



New York City

by Jeffrey Escoffier

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As the cultural and economic capital of the United States, New York City has attracted people from across the country and over the globe. Today, approximately one of every three New Yorkers was born outside the United States.

Off and on over two centuries, New York City has also reigned as the capital of homosexual, transgender, and queer life in America. It has frequently provided an environment in which homosexuals, transgender, and other queer people have found their niche. No doubt, the percentage of glbtq people (by any definition) living in New York City far exceeds the conventional estimate for the population as a whole. Current estimates range from 750,000 to more than one million glbtq people living in New York City proper.

But New York City, probably more than any other city in the country, is also the capital of sex. Walt Whitman celebrated this aspect of New York in his poetry. "City of orgies, walks and joys," he wrote, "as I pass O Manhattan your frequent and swift flash of eyes offering me love." New York City was the stage upon which millions of men and women realized desires--sexual, artistic, and commercial--that they could never have fulfilled in the small towns and provincial cities of America.

The Wild Years, 1790-1890

Early American culture, as historians Timothy Gilfoyle and Helen Horowitz have noted, showed an earthy acceptance of sexuality that was later suppressed by the purity and anti-sexual crusades of Anthony Comstock and other late nineteenth-century reformers. Though it was highly misogynist and male-dominated, New York's sexual culture offered men and (to a lesser extent) women a sexual freedom that stressed individualism and erotic choice.

However, the sexual culture was highly commercialized. Prostitution in New York City was conducted quite visibly throughout the city. Brothels flourished in every neighborhood and street walkers dominated many of the city's main thoroughfares, such as Broadway, the Bowery, and Church Streets. Walt Whitman's poetry accurately reflected this commercialized sexual culture: "You prostitutes flaunting over the trottoirs or obscene in your rooms / who am I that I should call you more obscene than myself?"

In this same period, an elementary homosexual subculture also emerged. Contemporary observers noted that "sodomites," as they were called, were usually young men of "feminine appearance and manners." The growing visibility of a homosexual subculture paralleled the growth of a rowdy and macho "sporting" culture of young, heterosexual, and working class men who engaged in wild rounds of bar hopping, drinking, and promiscuous sex with prostitutes.

The "sporting press," like the tabloid press of later periods (contemporary examples being the *National Inquirer* and the *Star*), routinely clamored about the spread of sodomy. They complained that sodomites were frequently foreigners and that they congregated in City Hall Park, where they accosted "respectable



Top: New York City in 1848.

Above: Times Square in 2006. Photograph by John Kolter.

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men." Supposedly, the theater was rife with them. New York's sodomitical subculture of young effeminate and cross-dressing men sometimes overlapped with the social world of prostitution. Many brothels featured boys who as prostitutes adopted feminine manners and dress.

There is also a long history in New York City of cross-dressing men. Before the Revolution, Edward Hyde the royal governor of New York was known to like to dress in his wife's clothes. A well-known painting in the New York Historical Society collection shows him dressed in women's clothes. In the 1830s, an African-American man, Peter Sewally, dressed in women's clothes and lived in a brothel as a housekeeper until he was arrested and convicted for grand larceny.

The Fairy Craze, 1890-1914

The 1890s were a key decade in the public emergence of glbtq community life in New York City. Again, as earlier in the century, it was predominantly a male community that emerged. Homosexuality and cross-dressing had existed on the margins of the sexual culture since the 1840s--in the dance halls, brothels, and docks, and in the crowded working class neighborhoods of the Bowery and the Lower East Side. But in the 1890s gay male life became more visible. Gay men had developed a sophisticated system of sub-cultural codes of dress, speech, and gestures that enabled them to recognize and communicate with one another.

Slumming was a common sport of middle-class straight men and women, who visited the red-light districts, black and tan clubs (bars and clubs that attracted a racially mixed clientele), and fairy resorts to see the seamy side of city life. The Bowery was the center of homosexual activities in the 1890s. A vice inspector noted that "fairies," as these men were then known, "act effeminately; most of them are painted and powdered; they are called Princess this and Lady So and So and the Duchess of Marlboro, and get up and sing as women, and dance; . . . call each other sisters and take people out for immoral purposes." The masculine men who had sex with the fairies were not considered fairies, but normal men.

Among the well-known "fairy" resorts of the day were Columbia Hall, characterized by a contemporaneous police officer as a "well-known resort for male prostitutes," Manilla Hall, and Little Bucks in the Bowery. On Bleecker Street there was the Black Rabbit, a lesbian hangout, and the Slide, a notoriously sleazy dive (where a bar still operates in the same space). Walhalla Hall, a social club on the Lower East Side, was a popular working class club; it frequently held dances that were attended by same-sex couples. Webster Hall on East 11th Street (where dances, rock concerts, raves, and special events like the Gay Erotic Expo still take place) was a popular site of dances and costume balls.

The housing in immigrant communities, such as those on the Lower East Side, often lacked hot water and bathing facilities. Since many tenements did not have running water, public bathhouses were widely used by working class and poor people in New York City. Turkish and Russian baths, modeled on institutions that existed in those countries, often tolerated homosexual men--and, in some instances, eventually catered exclusively to homosexual men. Mount Morris Baths in Harlem, which is still in existence, is the longest continuously operating bathhouse in New York City, as well as being the only one to admit blacks until the 1960s.

Throughout most of the nineteenth century, living outside the family was not a viable option for most women. But by the 1890s, "mannish" women had begun to gather in the public places in the Bowery that fairies also frequented--the Slide, Walhalla Hall, and Paresis Hall.

Later during the same decade, a controversial play opened that showed a masculine woman who cursed, smoked on stage, and tried to seduce the other female characters. The play, A. C. Gunter's *A Florida Enchantment* (1896), did not explicitly identify the main character as a lesbian-- her masculinity was the result of "magic"--nevertheless it seemed to suggest that lesbianism and feminism were connected.

In *Gay American History*, Jonathan Ned Katz published the stories of many American women who lived and

passed as men. One of the most famous passing women in New York history was Murray Hall, who lived as man for more than a quarter of a century. Hall, a prominent politician, had been twice married to women, neither of whom revealed her secret. After she died--from breast cancer--the *New York Times*, on January 19, 1901, wrote that "she even had a reputation as a man about town, a bon vivant, and all around good fellow."

Also by the 1890s, it became increasingly easier for women, especially middle-class educated women, to live outside the patriarchal family. It also became possible for women to live together as lifetime partners. For example, Alice Austen lived on Staten Island with Gertrude Tate, her companion of forty years. Austen is now known for her photographs of the women in her close-knit, exclusively female social circle. Many of these women were educated professionals who engaged in teaching, social services, and social reform.

Greenwich Village and Harlem, 1914-1939

By the 1920s new centers of gay life had developed in Greenwich Village, the bohemian neighborhood just below 14th Street on the west side of Manhattan, where sexual unconventionality mixed with artistic and bohemian styles, and in Harlem, where blues singers, jazz musicians, and black writers and intellectuals accepted lesbianism, homosexuality, and other kinds of unconventional sexual behavior.

Homosexual writers and poets found some comfort in the bohemian circles of the Village. *The Little Review*, one of the pioneering literary journals in the years between World War I and the early 1920s, was published by Margaret Anderson and her lover Jane Heap, from a brownstone in Greenwich Village. James Joyce's *Ulysses* was first published in *The Little Review*, which then became the target of censorship by the Society for the Suppression of Vice and the United States Postal Service. It was while living in the Village during the early 1920s that Hart Crane began to write his great book-length poem *The Bridge*.

Greenwich Village was also the home of a feminist organization called Heterodoxy that met for biweekly lunches up until 1940. The club was for "unorthodox" women and included feminists, writers, social reformers, socialists, and advocates of "free love." At least 24 of its 110 members were lesbians.

By the 1920s, Harlem had become a flourishing enclave of jazz and gay life. The Harlem Renaissance, an explosion of modern black literature and the arts, included a number of homosexual or bisexual figures, including the writers Claude McKay, Countee Cullen, Alain Locke, Wallace Thurman, Richard Bruce Nugent, and Langston Hughes.

Some of Harlem's most prominent musical performers, such as Bessie Smith, Alberta Hunter, George Hanna, Moms Mabley, Mabel Hampton, Ma Rainey, and Ethel Waters were also bisexual or homosexual. Gladys Bentley, a cross-dressing butch lesbian, like other homosexual performers frequently incorporated homosexual slang, such as "sissy" and "bulldagger" into her songs, as in the lyric "If you can't bring me a woman, bring me a sissy man."

White writers and intellectuals frequently made the trip uptown to experience the cultural excitement of black music and nightlife. One such writer was Carl Van Vechten, who as critic, photographer, and novelist, popularized Harlem's cultural explosion. Both Van Vechten and his wife were homosexual. He was the intellectual elite's guide to Harlem night life and cultural salons, and he devoted much of his energies to incorporating black writers, musicians, and artists into New York's cultural life. In that role, he served as a mentor of the poet Langston Hughes, who was probably gay or bisexual.

Many others sought to experience Harlem as an exotic adventure. One scene in *The Big Money* (1936), the final volume in his *U. S. A.* trilogy, John Dos Passos shows a young white heterosexual couple on a visit to Harlem dancing with same-sex partners, until they become frightened by the unconventional sexual atmosphere: "Pat [the young woman] was dancing with a pale pretty mulatto girl in a yellow dress. Dick was dancing with a soft-handed brown boy in a tight-fitting suit the color of his skin. The boy was whispering in

Dick's ear that his name was Gloria Swanson"

As long as the homosexual subculture was an underground phenomenon, gay men relied on cruising in parks, public restrooms, and the back rows of theaters. In the 1920s, Times Square was bustling with fairies and "go-getters" (female prostitutes) who attracted sailors and other service men.

After the repeal of Prohibition, however, gay bars proliferated all around Times Square, and by the 1950s male hustlers frequently cruised 42nd Street between 7th and 8th Avenues. Central Park has always offered numerous opportunities for casual sex, straight and gay. The Rambles, near West 77th Street and Central Park West, has been a cruising ground at least since the 1920s, when it was known as the "The Fruited Plain." It remains so today.

The Cultural Capital of the World: 1940-1968

World War II was a turning point in the emergence of glbtq life in the United States. Many gay men and lesbians discovered their sexual attraction to members of their own sex while living in same-sex environments such as barracks in the armed forces or by working in the wartime factories and living in sex-segregated dormitories and rooming houses.

Gay bars proliferated in the 1940s--including those for lesbians--partly as a response to the wartime mobilization and the hordes of young men and women seeking sexual release before they were shipped overseas or while they were on leave. In the postwar period, the bars helped establish the institutional matrix for a glbtq community life and set the stage for the spectacularly creative queer subculture of the 1950s.

Some time after World War II, New York City emerged as the cultural capital of the world. Lesbians, gay men, and transgendered people migrated to the city from all over the country to explore their aesthetic and sexual desires.

The "queer" moment of the cultural renaissance in the 1950s was centered in New York. Many of the new currents in American classical and popular music, in ballet and modern dance, in drama and musical theater, in painting and architecture, and in poetry and fiction were pioneered by talented gay men, bisexuals, and lesbians such as Aaron Copland, Virgil Thomson, Leonard Bernstein, John Cage, Lincoln Kirstein, Merce Cunningham, Paul Taylor, Alvin Ailey, Tennessee Williams, William Inge, Stephen Sondheim, Lorraine Hansberry, Paul Cadmus, Fairfield Porter, Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, Andy Warhol, Thornton Wilder, W.H. Auden, Paul and Jane Bowles, Gore Vidal, Truman Capote, James Baldwin, Paul Goodman, Allen Ginsberg, John Ashbery, Frank O'Hara, Philip Johnson, Audre Lorde, Samuel Delany, and William Burroughs.

Gore Vidal, Truman Capote, and James Baldwin--all of whom spent time in New York City during the 1940s and the 1950s--wrote a series of widely read novels that explored homosexuality as a dilemma of modern identity. In *The City and the Pillar* (1948), Gore Vidal portrayed the quest of a young man struggling to come to terms with his sexual desire for other men; Capote in *Other Voices, Other Rooms* (1948) recounted a gothic southern tale of alienation and effeminacy. During the 1950s and 1960s, James Baldwin explored the significance of homosexuality in three novels, all set partly or completely in New York. In *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), he explored the tortured consciousness of a young black preacher with his forbidden desires, while his later novel, set primarily in Paris, *Giovanni's Room* (1956), directly confronted what it meant to be a homosexual. In *Another Country* (1963), he explored interrelations between many forms of sexuality and race.

Broadway also saw the arrival of gay, lesbian, and bisexual playwrights, most notably Tennessee Williams, William Inge, and Edward Albee. They produced smash hits on Broadway, where they often brought a homosexual sensibility to bear on the sexual and existential crises of 1950s conformist America.

Lorraine Hansberry, whose play *A Raisin in the Sun* was a hit in 1959, was the first black woman ever to have a play produced on Broadway. She was married, but had had lesbian affairs and had once written for *The Ladder*, the lesbian rights publication. The title of her play, taken from a poem by Langston Hughes-- "What happens to a dream deferred? / Does it dry like a raisin in the sun? / Or does it explode?"--refers to the struggle of blacks for civil rights and dignity, a struggle that also resonated with homosexuals.

Gay poets Frank O'Hara, John Ashbery, and James Schuyler were intimately involved with the abstract expressionist painters who had created the leading artistic movement in the postwar world. The poets had developed a playful and irreverent style that mixed high art and popular culture and broke with the "high-serious" tradition of modern poetry pioneered by T. S. Eliot.

Several leading figures of the second generation of postwar American artists were bisexual or gay, including Robert Rauschenberg, Jasper Johns, and Andy Warhol. These artists, identified as the proponents of Pop Art, followed in the footsteps of gay poets such as O'Hara, Ashbery, and Schuyler by combining figures of popular culture with the techniques pioneered by the heroic (and predominantly heterosexual) figures of abstract expressionism.

Gay culture in the 1950s was invested in protecting the "secret" of an individual's homosexuality, expressing it only in a symbolic or heavily coded way. Many of these gay writers and artists reflected to some degree the *camp* aesthetic that was prevalent in 1950s gay culture. Gay men, transvestites, and lesbians frequently reacted to the era's oppression by engaging in camp's flamboyant, irony-charged humor. The ironic interplay between popular culture and high culture, a common trait of the camp aesthetic, was especially significant in the work of O'Hara, Johns, Warhol, and Albee.

Most gay bars of the era were located either in Greenwich Village or along Third Avenue (called "Queer Street" by writer James McCourt). The Village scene continued its bohemian tradition. The bar Julius, located on the corner of West 10th Street and Waverly Place, is one of the longest continuously operating gay bars in history. Founded as a speakeasy during Prohibition, it still exists today.

Beebo Brinker, while only a fictional character in the lesbian pulps of Ann Bannon, was nevertheless a typical New York City lesbian of the 1940s and 1950s. Brinker, a young butch, working-class dyke, discovers the lesbian bar life of postwar Greenwich Village. She would have been right at home in Mona's, a popular and long-lived lesbian bar founded during World War II.

Like Brinker, young lesbians in search of others like themselves, moved to the Village. Experiencing hostility to her lesbianism in Harlem, Audre Lorde, a young black poet, moved to the Village in the 1950s. Her remarkable book *Zami: A New Spelling of My Name* (1982) recounts her experience there.

Like other nascent gay neighborhoods, Third Avenue between East 45th and 52nd Streets was a slightly rundown stretch overshadowed by the tracks of an elevated train that ran over it. The string of gay bars along Third Avenue, with names like the Golden Cockerel, the Yellow Cockatoo, the Swan, the Golden Pheasant, and the Blue Parrot, became known as the "Bird Circuit."

Stonewall, Gay Liberation, and After, 1969-1979

In 1969, a police raid on a Greenwich Village bar called the Stonewall Inn provoked a series of riots that brought together drag queens, street hustlers, lesbians, and gay men, many of whom had been politicized by the movement against the war in Vietnam.

There were already many signs that homosexuals were in the process of creating a civil rights movement, inspired, in part, by the black struggles of the 1960s, but the Stonewall riots of 1969 crystallized a broad grass-roots mobilization across the country.

The gay movement that emerged after Stonewall sprang from the clash of two cultures and two generations--the underground homosexual subculture of the 1950s and 1960s and the 1960s New Left, youth oriented counterculture.

The first political organization formed in wake of the Stonewall riots was the Gay Liberation Front (GLF), named in honor of the National Liberation Front, the Vietnamese resistance movement, and as a gesture toward the unity of the struggles of blacks, the poor, the colonized in the Third World, and women.

Embroiled in bitter and highly charged political disputes over support for the Black Panthers and the anti-war movement, and debates about the primacy of homosexual civil liberties, GLF barely survived two years before completely falling apart and splintering into many other groups. The offshoots of GLF tended to focus on more narrowly defined goals and projects, such as raising consciousness, publishing newspapers, exploring culture, organizing support groups, and promoting such political movements as effeminism, radical lesbian feminism, gay Marxism, and civil liberties.

A new organization, Gay Activists Alliance (GAA), emerged from the GLF meltdown. Defining itself as a single-interest organization in contrast to GLF's broad-ranging political interests, GAA/NY focused on advancing gay rights, mobilizing gay men and lesbians to demonstrate against any institution detrimental to the interests of glbtq people, from the American Psychiatric Association to the Catholic Church. It took as its primary political goal the passing of a citywide gay rights bill to prohibit discrimination in housing and employment. It lobbied vigorously for the introduction of municipal gay rights legislation, the first of its kind proposed in the United States, in 1971.

The 1971 gay rights bill was not passed because of opposition led by the conservative municipal unions (in particular the Firefighter's and Police unions), the Catholic Church, and other religious groups. By a cruel irony, New York City, where the first gay civil rights legislation ever proposed in the United States had been introduced, failed to achieve civil rights protections for the glbtq community until a bill was finally passed in 1986. The continued political failure of New York City's glbtq community during the 1970s to pass a civil rights bill shifted the gay and lesbian movement's political center of gravity away from New York to San Francisco, which had elected Harvey Milk, the first openly gay elected official, to its Board of Supervisors in 1977.

Almost from the beginning of the movement, during the tempestuous days of GLF, tensions grew between women and men. Gay men were often no less misogynistic than most heterosexual men. Lesbians were critical of the hothouse sexual atmosphere that soon surfaced in meetings and social events, while gay men often remained indifferent to consciousness-raising exercises and criticism. Very early in the 1970s, impatient with gay men's lack of interest in women's issues, many lesbians left the gay organizations to focus on feminist politics. Thereafter, at least until the early 1980s, the social and political activities of lesbians and gay men developed largely separate and parallel to each other.

Jill Johnston, a journalist and dance critic for the *Village Voice*, one of the nation's first underground newspapers, dramatized the emergence of the new counterculture of the 1960s in her newspaper columns. A champion of lesbian and gay male artists, she was also one of the first prominent cultural writers to come out publicly as a lesbian, in her dance column.

Lesbian-feminism was the most thoroughly developed political philosophy to emerge from the heady days of early feminism and gay liberation. It was both a theory and a politics of lesbian identity. It was first publicly articulated in 1970 in the pamphlet "The Woman-Identified Woman," published by Radicalesbians (some of whom had been active in the GLF) and elaborated more fully in Jill Johnston's *Lesbian Nation*.

Through a series of popular and provocative essays and books, lesbian-feminist writers created an intellectual and political framework that offered bold and vigorous interpretations of feminist politics,

pornography, rape, lesbian culture, and history. Despite their ideological differences and social separatism, lesbians and gay men developed coalitions at several key historical junctures to respond to political attacks from outside the lesbian and gay male communities.

The 1970s have been called, by novelist Brad Gooch, the golden age of promiscuity. In the meat packing district a former meat packing plant was turned into a famous leather sex club, the Mineshaft. The club thrived until 1985 when an AIDS-inspired crackdown on commercial sex clubs closed it down.

After the Third Avenue elevated train line was torn down, the center of bar life returned to Greenwich Village (especially Christopher Street), where a new generation of bars opened. In these venues, with names such as Badlands, Boots and Saddles, Boot Hill, Ty's, the Eagle, the Strap, the Spike, Cell Block, the Ramrod, and Pipeline, the new "macho" style of the clone replaced the "fey" style of the Bird Circuit.

The AIDS Epidemic: New York in the 1980s

In 1981, a rare form of cancer was diagnosed among gay men in New York City, Los Angeles, and San Francisco. The discovery of a virus-caused disease that was eventually named HIV/AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome) created a health crisis among gay men across the country, but the gay male community in New York City was especially hard hit. New York has had more AIDS cases than any other American city. As of 1999, sixteen percent of all American AIDS cases have been diagnosed in New York City, which represents only three percent of the nation's population.

Since the cause of the disease was not known at first, few treatment options existed. Moreover, once AIDS was diagnosed in the early years, many gay men died very quickly. Soon the gay male community in New York City was physically and emotionally devastated. Care for the vast numbers of dying men was the preeminent need in the early days of the epidemic.

Until 1984, when a particular virus was identified as the cause of AIDS, gay men vigorously debated the possible causes of the syndrome and what if anything they could do to prevent its spread.

One of the first to rally the gay community to combat the epidemic was Larry Kramer. In 1977, Larry Kramer had published *Faggots*, a controversial novel that portrayed gay male life in a highly negative manner. He focused on the emotional damage that he believed was caused by a promiscuous lifestyle.

The AIDS epidemic seemed to suggest that there was a health hazard as well. In 1981, Kramer wrote in the *New York Native*, a gay newspaper, that "something we are doing is ticking off the time bomb that is causing the breakdown of immunity." Soon after, he called together a group of friends in order to raise money to combat the epidemic. Out of that fundraiser, Kramer and his friends founded Gay Men's Health Crisis, the nation's first AIDS organization and still one of the largest.

Six years later, Kramer felt that neither the community nor health officials had responded adequately. Again he called a meeting and founded another group, ACT UP (AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power), an activist organization that soon set up chapters across the country and demonstrated against the failure of both Federal and local health officials to adopt more vigorous efforts to oppose the epidemic.

It was during the 1980s, in the midst of the AIDS epidemic, that the New York City Council finally passed a civil rights bill that protected gay men and lesbians from discrimination in housing and employment.

In response to the many challenges faced by the partners and caretakers of gay men seriously ill with AIDS, the gay political groups and AIDS activists exerted political pressure for expanded rights, including the right to visit and stay with dying partners, to inherit leases on apartments shared by longtime lovers, and other benefits. In 1989, a New York Court awarded longtime gay and lesbian partners the right to continue to live in an apartment after a lover's death. This right was reinforced in 1993 when it became possible for gay and

lesbian couples to register as domestic partners.

Angels in America: New York in the 1990s

In the early 1990s, Tony Kushner's play *Angels in America* loomed over the political and cultural scene in New York City as the dialectical summary of American political history, gay liberation, and the devastating impact of the AIDS epidemic. Kushner's play mapped the queer political imagination in an era of political reaction and commercialism. *Angels in America* played in San Francisco, London, and Frankfurt, but it was set primarily in New York and sang its fantasia on gay themes with a New York accent.

After the passage of the gay and lesbian civil rights bill in 1986, the glbtq community played an increasingly larger role on New York City's political stage. The community was instrumental in the election of David Dinkins, New York's first black mayor, in 1989. In 1991, Tom Duane was elected to the City Council, becoming its first openly gay member. Deborah Glick, elected from an assembly district that included Greenwich Village and Chelsea, became New York State's first openly lesbian legislator.

In New York, as in other glbtq communities, the 1990s marked the triumph of the "gay marketing moment" and consumerism. The glbtq market emerged as a major consumer market. Large corporations, such as AT&T, Miller's Beer, Continental Airlines, and Calvin Klein, developed marketing campaigns that explicitly targeted the gay and lesbian communities. A growing number of mainstream companies advertised in gay magazines, sponsored television shows with gay and lesbian characters, and customized their products and services for the needs of lesbians and gay men.

While the Village (around Christopher Street) still had a cluster of gay bars, by 1990 Chelsea, from West 17th to 23rd Street between 6th and 9th Avenues, had become the new gay neighborhood. The gay market boom had resulted in the proliferation of fancy restaurants and bars, expensive gyms, and pricey boutiques.

During the 1990s, New York's sexual scene and nightlife suffered from the clean-up drives of Mayor Giuliani. Many large dance clubs closed in the wake of the City's prosecution of drug violations. Sex clubs and the backrooms of bars in which sex took place were closed. Despite these developments, the lounge and bar scenes continued to thrive. Every week gay publications like *HX* and *Next* published listings of hundreds of parties, dances, performances, and events for gay men, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgendered people.

The New Century

In the early years of the twenty-first century, glbtq community and political institutions continue to carry out important work. There is a rich institutional infrastructure that continues to care for those with AIDS and to combat HIV. GMHC (Gay Men's Health Crisis), one of the largest such organizations in the country, is just one of the several dozen organizations dedicated to the prevention of AIDS.

The Lambda Legal Defense Fund may be best known for its fight for the right of gay and lesbian couples to marry and adopt children, but it also offers legal aid to glbtq people throughout the country in order to combat employment and housing discrimination.

It is frequently said that New York is the least American of cities and that one must travel many miles west in order to understand the United States. There is no question that New York City is different; not only were more than one-third of the city's population born abroad, probably another third migrated from somewhere else in the United States. Moreover, as one of the largest cities in the world, it maintains a status that makes it unlike other cities in the country. Nor is it a static social entity: it constantly changes. These factors facilitate the growing diversity of glbtq lifestyles in the city, including sexual subcultures and ethnic niches that proliferate and interact at an astonishing rate.

Sexual activity (both homo and hetero) takes place everywhere, in private homes, in offices, in the back

seats of taxis, in parks, in doorways, and even on subway platforms. There are many women and men in New York who engage in homosexual activity or adopt unconventional gender behavior who never identify in any way as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender. New York City is home to these people as well.

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Jeffrey Escoffier writes on glbtq history, politics, culture, sexuality, music, and dance. One of the founders of *OUT/LOOK: National Lesbian and Gay Quarterly*, he has published widely. Among his books are *American Homo: Community and Perversity* and a biography of John Maynard Keynes in the Chelsea House series on the Lives of Notable Gay Men and Lesbians. He co-edited (with Matthew Lore) Mark Morris' *L'Allegro, il Penseroso ed il Moderato: A Celebration*. His most recent book is *Sexual Revolution*, an anthology of writing on sex from the 1960s and 1970s. He is currently working on a book on sexual politics and writing about the production of pornography.