Queer American expatriate writers in France and the birth of the gay modernist subject

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Description

Title: Queer American expatriate writers in France and the birth of the gay modernist subject

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Abstract: This dissertation is a comprehensive critical history of forgotten or neglected queer American writers in the international expatriate community in France who used their time in the French mainland and colonies to construct early narratives of gay identity. This project argues that French literature and art, which had already articulated discourses and paradigms of queer sexuality through writers like Proust, Gide, and Colette, and French cultural spaces in which a vibrant underground queer culture was present, were integral to the imagination of American gay identity and culture in the early to mid 20th century. This dissertation contends that through modernist French and European philosophies and literary movements such as surrealism, psychoanalysis, orientalism, and existentialism, queer American writers were able to imagine and express queer identity and desire in ways previously unspeakable in an American context. By considering unpublished manuscripts from the archives and reevaluating overlooked queer-themed works from the Lost Generation era through the 50s in France, this study uses this new history of queer writers in France to explore the wide range of queer expression in pre-Stonewall American literature before it would eventually be consolidated under the term “gay.”
Indigenous and expatriate modernists were published both in American and expatriate little magazines, and both published the works of the international avant-gardes. “Staying at home was a conscious choice which did not necessarily imply withdrawal from the international context of the modernist movement.” The only excuse for living two years in France is to remove this complex, and to discover, for example, that Tzara, who resembles you like two drops of water, talks a shade less intelligently than you. To discover that the Dada crowd has more fun than the Secession crowd because the former, strangely, has more American pep (Cowley 1923 135). Queer Geography. The Gay Liberation Front introduced the term ‘gay ghetto’ into its political analysis of the gay subculture, seen largely in terms of sordid or exploitative bars and Greyhound Bus Station toilets. The use of the phrase ‘gay ghetto’ really prejudges the argument in terms of victimology. Historically and objectively the phenomenon is a queer community or queer quarter rather than a gay ghetto. Trumbach and others refer to ‘the birth of the subculture’, but I do not believe there is any particular decade which we can point to and say, ‘before this date the queer subculture did not exist’. It is quite simply impossible to subject all of this widespread evidence from different times and different places to a single Marxist analysis of the rise of capitalism. Gertrude Stein: Gertrude Stein, avant-garde American writer, eccentric, and self-styled genius whose Paris home was a salon for the leading artists and writers of the period between World Wars I and II. Stein spent her infancy in Vienna and in Passy, France, and her girlhood in Oakland, Calif. She entered the. Stein spent her infancy in Vienna and in Passy, France, and her girlhood in Oakland, Calif. She entered the Society for the Collegiate Instruction of Women (renamed Radcliffe College in 1894), where she studied psychology with the philosopher William James and received her degree in 1898.