

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-71657-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Gay and Lesbian Writing

Edited by Hugh Stevens

Excerpt

[More information](#)

HUGH STEVENS

## Homosexuality and literature: an introduction

‘I wish we were labelled,’ said Rickie. He wished that all the confidence and mutual knowledge that is born in such a place as Cambridge could be organized. People went down into the world saying, ‘We know and like each other; we shan’t forget.’ But they did forget, for man is so made that he cannot remember long without a symbol; he wished there was a society, a kind of friendship office, where the marriage of true minds could be registered.

E. M. Forster, *The Longest Journey* (1907)<sup>1</sup>

In many parts of Europe – though not in most states of America – the wish that Forster’s Rickie made just over a century ago has been granted. Since the Second World War, we have gradually entered an era of greater tolerance. Homosexuality has been decriminalized in most of the world’s democracies, and since the 1990s same-sex marriages and partnerships have begun to be recognized in an ever-growing number of countries.<sup>2</sup> This greater tolerance has led to changes in the ways that same-sex relationships and same-sex desire are recognized, given ‘symbols’. Rickie thinks mournfully that ‘a few verses of poetry is all that survives of David and Jonathan’.<sup>3</sup> Today, however, Davids and Jonathans, Ruths and Naomis, are marrying their true minds in various kinds of friendship offices. Followers of gay and lesbian trends are wondering how same-sex marriages, or ‘civil unions’, will be represented on celluloid and between book covers. And how will same-sex couples negotiate the challenges of divorce?

Girl meets boy, they fall in love, marry, have children. In this story, so central to our culture, identities are formed, identities of wife, husband, mother and father, daughter and son. Children, it is assumed, will repeat the story, move from outcome of one story to cause of another, and this story’s repetition constitutes not only the continuation of cultural values but also the continuation of culture itself. In a private, romantic sense, marriage is viewed as a fulfilment of desire. In a social sense, marriage creates kinship, merges families, and defines legally binding relationships. It links individuals, but also creates wider networks of relations.

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-71657-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Gay and Lesbian Writing

Edited by Hugh Stevens

Excerpt

[More information](#)

HUGH STEVENS

Yet what if boy loves boy, or girl loves girl? Should they ignore or forget their love for each other? Are the girl-loving girl, and the boy-loving boy, defined by a culture which appears not to accept their very possibility? Or do they exist outside that culture? Will their love always be a story which goes against the grain of another, dominant story, or is it something that can exist alongside the other story, in a relationship of benign equality?

Literature has always been concerned with questions of kinship, love, marriage, desire, family relationships. The central and privileged stories have tended to assume that desire will be desire between girl and boy. Obstacles are thrown in the way of desire. In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1597), the heroine and hero cannot marry because their families, the Montagues and the Capulets, are feuding. The obstacles that stand in the way of same-sex romantic entanglements have been much more encompassing. Before the twentieth century, they have, for the most part, been represented as an impossibility rather than a desirable outcome thwarted by circumstance.

'Gay and lesbian writing' constitutes a problematic category, in large part because the meanings of 'gay', 'lesbian' and other related concepts such as 'queer' and 'homosexual' have been so intensely contested. Defining gay and lesbian writing is by no means a straightforward, or even a desirable, task. Are we dealing with writing by lesbians and gay men? Much of the literature that has been discussed in connection with homosexuality has not been written by writers who would identify themselves as gay. Are we dealing with literary representations of same-sex desire? This might seem to be a more promising way of approaching the subject, but it, too, has its pitfalls. Are representations of desire between male friends, or female friends, 'gay and lesbian'? Are Antonio and Bassanio, the two friends in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* (1598), gay?<sup>4</sup> Is Henry James's Olive Chancellor, in his novel *The Bostonians* (1886), with her desire to have 'a friend of her own sex with whom she might have a union of soul', a lesbian?<sup>5</sup> Different critical answers can be given to these questions, but the answers remain tentative, in part because Antonio never declares his homosexuality, and James never tells us, in so many words, that Miss Olive is a lesbian. The identification of Antonio and Olive as gay or lesbian is dependent on another question: the question of the extent to which it is possible to assert or understand homosexual identities in cultural and historical contexts in which the concept of homosexual identity has scarcely developed.

In 1976 Michel Foucault made his much-quoted claim, in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, that not until 1870 was the 'psychological, psychiatric, medical category of homosexuality ... constituted ... less by a type of sexual relations than by a certain quality of inverting the masculine and the feminine in oneself ... The sodomite had been a temporary

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-71657-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Gay and Lesbian Writing

Edited by Hugh Stevens

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## Homosexuality and literature: an introduction

aberration; the homosexual was now a species.<sup>6</sup> Since then, much has been written on the history of homosexuality which might modify and refine Foucault's claim, but not categorically refute it. However, there is still no consensus on vital questions surrounding homosexual identities and history. Disagreement exists over the question of when homosexual identities become visible, and also over theoretical questions important in the writing of queer history. According to essentialist approaches, there are always within human culture beings whose sexual desires are directed exclusively or predominantly towards members of their own sex, and who might be thought of as homosexual, even if expressions of homosexual identity and desire are so clandestine in much of the historical archive as to make scholarly documentation of them impossible. On the other hand, constructionist approaches hold that it only makes sense to talk of homosexual identities when there is a cultural understanding of what it means to be homosexual.<sup>7</sup> These approaches shape historical inquiry as well as discussions about homosexuality in different parts of the world today.

Tensions between different approaches are evident in historical accounts of homosexuality in Western culture. Randolph Trumbach has influentially argued that although '[t]he terms *heterosexual* and *homosexual* were nineteenth-century inventions ... the behavioral patterns they described came into existence in the first generation of the eighteenth century'.<sup>8</sup> In England, France and northwestern Europe, a 'new world of sexual relations' began to emerge, characterized by 'a division of the world into a homosexual minority and a heterosexual majority'.<sup>9</sup> Trumbach connects this emergence with the larger 'vast transformation that is sometimes called modernization', and names 'religious skepticism and the enlightenment' and 'romantic marriage' as factors that can be associated with this new identification of individuals and groups according to sexual identity. (He is not alone in connecting homosexual identities to modernization.<sup>10</sup>) In this 'new world', sexual contact between men 'was now tied to a deviant gender role'.<sup>11</sup> In English literature, glimpses of this new subculture, and of the 'molly houses' and 'sodomites' walks' where these men would meet, are provided in works such as Ned Ward's *History of the London Clubs* (1709), and in several press reports of trials of 'sodomites'.<sup>12</sup> The Societies for the Reformation of Manners, which worked to repress homosexual activity by sending their agents to arrest men engaged in or looking for sex, and brought a number of victims of their vigilance to trial, helped raise awareness of the subculture they were aiming to suppress. There is some disagreement, however, as to whether a homosexual subculture is being formed in the early part of the eighteenth century, or whether an existing subculture is being publicized by legal proceedings and the press. Another historian of sexuality, Rictor

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-71657-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Gay and Lesbian Writing

Edited by Hugh Stevens

Excerpt

[More information](#)

HUGH STEVENS

Norton, has commented: ‘What is spoken of as “birth” by the historian Randolph Trumbach and others should really be recognized as merely “public knowledge”. Or, to put it another way, the birth of the subculture is nothing more than (a) the birth of efficient policing and surveillance, and (b) the birth of the popular press.’<sup>13</sup>

In any case, the growth of awareness of gay and lesbian identities was tentative and slow. From 1774, the British utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham began to write in favour of reforming the sodomy laws, and in defence of same-sex relations. In the 1780s Bentham claimed that ‘paederasty . . . produces no pain in anyone. On the contrary it produces pleasure, and that a pleasure which, by their perverted taste, is by this supposition preferred to that pleasure which is in general reputed the greatest.’<sup>14</sup> But Bentham’s views on homosexuality had no influence, as they remained unpublished.<sup>15</sup>

Notwithstanding the presence of urban gay subcultures in Europe’s major cities from the early eighteenth century, it was only in the late nineteenth century that a substantial literature appeared which described recognizably contemporary notions of homosexual identities. Modern homosexuality, it might be said, was an Anglo-Austro-German invention. While it is commonly regarded as a construct arising from the new late nineteenth-century discipline of ‘sexology’, the original writings on modern same-sex identity were produced by Karl Heinrich Ulrichs, a journalist who had studied law in Göttingen and Berlin, and who had worked for the civil service as a legal official in Hannover until 1854. Ulrichs’s writing aimed to demonstrate that same-sex love was associated with a particular character type, a ‘third sex’, and argued that this ‘sex’ should not be criminalized for desires that were intrinsic to its nature. In 1864 and 1865 he published a series of five booklets with the title *Forschungen über das Räthsel der mannmännlichen Liebe* (*Researches on the Riddle of Male–Male Love*). Ulrichs used the term Uranism to characterize male–male love, and ‘urnings’ who felt this love were said to possess *anima muliebris virili corpora inclusa* (a female soul enclosed in a male body).<sup>16</sup>

Ulrichs’s ideas were taken up and disseminated by sexologists with medical and neurological trainings. Particularly important was Carl Friedrich Otto Westphal, whose article ‘Die conträre Sexualempfindung’ (‘Contrary Sexual Feeling’), published in 1869, Foucault identified as a founding document of modern homosexuality.<sup>17</sup> Westphal cited Ulrichs extensively, and was influenced by him in associating same-sex attraction with gender deviance. Ulrichs and Westphal in turn influenced Richard von Krafft-Ebing, whose *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), the period’s most influential sexological text, contained several case studies of male and female homosexuality.<sup>18</sup> This

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-71657-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Gay and Lesbian Writing

Edited by Hugh Stevens

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## Homosexuality and literature: an introduction

burgeoning sexological literature made its way into English culture in translation, and also through the works of the sexologist Havelock Ellis and the poet and literary critic John Addington Symonds (see Joseph Bristow, 'Homosexual Writing on Trial', Chapter 1 in this volume, 17–33). Early psychoanalytic writing on sexuality, in particular Freud's *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*,<sup>19</sup> cited sexological literature extensively, and gave further authority to concepts of 'sexual inversion'. The trials of Oscar Wilde in 1895 have been recognized as the nineteenth century's greatest promotion of homosexuality.<sup>20</sup> But what they publicized had been formed through the shared influence of early homophile activism and scientific writing.

As Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick argued in *Epistemology of the Closet*, late nineteenth-century gay writing often figured modern homosexual identities as a secret which could not be divulged. In the early twentieth century, Wildean and sexological notions of homosexuality begin to appear more openly in literary texts. The novels of Ronald Firbank and a short story by Willa Cather, 'Paul's Case' (1905), are some of the notable texts to paint homosexuality in the flamboyant colours of the Wildean aesthete.<sup>21</sup> Another story by Cather, 'Tommy the Unsentimental' (1896), describes the efforts of a mannish lesbian, Theodosia Shirley, the 'Tommy' of the title, to marry off her effeminate, carnation-wearing friend Jay Harper with Miss Jessica, 'a dainty, white languid bit of a thing' whom 'Tommy took to being sweet and gentle to'.<sup>22</sup> Tommy is acting in part to ward off the disapproval she and Jay face in the small town in which they live, but the date of the story's appearance gives a more international context to unsentimental Tommy's urgent efforts to see her fey friend married. The story registers both sexological concepts of sexual inversion and the publicity attached to Wilde's trials and imprisonment.

This *Companion* does not attempt to cover the literary history of representations of same-sex desire and love in English literature from the medieval period onwards. Rather it discusses a range of themes relevant to lesbian and gay culture, and shows how these themes are treated in literary texts. The chapters reflect the plurality of voices and approaches within lesbian and gay studies as well as the diversity of queer life today, and show how questions of homosexuality frequently intersect with other aspects of politics and culture.

A specifically lesbian and gay criticism might trace its roots to the late nineteenth century, to texts like J. A. Symonds's *A Problem in Greek Ethics* (1884; see Bristow, 25) and Oscar Wilde's 'The Portrait of Mr. W.H.' (1889).<sup>23</sup> Gay and lesbian criticism became identifiable as a major part of literary studies in the 1980s. Before this period, there were some important studies of homosexuality in literature, including Roger Austin's *Playing the Game: The Homosexual Novel in America* and Jeannette Foster's outstanding *Sex Variant Women in Literature*.<sup>24</sup> Only rarely, however, did English

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-71657-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Gay and Lesbian Writing

Edited by Hugh Stevens

Excerpt

[More information](#)

HUGH STEVENS

departments teach lesbian and gay writing as a distinct literary topic, and few critical books on homosexuality were published by university presses. Now there are many lesbian and gay writing courses in English departments throughout the world, and questions of homosexuality are routinely discussed in period courses.

Studies from the early 1990s typically regarded lesbian and gay identities as dissident, subversive, transgressive, and as having been subject to repression. In addition, the very discussion of lesbian and gay writing was assumed to be oppositional.<sup>25</sup> This oppositional stance was necessary in Britain under Conservative Prime Ministers Margaret Thatcher and John Major, and in the United States under Republican presidents Ronald Reagan and George Bush Part One. Egregiously poor government responses to the AIDS epidemic in both the UK and the US fuelled scholarly activism in a time when gay and lesbian criticism became ‘queer’ criticism. The equation of lesbian and gay studies with ‘queer’ studies received some backlash within lesbian and gay communities – particularly in the United States, where Bruce Bawer’s *A Place at the Table* (1993) and Andrew Sullivan’s *Virtually Normal* (1995) struck a populist vein of sentiment with their polemics urging that gay and lesbian politics should be reconceived as a non-radical advocacy of tolerance towards homosexuality as a ‘normal’ identity. Nevertheless queer theory, criticism and history remain highly visible and voluminous, whether in specialist journals such as *GLQ*, *Differences* and *Genders*, or in academic monographs, many of which have appeared in specialist series such as Duke University Press’s ‘Series Q’ or Columbia University Press’s ‘Between Men – Between Women: Lesbian and Gay Studies’.

In the process, ‘queer’ has inevitably lost some of its radical charge, become neutralized. This is not only because of the growing familiarity of the term itself, but also because of the increasing legitimation of gay and lesbian identities in our culture. Gay and lesbian studies are indeed ‘kinda subversive, kinda hegemonic’, in the memorable words of the late Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick.<sup>26</sup> The chapters in this *Companion* reflect that ambiguous status. The study of gay and lesbian writing, they show, can also reflect differences within lesbian and gay culture, and demonstrate the multiplicity of forms gay and lesbian identities take.

In the first section of this *Companion*, ‘Repression and Legitimation’, contributors discuss lesbian and gay writing in relation to various institutions: the law, psychoanalysis and the press. Joseph Bristow’s chapter demonstrates the extent to which homosexual writing has been censored as obscene or blasphemous under British law. Intellectual and literary writing about homosexuality – by figures as diverse as Havelock Ellis, Edward Carpenter, J. A. Symonds, Radclyffe Hall and James Hanley – was often subject to legal

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-71657-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Gay and Lesbian Writing

Edited by Hugh Stevens

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## Homosexuality and literature: an introduction

intervention, with many major works being seized and destroyed. Lesbian and gay writers faced stark choices under these conditions: there were limits on how openly they could write if they wanted their works to circulate freely. Bristow concludes his examination of 350 years of censorship with the affirmation that homosexual writings in Britain are no longer on trial.

The scientific writing on homosexuality that began to appear in the late nineteenth century was aimed at a specialist audience, and was not subject to legal control to the same extent as more popular forms of writing. In his discussion of homosexuality in the writing of Sigmund Freud and in German modernist literature, Andrew Webber notes that ‘psychoanalysis has achieved rather ambivalent forms of recognition for gay and lesbian sexualities’ (34). Psychoanalysis provided an articulation of homosexuality which departed from the biological reductionism of sexological writing, and refused to regard homosexuality as a pathology, yet it also associated homosexuality with ‘particular forms of mental illness, from hysteria and melancholia to paranoia’ (35). Webber shows how many of Freud’s case studies construct sexual identity using peculiarly literary tropes. Homosexuality in Freud’s writing can recall the Romantic figure of the *Doppelgänger*, embodying a ‘narcissistically inflected and sexually charged relationship between men’ (37). The sexual curiosity of children in Freud’s case studies leads them, like children in fairy tales, to encounters with beasts in enclosed spaces. Webber explores correspondences between Freud’s case studies and a wide range of German modernist writing, reading formative scenes ‘located in a variety of closet spaces, between private and public exhibition, with more or less explicit indications of homoerotic attachment’ (43).

Closet spaces are a focus in Joanne Winning’s chapter. The closet, Winning writes, has been conceived of as ‘the private, hiding space’ (50) in which dissident sexual identities are kept secret. Winning follows Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in emphasizing how the closet is a shaping presence in understandings of homosexuality, but also suggests ways in which the closet is losing its force as contemporary lesbian and gay life is led more openly. Winning shows how lesbian modernists – in particular H.D. and Bryher – challenge ‘the dialectics of outside and inside that pervades our own formulations of sexual identity’ (55). For these women writers, the text is not a place of secrets, but an artefact enabling ‘the progress towards both self-inscription and sexual self-knowledge’ (58).

Power and resistance are central to Tim Dean’s chapter on ‘The Erotics of Transgression’. The growing acceptance of homosexuality has shifted the meaning of transgression: lesbian and gay sexualities, Dean notes, ‘have no essential or privileged relation to transgression’ (68). Transgression concerns not the law but the limit, the violation of taboos, of thresholds constructed

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-71657-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Gay and Lesbian Writing

Edited by Hugh Stevens

Excerpt

[More information](#)

HUGH STEVENS

through shame, disgust and moral sanction. Dean identifies two traditions of transgressive writing in late twentieth-century American fiction. In the first, represented by John Rechy, homosexuality is identified with the figure of the sexual outlaw, and repressive laws augment the lust of a ‘dance of mediated desire’ (74). In another, represented by Samuel R. Delany, writing explores disturbing fantasies which violate taboos rather than laws or conventions.

My own chapter, ‘Normality and Queerness in Gay Fiction’, further upsets the equation of gay writing with transgression by showing how contemporary gay fiction negotiates with family structures in ways which refuse to figure the (heterosexual) family as that hegemonic monstrosity against which gay identities define themselves. In the fiction I discuss, homosexual identities negotiate with familial structures, and nuanced accounts are given of the ways in which homosexuality is neither wholly queer nor fully accepted. This fiction challenges concepts of queerness which figure homosexuality as resistant to power. I place a conversation between queer theory and gay fiction in a historical context of tensions between assimilation and radicalism within homophile activism, gay liberation and queer theory.

The second section of the *Companion* explores affiliations between homosexual writing and other forms of identity: cultural, national and racial identities, transgender identities and urban identities. In her chapter ‘The Homoerotics of Travel: People, Ideas, Genres’, Ruth Vanita suggests ways in which homophobia and notions of homosexual identity are internationally disseminated, and discusses tales of protagonists moving ‘in search of more congenial climes and of the hidden self’ (99). Vanita shows how a wide range of writers work within national traditions but also cross between nations, religious communities and linguistic groups. European and American writers discussed by Vanita – including Thomas Mann, Radclyffe Hall and Edmund White – travel widely in search of ‘places where they feel freer precisely because they are foreigners there’ (104). Vanita also discusses how twentieth-century Indian writers Pandey Bechan Sharma (‘Ugra’) and Suniti Namjoshi draw not only on Indian but also on European literary traditions. Local lesbian and gay traditions negotiate with imported and exported homosexual identities, and queerness remakes itself in this contact between cultures.

Kathryn Bond Stockton, in her chapter on ‘The Queerness of Race and Same-Sex Desire’, examines the rich complications arising from ‘the place where race and queerness cross’. Noting that the ‘linguistic binds and conceptual fields’ of ‘queerness’ and ‘race’ can be markedly distinct, Stockton discusses a range of films and plays which provocatively dramatize the challenges racial and sexual identities pose to liberal sensibilities. She then offers readings of Richard Bruce Nugent and Langston Hughes which address the *mélange* of queer overtones and undertones in the Harlem Renaissance. In



Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-71657-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Gay and Lesbian Writing

Edited by Hugh Stevens

Excerpt

[More information](#)

## Homosexuality and literature: an introduction

addition, her chapter explores ‘switchpoints’ between race and queerness as they are played out in Chicano/a writing (the works of John Rechy and Cherríe Moraga), and, in readings of David Henry Hwang’s play *M. Butterfly* (1988) and Deepa Mehta’s film *Fire* (1996), shows how conflict over meanings of queer sexualities takes place within imperial contexts.

AIDS, we are often told, is not a ‘gay disease’, but we are still taking stock of its continuing impact on gay communities. Richard Canning’s chapter on ‘The Literature of AIDS’ begins by discussing ‘the contemporary dearth of representations of AIDS in culture’ (132). Despite the ‘huge quantity of novels, memoirs, films, dramas and collections of verse’ (133–134) responding to the epidemic, there is now what Canning calls ‘an unnatural calm, even silence’ around AIDS. Canning links this silence to the introduction of anti-retroviral therapies in 1997, and notes how recent works on AIDS – notably Alan Hollinghurst’s *The Line of Beauty* – ‘return to the days of uncertainty with the hindsight of a post-treatment consciousness’ (135). His chapter explores the astonishing variety of AIDS literature produced in the 1980s and 1990s, including fiction, poetry, memoirs, short stories and plays. Although the majority of this literature was written ‘by and about Caucasian gay men’ (137), Canning also discusses fiction and memoirs by non-white writers.

In the 1990s ‘transgender’ emerged as a term to describe a range of forms of gender variance, and to provide a space for resistance against the process of compulsory gendering. Questions about the convergence and disparity of transgender and homosexual identities have led to a re-thinking of the history of gender difference. Heather Love begins her chapter on transgender identities, literature and politics by noting how certain key lesbian modernist texts – Djuna Barnes’s *Nightwood*, Virginia Woolf’s *Orlando* and Radclyffe Hall’s *The Well of Loneliness* – and accounts of sexual inversion from sexological writing, based on testimonies of ‘individuals who felt that they were born in the “wrong” body’ (149), might persuasively be read not as lesbian but as transgender. Love goes on to discuss a wide range of late twentieth-century self-conscious transgender and transsexual memoirs and novels, and comments on relationships between lesbian and gay politics and transgender issues. Love concludes her chapter by urging that the ‘mainstreaming’ of lesbian and gay identities should not take place at the cost of newly stigmatizing gender deviance.

The chapters in the final section of the *Companion* show how gay and lesbian literary creation takes place through reference to other queer writing, or writing re-imagined as queer. Jodie Medd uses Stuart Hall’s remark that ‘Identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past’ (168) as a departure

Cambridge University Press

978-0-521-71657-4 - The Cambridge Companion to Gay and Lesbian Writing

Edited by Hugh Stevens

Excerpt

[More information](#)

HUGH STEVENS

for an examination of contemporary gay and lesbian literature's engagement with the Victorian and modernist past. Alan Hollinghurst's *The Swimming-Pool Library* and Jamie O'Neill's *At Swim, Two Boys* explore the homosexual past within national and imperial contexts, and Michael Cunningham's *The Hours* juxtaposes a queer present in contemporary New York with the re-imagining of an iconic moment in British modernism, Virginia Woolf composing *Mrs. Dalloway* in 1923. Noting that 'the historiography of same-sex desire is diacritically marked by gender' (174), Medd shows how contemporary lesbian writers like Sarah Waters and Jeanette Winterson take 'strategic historical liberties' (177) with the archive of lesbian experience. In creative responses to the faint or 'apparitional' presence of lesbianism in the historical record, they re-imagine lesbian pasts while also reflecting on the processes by which we create historical narratives.

Lesbian and gay literature is produced by individuals, but it has also depended on the writer's contact with networks which stimulated, supported and sustained queer cultural production. Jane Garrity and Tirza True Latimer challenge separatist stereotypes of lesbian and gay culture by emphasizing collaborations between lesbians and gay men. The circle of gay men that formed around Gertrude Stein after the First World War were involved in every form of artistic life: not only writing but also dance and choreography, photography and painting. Collaborations took various forms, and Latimer and Garrity discuss the shared creative enterprise that fed into *Dix Portraits*, a book merging visual and literary portraits, and the opera *Four Saints in Three Acts*. They then focus on the sexual nonconformity of the Bloomsbury group, and connect the erotic and artistic entanglements of the group's married men and women, sapphists and buggers, with their modernist innovations in various fields, including painting, literature and interior design.

Richard Bozorth's chapter discusses 'some of the most influential and representative love poetry written and read by gay men and lesbians since the time of Shakespeare' – figures including Christina Rossetti, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Hart Crane, Gertrude Stein, W.H. Auden, Adrienne Rich and Mark Doty. Bozorth describes how lesbian and gay love poetry speaks 'the love that dare not speak its name', and exploits unspeakability 'to speak sexuality and the body as subtext' (204). Bozorth uncovers complex networks of poetic influence, and describes a range of poetic strategies, including modernist experimentation, lyric introspection, poignant addresses to an ungendered 'you', erotic celebration in free verse or finely crafted lyric verse which deals with themes of death and loss.

If gay and lesbian communities are imagined communities, then nowhere have they been so powerfully imagined and developed as in New York. The