples and marriage for heterosexual couples) are inherently unequal.

The British government recognizes same-sex marriages, registered partnerships, civil unions, and domestic partnerships from other countries, including Canada, Spain, Belgium, the Netherlands, South Africa, and the states of Massachusetts, California, Vermont, Connecticut, and New Jersey, among others, as legally equivalent to civil partnerships. A High Court decision of July 31, 2006 specifically ordered that same-sex marriages performed in other nations be classified as civil partnerships rather than recognized as marriages.

The Gender Recognition Act 2004 gave transgender individuals legal recognition and rights under the law. However, many advocates for transgender rights believe that these rights are not vigorously enforced.

Taking effect in 2007, Sexual Orientation Regulations are intended to insure equal treatment of gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals and to outlaw discrimination against them in employment and accommodations. Although the provisions of the Sexual Orientation Regulations are uniform throughout the United Kingdom, these were developed through separate processes for England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. Thus far, the government has resisted efforts by the Catholic Church and other religious organizations to secure exemptions from the Regulations throughout the United Kingdom.

Marriage Equality

By 2014, when marriage equality became a reality in England, Wales, and Scotland, glbtq citizens had achieved equal rights under the law in all parts of the United Kingdom except Northern Ireland.

The battle for marriage equality received impetus from the 2010 general election, when Tory Shadow Chancellor of the Exchequer George Osborne said that a Conservative government would be happy to "consider the case" for ending the ban on same-sex marriage. On May 4 2010 the party published a "Contract for Equalities," which included the promise to consider possible marriage equality legislation.

During the campaign Liberal Democrat Leader Nick Clegg emphasized unambiguously that his party supported marriage equality.

Hence, after Conservative Leader David Cameron, who was intent on redefining his party as "modern" and to erase its history of homophobia, turned to Clegg to form a coalition government, it was no surprise when, in September 2011, the government announced that it would launch a consultation on how to implement equal civil marriage for same-sex couples with the intention of any legislative changes being made before the next general election.

In December 2012, the Minister for Women and Equalities, Secretary of State Maria Miller announced that the government planned to bring forward same-sex marriage legislation for England and Wales in early 2013 and that the legislation would include provisions to allow religious organizations to "opt into" performing same-sex marriages if they wish, but that there would be a "quadruple lock" of measures to prevent the

compulsion of religious organizations to marry same-sex couples.

After a frequently rancorous debate in the House of Commons, the legislation was passed on its second reading by a vote of 400 to 175. On May 21, 2013, it passed its final reading in the Commons by a 366-161 vote. Although more Conservative MPs voted against the legislation than voted for it, the measure received overwhelming support from the Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs.

After surviving several "wrecking amendments" in the House of Lords, the marriage equality bill was overwhelmingly approved in the Lords on July 15, 2013. It was granted Royal Assent on July 17, 2013.

Although the new law was supported by the leaders of all three major parties, the passage of the marriage equality law was a personal triumph of Prime Minister David Cameron, who bucked the history of the Conservative Party to fulfill promises he made to the glbtq community.

In an op-ed he published in the (London) *Evening Standard* on July 18, 2013 entitled "Commitment, Responsibility, and Family," the Prime Minister wrote, "I am proud that we have made same-sex marriage happen. I am delighted that the love two people have for each other--and the commitment they want to make--can now be recognised as equal."

He declared, "I have backed this reform because I believe in commitment, responsibility and family. I don't want to see people's love divided by law."

Because the new law affected other laws, regulations had to be promulgated before the Act could be implemented. The Same-Sex Marriage Act of 2013 officially went into effect on March 13, 2014, and the first new weddings took place soon after midnight on March 29.

The progress toward marriage equality in Scotland also had a surprisingly smooth passage. After an extensive consultation, Scotland's marriage equality legislation was approved by overwhelming votes. On February 4, 2014, after a debate of more than three hours in which a number of "wrecking" amendments were decisively rejected, Scotland's Parliament voted in favor of the marriage equality bill by a margin of 105 to 18.

The Marriage and Civil Partnership (Scotland) Act came into force on December 16, 2014. On that date couples in Scottish civil partnership could convert their partnerships into marriages. Because Scotland enforces a 15-day notice for weddings, new same-sex marriages were first performed on December 31, 2014.

Much still needs to be done to achieve genuine equality for glbtq people in Great Britain. Nevertheless, there has been a truly remarkable advance in the legal and social status of glbtq people in the United Kingdom, which culminated in the arrival of marriage equality in England and Wales and Scotland in 2014.

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About the Author

Richard G. Mann is Professor of Art at San Francisco State University, where he regularly offers a two-semester multicultural course in Queer Art History. His publications include *El Greco and His Patrons* and *Spanish Paintings of the Fifteenth through Nineteenth Centuries*.