

*Anarchist philosopher John Henry Mackay was recognized as an artist as well as a political thinker--his contemporary Richard Strauss set some of Mackay's poetry to music. He was also a founder of modern gay liberation, offering a radical challenge to colleague Magnus Hirschfield's leadership. Finally, Mackay was a lover of adolescent boys who created a body of literature, The Books of the Nameless Love, exploring his sexual feelings. Hubert Kennedy's appreciation of Mackay reveals how the philosopher's love of boys influenced his political thinking and how he lived out his politics and philosophy in his life with boys.*

## Hubert Kennedy



Put up  
through  
p 9.

## **Anarchist of Love**

*The Secret Life of John Henry Mackay*

by Hubert Kennedy

Revised and Expanded Edition

This revised and greatly expanded version of *Anarchist of Love: The Secret Life of John Henry Mackay* (New York: Mackay Society, 1983) is published simultaneously as *NAMBLA Topics #3* by the North American Man/Boy Love Association (PO Box 174, New York, NY 10018). A revised German edition, translated by Almuth Carstens, was published as *Anarchist der Liebe: John Henry Mackay als Sagitta* (Berlin: Jochen Knoblauch Verlag, 1988). Further additions have been made for the present edition.

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## ANARCHIST OF LOVE

### 1

#### “I was SAGITTA”

I am the arrow that springs from the string,  
Whirring through the night of time I ring—

To all healing, here courage, there comfort, bring:  
If healing, not death—“Your health!” I sing.  
I am SAGITTA!

—Know: the arrow am I

Which cures or kills . . .

Stay!—or—away fly!

On 6 October 1909, after nineteen months of legal proceedings, the power of the German state moved to crush the first deliberate and self-aware campaign in modern times to gain public understanding of man-boy love. In spite of having one of the best defense lawyers in Germany, and in spite of expert witnesses of the first rank (including M. G. Conrad, Alfred Kerr, Hans Land, and Bruno Wille)

to testify to the purity and artistic value of the works, three publications of the pseudonymous Sagitta were declared "obscene writings" and ordered destroyed. One of the judges even conceded that these were "works in a completely artistic form," but apparently there was a nod from the Minister of Justice as to which way the decision should go. The publisher, who continued to preserve the anonymity of the author, was fined and assessed court costs, but in fact all costs were paid by Sagitta—in reality the German writer John Henry Mackay.

Mackay wrote to his American friend Benjamin R. Tucker that the court costs amounted to around 1,000 marks and that all together the whole affair had cost him about 6,300 marks—the equivalent of at least \$30,000 in today's currency (*Dear Tucker* 42; references are to the list of Works Cited at the end of this essay). More than the money, Mackay felt the loss of his struggle for equal rights for man-boy love. He recalled that day as the most depressing of his life. He was living in Berlin at the time, and after hearing the court's decision, he wandered alone in a forest on the edge of the city. "Never before in my life, so accustomed indeed to all the sorrows of loneliness, had I felt myself so abandoned by all as in this hour. . . . It was an hour such as is probably known only to him who has staked his life on a cause and now sees his life lost with it" (*Fenny Skaller* 152). He wandered throughout the night, gradually recovering his strength from the knowledge that he had done what he had to do, and with the dawn he returned to the city and a new day. "And as I read the eternal confirmation of this love in the trusting and pure eyes of my boy, he found me calm and cheerful as always" (*Fenny Skaller* 153).

In fact, Mackay did not give up his struggle, but found the strength to complete his project of writing six "Books of the Nameless Love" treating man-boy love in various literary forms, and these were published in one volume in 1913 (with a second edition in 1924). As Sagitta, Mackay also published in 1926 a long novel treating the life of teenage hustlers in Berlin in the 1920s.

The Scottish marine insurance broker John Farquhar Mackay married Luise Auguste Ehlers in Hamburg on 21 March 1863. Less

than a year later their first and only child, John Henry, was born on 6 February 1864 in Greenock, Scotland, a city on the Firth of Clyde about twenty miles from Glasgow. The boy was only nineteen months old, however, when his father died and his mother returned with her young son to her native Germany.<sup>1</sup> When he was nine years old she married a widower, who also had a son Mackay's age. Mackay remained devoted to his mother (she died when he was thirty-eight years old), but relations with his stepfather, Alfred Dumreicher, a Prussian official, were cold, and he did not get along at all with his new brother. Thus he was happy to attend the *Gymnasium* (high school) in another town, where he lived as a boarder with another family. Although he grew up in Germany, with German as his mother tongue, Mackay did not become naturalized until around the turn of the century, after he had decided to settle permanently in Berlin (Dobe 39).

Mackay left school in 1883 and spent a year as an apprentice with a publishing house. This was followed by five semesters as a university student (in Kiel, Leipzig, and Berlin), but only as an auditor. Unsatisfied by these activities he tried to lose, or rather, find himself in travel. His mother was of a well-to-do merchant family and allowed him an annual income sufficient to live on; in 1900 he received a lump sum from her and he inherited more on her death in 1902. In 1911, on the advice of his American friend Benjamin R. Tucker, he used the remaining money to purchase a lifetime annuity (Mackay, *Dear Tucker* 66). Thus Mackay could independently pursue his choice of career, and from an early age he always considered himself a writer.

From spring 1887 to spring 1888 Mackay was in London, where he turned to the left in his search for a social philosophy. In the spring of 1888 he settled in the quiet town of Rorschach in Switzerland to digest his London year. The first result was the publication that year of a volume of anarchist verse, *Sturm* (Storm), which had several later editions; altogether, more than 20,000 copies were printed in Mackay's lifetime. He then gave his impressions of his London year in *Die Anarchisten: Kulturgemälde aus dem Ende des XIX Jahrhunderts* (The Anarchists: A Picture of Civilization at the Close of the Nine-

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teenth Century), which appeared in 1891 and was published in English in the United States that same year; it was later translated into eight other languages: Czech, Dutch, French, Italian, Russian, Spanish, Swedish, Yiddish.

By this time Mackay had read Max Stirner's book *Der Einzige und sein Eigentum* (published in English under the title *The Ego and His Own*), was impressed with Stirner's agreement with his own position of individualist anarchism, and had determined to recall the "lost" figure of Max Stirner (the pseudonym of Johann Kaspar Schmidt, 1806–56) to public attention. This labor of love cost Mackay much time and money, for he carefully tracked down and collected all references to Stirner and his writings. (Mackay's collection of some 750 books and other items was sold in 1925 to the Marx-Engels Institute in Moscow, after unsuccessful attempts to sell it to the Library of Congress in Washington, the New York Public Library, Jerusalem, and even Japan.) Mackay's biography, *Max Stirner: Sein Leben und sein Werk* (Max Stirner: His Life and His Work), was published in 1898. In the meantime he had established contact with American anarchists and visited several of them during a three-month trip to the United States in the fall of 1893. In her autobiography, Emma Goldman recalled lunching with him on 28 September, the first day of her New York trial for "inciting to riot" (1: 129). Mackay kept a lifetime friendship with Benjamin R. Tucker (1854–1939), to whom he dedicated *Der Freiheitsucher* (The Freedomseeker) in 1920.



*John Henry Mackay*  
Mackay, from the American edition  
of *The Anarchists*, 1891.

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By the turn of the century Mackay had spent extended periods in several large cities of Europe: Berlin, London, Paris, Rome, Zurich. He returned to Berlin in 1892 to complete his research on Stirner and settled there permanently in 1894. But he continued to travel occasionally and there are echoes of some of his experiences with boys during his trip to Paris for the International Exposition of 1900 in the poems later published by Sagitta, as well as in the largely autobiographical novel *Fenny Skaller*, also by Sagitta—to whose story we now turn.

Mackay was surely aware of his sexual orientation by 1886, but it was no doubt the appearance that year of Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia sexualis* which allowed him to "come out" to himself. He described his reading of the book in his novel *Fenny Skaller*:

But he does now know one thing: *There are others like him!* He is no longer alone among people, no longer alone on this earth! Now it is to be his, too, this earth, and he wills to live on it! . . . It would still have been quite impossible for him to talk to another person. But he kept silent no longer within himself, and from then on no longer silent about his love. (40–41)

That was the only thing he learned from the book, however, for the rest outraged him:

He understood only so much: they had locked up his love in science's wax-figure cabinet of monsters, deformities, and monstrosities of all kinds—there they had also classified him: among people with whom he had nothing in common, and could and would have nothing in common. (41)

Unlike Magnus Hirschfeld (1868–1935), Mackay had no explanation for his deviation from the norm. He saw no need for an explanation and, feeling himself to be entirely manly, he emphatically rejected Hirschfeld's development of the "third sex" theory of

Karl Heinrich Ulrichs ("anima muliebris virili corpore inclusa"—a woman's psyche confined in a man's body)—a theory that beautifully fit "Tante Magnesia" (Blüher 133). He also rejected the campaign of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee, led by Magnus Hirschfeld, to obtain a modification of §175 of the German Penal Code so as to allow sexual activity between same-sex adults, for he could not accept their tactic of gaining a liberalization of the anti-homosexual law at the expense of a tightening up of age-of-consent legislation, the tactic of those who sought to make themselves appear respectable by damning man-boy love. Having come into contact in Berlin with a few other men who shared his view, he determined to launch his own campaign for a better understanding of the man-boy love issue.

It is unlikely that any of Mackay's colleagues knew of his interest in boys before the death of his mother in 1902. It is probably a pure coincidence that in the play by Arno Holz *Sozialaristokraten* (Social Aristocrats, 1897) Bellermann, who is patterned after Mackay, says (Bellermann—like Mackay—stutters a bit): "There is a charge against m . . . me too. R . . . ridiculous. It's for breaking the law against obscenity" (Holz 86). But Holz proved to be prophetic, for in 1908 exactly that charge was brought against Mackay.

The enthusiasm that Mackay gave to his new endeavor is partly explained by his long depression following the death of his mother in 1902. (His devotion to her is shown in his later comment: "It is not true that time heals. There are wounds that never quite heal over" [*Abrechnung* 41]). For a long time he felt lost, and then, as he later recalled: "In the middle of my life a task arose, like a deliverance to a new goal; it is still too early to speak of it (as late as it already is)" (*Abrechnung* 41). That was written in 1932; we can only wonder why he remained unwilling to reveal his identity as Sagitta so late. Indeed, shortly before his death in 1933 Mackay wrote to his American friend Benjamin R. Tucker (in English, for Tucker did not read German): "I did *not* lift the veil of Sagitta. One of these infamous communistic papers did it, some years ago, to hurt me, and now it is an open secret" (*Dear Tucker* 193). In fact, his identity had been revealed in print as early as 1923 by Emil Szittyá (155) and

must have been widely known much earlier, as least among homosexual circles, as a result of the legal process against his Sagitta books.

The police certainly suspected that Mackay was Sagitta, for they searched his house several times for the Sagitta books in 1908. They did not find them, however, for Mackay kept the Sagitta material in a small room outside his apartment, with a separate entrance that appeared to lead to the attic (Dobe 19). They may have been prompted by the fact that Bernard Zack, publisher of the Sagitta books, had also been the publisher of Mackay's series of nine pamphlets, "Propaganda des individualistischen Anarchismus in deutscher Sprache" (Propaganda of Individualist Anarchism in the German Language), which were translations, mostly by Mackay, of writings by Tucker and others. The discovery that Mackay was Sagitta would certainly have delighted the police! Indeed, Mackay's friend Friedrich Dobe reported that Mackay gave as his reason for using a pseudonym his desire to avoid hurting the anarchist cause:

The fighter for the nameless love, who knew how deeply this was always dragged through the mud, wanted by no means that through its connection with his person the cause of freedom, anarchy, also would be dragged in the mud and exposed to new misunderstandings—something that would doubtless have happened, since they had no decent weapon against this honorable fighter. (Dobe 5)

Mackay worked out his plan for the "Books of the Nameless Love" in 1905, but he first appeared as Sagitta with four poems in *Der Eigene* that year (a fifth poem appeared there in 1906). Begun in 1896 as an anarchist journal that reflected the philosophy of Max Stirner ("Der Eigene" = "The Self-Owner" in the meaning given that word by Stirner)<sup>2</sup>, *Der Eigene* became an openly homosexual journal from 1898. As such it continued, with occasional interruptions (mostly due to police interference), into the 1930s, making it the first successful gay journal<sup>3</sup>. Mackay's Sagitta poems appeared in the first half of 1905. Numa Praetorius (pseudonym of Eugen Daniel

Wilhelm, 1866–1951), in a review of that year of *Der Eigene*, wrote:

The poems of Sagitta are due the first place, however, principally the two poems "Der Fremde" [The Stranger], in which the force of the sentiment thrillingly bursts forth in lively dactylic rhythms, and "Die Türe" [The Door], in which melancholy, hope, and longing for the loved one flow in strong manly verses. (590)

Mackay was so determined to keep his identity as Sagitta secret that he did not reveal it even to Adolf Brand (1874–1945), publisher of *Der Eigene*. In fact, he had all correspondence sent to Brand from Dresden in the handwriting of his good friend, the Dresden actress Luise Firlé (1865–1942). But Brand soon guessed who Sagitta was, for, by coincidence, at the same time as he received the first Sagitta poem, he read an earlier poem by Mackay, which he immediately recognized as treating man-boy love, and saw the resemblance of the two. His suspicion was confirmed during the Sagitta trial, when one of Mackay's literary expert witnesses, Bruno Wille, let slip to Brand that he had appeared at the "Mackay-Process" (Kennedy, "Das Geheimnis von Sagitta" 11).

Mackay planned the Sagitta project as a series of writings in various literary forms with the common title "Die Buecher der namenlosen Liebe" (The Books of the Nameless Love). He rejected all the medical, legal, and moralistic terms of the day and always spoke of the "nameless love," probably being influenced by the expression, "the love that dare not speak its name," made famous by Oscar Wilde at his trial in 1895. Brand later recalled that Mackay had shown at that time "irritation and outrage over the judgment of Oscar Wilde" (Kennedy, "Das Geheimnis von Sagitta" 11)<sup>4</sup>.

Mackay saw his task as two-fold: to gain support from men like himself, and then to take his cause to the public. He thought the first task would be easier, for he believed there were many who had suffered as he had and were only waiting for a spokesman. He chose to act anonymously, for the reason given above and also because he knew how easily a single public voice can be crushed. Editions of

1000 were planned for the books, to be brought out two a year and sold by subscription only. The first invitation was sent out on 1 August 1905 for the first two, which then appeared in 1906: *Die namenlose Liebe, ein Bekenntniss* (The Nameless Love, a Creed, 29 pages) and *Wer sind wir? Eine Dichtung der namenlosen Liebe von Sagitta* (Who are we? A Poem of the Nameless Love by Sagitta, 62 pages). Mackay was careful to ask each subscriber to sign a statement that he would not be offended and that the book was for private use only.

The response to this offering was so slight that when he sent out the invitation on 1 July 1906 for the next two books, he noted that the project could not continue unless more people subscribed. But despite the fact that his list of addresses continued to grow, the number of subscribers was so small that further publication was impossible, and he saw his struggle ended before it had hardly begun.

Mackay later complained that these books were never reviewed, but in fact there were a few reviews. Wilhelm Hammer reported on them in the *Monatsschrift für Harnkrankheiten, Psychopathia sexualis und sexuelle Hygiene* (Monthly for Urinary Diseases, Sexual Psychopathology, and Sexual Hygiene) in 1907, and an excerpt from his report was given that year in the *Monatsbericht des Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees* (Monthly Report of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee):

From these volumes there no longer sounds the imploring voice of the sick begging for sympathy, but rather the trumpet of battle; conscious of his goal, the poet attacks the teaching of the Christian church and the ascetics preaching victory over self. The second volume clearly describes the love of the man who feels himself drawn to youths, an everyday story and yet meaningful through the trueness to life with which Sagitta is able to reproduce his feelings. The author has correctly recognized that dormant in the average person are also same-sex drives, which can be awakened to glowing flames. The experiences of sailors, the observations of prison doctors confirm the correctness of this statement. (*Monatsbericht* 6:136)

Despite this favorable view of the author, who was later described by Hirschfeld as "Dr. med. et phil. et jur. Wilhelm Hammer, who often frequented the Committee at that time" (*Von einst bis jetzt* 177), he concluded on a rather ambiguous and unrealistic note:

On the other hand, in my opinion it must be sharply emphasized that same-sex love, so long as it remains within moderate limits, is not condemned by pastors, but rather is tolerated as friendship, yes even honored, and that the legal scholars of §175 of the German Penal Code reject only the crudest forms of activity and do not do away with noble friendships that hold themselves distant from raw sensuousness.

Another review was published in 1908 in Hirschfeld's new *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft* (*Journal for Sexual Science*), and this time the author was much less sympathetic:<sup>5</sup>

Sagitta is an artist, and his artistic Creed (Book 2) stands apart from all medical theories on the basis of the purely human individual. In rhythms often of rare beauty the broken strength of his longing sobs. Why must he love this lowly height? Nature, which wills it, is unfathomable. He flees, and the pain flees with him. . . .

A complete poem is a vision that requires neither an excuse nor a justification nor yet a polemic. Therefore I find the prose of the first book superfluous. Nor will the pamphlet that he is now sending out (*Gehoer! Nur einen Augenblick! Ein Schrei* [Listen! Only a Moment! A Cry]) gain for him the expected new friends. It imploringly attempts, on the basis of esthetics and altruistic morality, a quixotic battle against the primal instincts of mankind. A pity for the wasted effort. (Kind 248)

Mackay's close friend Herbert Stegemann wrote a long and

glowing review that concludes:

The great perception, that all happiness, also of love, rests on the unlimited freedom of our natural inclinations, rises up like a sun, shines into blessed faces, and casts gleaming light over the shabbiness of our systematized and confined existence; then we feel that here a genuine poet is disclosing to us his latest wisdom and that there is a duty to listen to him in quiet reverence. It is not given to everyone to feel the love of Sagitta in his own soul. But it is the prerogative of art to change the one-sidedness of human existence into infinity and to raise us up above the narrow bounds of our personality into the sphere of unlimited gaze, understanding, and enjoyment.

And in the *Monatsbericht* of April 1907, Hirschfeld had mentioned the two publications of Sagitta:

This circular was sent out with several prospectuses of the poems of Sagitta by their publisher. This unnamed but not unknown author is greatly angry with our Committee because we had to explain, in response to the repeated insistence of his publisher, that it is not our task to participate in the marketing and advertising of his poetry collections in the manner wished. (6: 62)

Indeed, Mackay was "greatly angry" with Hirschfeld, but not for the reason Hirschfeld gave, and Hirschfeld, who knew perfectly well that these were not "poetry collections," only further confused the issue in a Report in a later *Monatsbericht*:

The books published by Sagitta are not, as we erroneously expressed it in our Report before the last one, "poems," but rather poetic works and fiction (or creeds and scenes in prose). We emphasize this since the publisher expressed the opinion that we, "given the prejudice of our time against 'poems,'



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wanted to harm the distribution of the books." (6: 116)

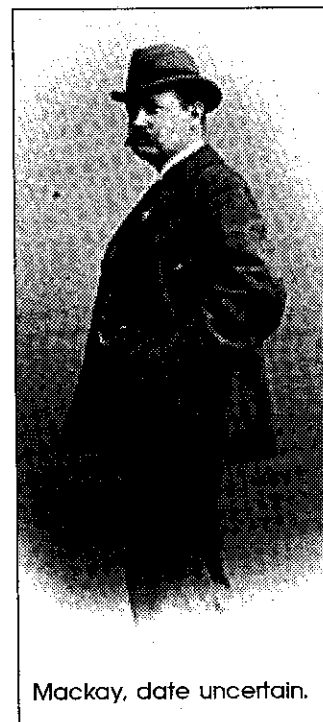
Mackay's Sagitta project was most directly affected by the so-called "Eulenburg affair," which had its beginning with an article of Maximilian Harden in the independent weekly *Die Zukunft* on 17 November 1906 and which eventually led Mackay to publish the pamphlet *Geboer*, mentioned (above) by Alfred Kind. But Mackay's definitive break with Hirschfeld came already a month earlier and for other reasons. Because of Hirschfeld's importance for the early history of the gay movement, the connection of Mackay with the Scientific Humanitarian Committee (SHC) is worth discussing.

It has been known that Mackay was an early signer of Hirschfeld's "Petition to the Legislative Bodies of the German Empire" for a revision of the antihomosexual §175 (his name appeared in the first list published in 1899, where his address was given as Zurich, although he was already living in Berlin at the time ["Petition" 256]), but it has not been generally known that he also attended sessions of the SHC. This was revealed in a memoir by his longtime friend Friedrich Dobe, written in 1944, but not published until 1987. Dobe first met Mackay in April 1905 at an evening at the home of Mackay's good friend, the wealthy independent scholar Benedict Friedländer (1866–1908). "At it a young medical student named Hartwig read a long poem of his that was inspired by a deep but unhappy love for a younger friend. Mackay had come precisely for this reason" (Dobe 53). Although Dobe and Hartwig were both twenty years younger than Mackay, the three were to become good friends. Later, due to Friedländer's severe illness (dysentery), "these evenings took place in others' homes, a few times at Mackay's, but then in the club room of a small tavern next to Mackay's house in Charlottenburg." Dobe compares the evenings to Plato's "Symposium": "Whoever had a young friend brought him along" (54). (He names only two other men who played a role in these evenings: Wilhelm Jansen and Mackay's friend, the writer Walther Heinrich, who died in Rome in 1939.)<sup>6</sup>

It was Friedländer who interested Dobe in the SHC, whose sessions Dobe occasionally attended with Mackay and Hartwig; Dobe

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himself lectured several times. The last session he and Mackay attended was on 14 October 1906 at Hirschfeld's house. Friedländer was too ill to attend, but had entrusted Dobe with his information. As Chairman of the Advisory Committee, Friedländer had not only raised objections to Hirschfeld's theory of homosexuality (his so-called theory of sexual intermediates), but also objected to his handling of the finances of the SHC. Unknown to Friedländer's friends, Hirschfeld had called for an informal meeting of his own supporters



Mackay, date uncertain.

the evening before to prepare their response. The result, as reported by Hirschfeld, was:

The General Assembly almost unanimously accepted the proposal of the four members of the Administrative Committee present, Prof. Wirz, Dr. M. Hirschfeld, Dr. Merzbach, and

Dr. v. Römer, to the effect that along with the simultaneous dissolution of the Advisory Committee the number of the Administrative Committee was gradually to be doubled. (*Monatsbericht* 5: 202)

Thus Hirschfeld was able to eliminate Friedländer's influence without even having to name him.

Mackay was outraged at the tactic. As reported by Dobe:

Mackay rose in protest and I followed. Hirschfeld diplomatically wanted to intervene and not let us out of the already closed house. I still see him before me as he raised his arms and implored, "My dear Mackay!" But Mackay, red-faced with anger, flew at him: "I'll break the glass in the door, if you don't let us out!!" (52)

Mackay's close friend Herbert Stegemann was with them and the three retired to a tavern to discuss the matter. Dobe calls this the "birth hour" of what Friedländer named the "Sezession des Wissenschaftlich-humanitären Komitees" (Secession of the Scientific Humanitarian Committee). In fact, the Secession was organized with Stegemann as President and attracted some members of the original SHC. But it depended on the support of Friedländer and quietly died out after his death on 21 June 1908. Also contributing to its demise were the public "scandals" of the so-called Eulenburg affair, which also affected the SHC and the reception of Mackay's Sagitta writings. This event has been summarized as follows in the catalog of the 1984 exhibition of the Berlinische Galerie "Berlin um 1900":

In his battle against the court camarilla, Maximilian Harden, whose podium was the journal *Die Zukunft*, which was founded in 1892, directed an accusation of homosexuality in 1906 against Prince Philipp Eulenburg, a close confidant of Wilhelm II, and against the personal adjutant of the

emperor, the Commanding General of Berlin Count Kuno Moltke. Moltke's charge of libel led to a discussion of his private life in court amidst the lively participation of the sensation-hungry press; four members of the upper nobility had to submit their resignations. (Asmus 96; see also Steakley, "Iconography")

Mackay had planned to bring his cause to the attention of the most interested persons first, before moving to any public discussion, but now, after centuries of silence, the subject was being discussed everywhere, and in the worst possible way for boy-lovers. As Mackay said: "We were again—as always—the ones who were hit the hardest in our love" (*Fenny Skaller* 142). He determined to enter the fray.

One of the objections to the original Sagitta project was the price of the books. Mackay decided on a cheap pamphlet, which he sent out toward the end of 1907 to the nearly 1000 addresses he had collected. With it was a cover letter appealing for help in making the pamphlet widely available. The pamphlet was *Gehoer! Nur einen Augenblick!* (Listen! Only a Moment!). In it Mackay tried to bring together all the objections to man-boy love and to give them an answer. He wrote to his friend Benjamin R. Tucker: "Nothing better, and almost all in short words, I can say about this love I have said in this pamphlet" (*Dear Tucker* 19). He set three conditions for the pamphlet: (1) It must be immune from censorship; (2) it must be able to be understood by anyone; and (3) it must be effective. He was confident he had satisfied the first two conditions—but he was to be frustrated again.

Mackay was immediately disappointed in the small response to his letter, but with the financial help of his close friend Benedict Friedländer, 3340 copies were sent out, of which 1200 went, at Friedländer's expressed wish, to the heads of the Evangelical (Lutheran) Boys Clubs in Germany, and the remainder went to members of parliament, to public and private libraries, and other institutions. In addition, Mackay himself paid for another 1000 review copies, to be sent to newspapers and magazines—"needless to say,

not one of them even mentioned the writing, not even by title" (*Fenny Skaller* 147). The letters received in response quickly convinced Mackay that "there is perhaps no class that exceeds Evangelical ministers in narrow-mindedness, intolerance, and dark fanaticism" (*Fenny Skaller* 148).

The first real blow, however, fell on 12 March 1908, when the police confiscated not only the pamphlet, but the first two books as well. On 4 April the police conducted a house search for the third and fourth books, which had not even been published. Two charges were then brought against the publisher, Bernhard Zack:

(1) A minister in Magdeburg was offended. This charge was rejected on 15 May, but on appeal on 8 July Zack was fined 50 marks.

(2) Nineteen Evangelical ministers were offended in Berlin. More importantly, the books and pamphlet were charged with being "obscene writings." The process lasted for nineteen months. Mackay reported the outcome as follows:

On 6 October 1909 the main trial took place, which ended by declaring the books and pamphlet "obscene writings," whereby their destruction was also pronounced, and their distribution in Germany placed under punishment. At the same time, their publisher was sentenced to a fine of 600 marks and court costs for distributing these "obscene writings," as well as for giving offense by sending the pamphlet. . . . With a clarity not to be misunderstood, the publisher was advised in the pronouncement of the sentence that any further step in the fight in this cause would be for him at the same time a step into prison. (*Fenny Skaller* 149–50)?

In the meantime, Mackay was hopeful that the process would be won and the confiscated material returned. So, before his address list got too old, he sent out, on 1 May 1909, an announcement of the fifth book, *Am Rande des Lebens. Die Gedichte der namenlosen Liebe* (On the Margin of Life. Poems of the Nameless Love), which he thought the least likely to be confiscated. In fact, it was not, but

sales were as slow as before.

With the adverse judgment at the beginning of October 1909, Mackay's struggle seemed really at an end. Before the end of the month he sent to some 1200 addresses a farewell letter to the "serious friends of the cause." In it he acknowledged that the cause was dead, and for a long time to come. Might had conquered again and had simply declared this love, "the nameless love of a man for a youth of his own sex," to be a vice and a crime: "This love, misunderstood and despised, persecuted and misconstrued like nothing else in the world!" He could only look to the future for vindication: "They murder our love—and it lives. They strangle our cry—and it echoes back from the future! They have murdered my books. But my books will live" (*Fenny Skaller* 155).

In his letter Mackay wrote that he was willing to complete the third and fourth books and publish them, along with *Gehoer!* as the sixth, and the story of this struggle, as a "document of the shame of our time." But he no longer had the means—nor the help of Benedict Friedländer, who had taken his life on 21 July 1908 after a long and painful illness. He asked anyone wishing to help to speak up. There were only six replies. Nevertheless, Mackay decided to complete the project, and the one-volume edition of *Die Buecher der namenlosen Liebe*, including Mackay's history of his struggle, from which the above account has been taken, was published in 1913. The title page gave Paris as the place of publication, but in fact the book was prepared by Mackay in Berlin and printed there, with orders being taken for it through a cover address in Holland, that of Mackay's friend J. H. François, who had published a very favorable review of the three earlier Sagitta books of 1906/1909 the year before.<sup>8</sup> Mackay had given eight years, "the best years of my life," to the cause of man-boy love. Looking back over those years of the homosexual emancipation movement in Germany, he saw that great mistakes had been made, two above all:

(1) An attempt had been made to present this love as "nobler and better" than heterosexual love, whereas it is neither better nor worse, but "as rich in blessings as any love."

(2) For similar reasons, an attempt was made to promote the freedom of men to love—at the expense of women. But: “However false the position of the other sex (in all classes) still is today—to prevent and deny that sex its possibility of developing does not mean making friends out of enemies, but rather making the enemies of today into the implacable enemies of tomorrow and forever, and it is above all a complete misunderstanding of the great law of the future. This law is called freedom. Freedom includes all and excludes none” (*Fenny Skaller* 159).

Finally, however, Mackay found one mistake more disastrous than all the others: “This love, persecuted by judges and damned by priests, has fled to the medical doctors, as if it were a sickness that could be cured by them.” And he was especially bitter about those homosexuals who seek “to rescue some at the expense of others”:

Knowing well how very much “public opinion” (whose influence above all appears to them so important) opposes precisely the love of the older man for the younger of his sex, since the thoughtless always are able to see here only “seduction” while they are more and more inclined to the thought of a “legalization of love between adults,” these dangerous helpers consent to, yes, advocate, a law that legalizes the one while it condemns the other. And this they do, who can claim for themselves no excuse of ignorance and bias, but rather know, and know precisely, that here not the age but rather the maturity alone can be decisive. . . . (*Fenny Skaller* 160)

This last was directed, of course, at Hirschfeld and the SHC, which recommended an ‘age of consent’ of sixteen (“Petition”). Mackay’s view regarding an age of consent may thus be summed up: Not the age, but rather the maturity alone can be decisive.

A second edition of *Die Buecher der namenlosen Liebe* was published in 1924. No place of publication was given, but like the earlier edition it was printed in Berlin. In the preface to the new edi-

tion Mackay could only confirm his earlier views:

For it has been shown again and again in these years that this love has to look for its worst enemies precisely among those not outside, but within, its own camp. Again those who call themselves “leaders” in this fight, and as such label themselves as responsible, have publicly advocated, in one of their ridiculous and degrading petitions to the ruling power, an ‘age of consent’—not in the case of a child, but rather for the mature boy and youth!—and with it the prosecution and punishment of those who they, like no others, know are exactly as innocent as themselves. Once again those who love a higher age have sought to save themselves at the cost of the comrades-in-destiny of their time: a betrayal of the cause more harmful in its intentions and more terrible in its results cannot be imagined. (*Fenny Skaller* 162-63)

This edition of *Die Buecher der namenlosen Liebe* was financed by the sale of Mackay’s private library of some 1500 books, for the income from his annuity had been wiped out by the runaway inflation of 1923. He was also forced to sell his Stirner collection and his summer cottage, his “Haus zur Freiheit” (Freedom House), in the Riesengebirge, or Giant Mountains, on the boundary of Silesia and Bohemia. The war years had prevented publication, but had not stopped his writing, and in 1920 Mackay completed his anarchist work *Der Freiheitsucher* (The Freedomseeker), which he considered his most important book. In 1926, once more as Sagitta, he published *Der Puppenjunge* (The Hustler), a novel set in the milieu of the teenage hustlers in Berlin in the 1920s.

Sales of his books were hardly adequate to support him, but just when everything seemed blackest a miracle happened, for, as he wrote to Tucker, “at last—we have found the millionaire, for whom we searched so many years. *This is not a joke! It is truth!*” (*Dear Tucker* 154). The “millionaire” was a Russian named Davidovsky, living in Paris, who offered to help Mackay set up his own publishing house and even promised him a monthly pension. Mackay once

again saw his old age assured, and he was eager for new projects. He immediately planned a complete edition of Stirner's works—Davidovsky had been attracted to Mackay by his biography of Stirner—but he began with a one-volume edition of his own writings, and only this first project was completed before the Russian withdrew his support, having made only a few payments and never settling the matter of a pension. Mackay, who had sunk everything he had into the project, was now completely dependent on the sales of his books, for he refused to accept charity or gifts from his friends. He likewise rejected any money from the state. As reported by Dobe:

To be sure, President Ebert offered him a gift from the State of 100,000 marks, but Mackay respectfully rejected it as coming from the State, an institution he had fought his whole life as his worst enemy. He himself showed me Ebert's letter and his reply. (19)

His last publication, *Abrechnung* (Summing Up, 1932), contains the memories of a disappointed man, but one proud of having written the truth and sure of the real value of his work. But even there he merely hinted at his Sagitta writings. He stipulated in his will, however, that when they were reprinted they were to show his real name, with the note: "I was Sagitta. I wrote these books in the years in which people thought my artistic powers extinguished" (*Die Buecher der namenlosen Liebe von Sagitta* 1: 491; in the following, this work will be cited as *Sagitta*.).

Mackay died on 16 May 1933 in the office of his doctor, only a few houses from his own, apparently of a heart attack. He was also suffering from stones in his bladder (Mackay, *Dear Tucker* 195). As he had wished, no one spoke at his funeral, which was attended by only five persons. His ashes were placed in a cemetery in Stahnsdorf outside of Berlin. The death of Mackay closed an era in the movement for the recognition of same-sex love, for Adolf Hitler had become dictator two months earlier, and all activities of the German homosexual emancipation movement soon ceased.

## 2

## Writer and Boy-Lover

I sing of the love whose joy  
 You bury, proscribe, and ban!  
 I sing a man's love for a boy,  
 A boy's love I sing, for a man.

## SAGITTA

In the preceding account of John Henry Mackay's dedication to the cause of man-boy love, his one-man struggle, under the pseudonym Sagitta, was given in some detail, along with his analysis of the reasons for its failure. But the rest of his life was only sketched.

And although he gave, as he said, "the best years of my life" to that cause, it was not for the Sagitta volumes that he was known as a writer, nor, most likely, for which he will be best remembered. Only a couple of his other writings have been mentioned; it remains to see what can be learned from them—and the Sagitta volumes—about Mackay's development as boy-lover and anarchist.

It would be simplistic to suppose that Mackay's realization that his sexual orientation was irreconcilable with modern society led him to advocate anarchism.<sup>9</sup> Rather, it was his acceptance of the philosophy of individualism that allowed him to fully accept himself as a boy-lover. Most likely, there was a dialectic at work in his increasing understanding of himself and of society. Certainly he came to see the practical solution of the "social question" and of the problems faced by boys and boy-lovers as intimately connected:

Life itself will find this solution not in separation from its other questions, but rather with them. For the question of this love also is in its deepest basis a social question: the fight of the individual for his freedom against whatever kind of oppression. (*Fenny Skaller* 159)

Reinforcing Mackay's view that man-boy love was "a question of personal freedom, the freedom of the individual" was his perception of the small circle of those from whom an understanding of this love might be expected:

For basically everyone just understands his own love and any other is foreign to him and unintelligible, if not sinister. Here too only the comprehension of the right to equal freedom, the tolerance of foreign life-styles as the final and highest result of civilization, can be salutary. (*Fenny Skaller* 162)

How did Mackay arrive at these views? What were the events in his life that influenced him? It is not easy to answer these questions with certainty. Nevertheless, the novel *Fenny Skaller* appears to be largely autobiographical, and some information can be found there.

With the subtitle "A Life of the Nameless Love," *Fenny Skaller* was the third book of Sagitta. It is a novel in ten chapters, called "pictures," told within the time-frame of one night, and presents the story of a man who slowly and painfully becomes aware of, and comes to terms with, his love for teenage boys. Ferdinand Skaller, nicknamed "Fenny" as a child, has waited in vain for a new young acquaintance to keep an appointment. Deeply disappointed, he returns to his apartment and spends the night looking through his collection of photographs of ten boys, each of whom is recalled in flashback in the ten "pictures" of the novel. As the sun comes up, Skaller is reassured and ready to face another day.

The portraits of these ten boys appear to reflect Mackay's own experiences. He surely knew more than ten; one hopes that the proportion of unhappy experiences in his life was not as large as recounted here! But of course the novel is designed to show the development of a boy-lover, his awakening to his special sexual orientation.

The first picture is of a sixth grade pupil. Skaller was in the seventh grade and never even spoke to him; he stole the photograph from a family album. The boy in the second picture was Skaller's first real love; Skaller was sixteen, the other fifteen. They at least kissed—and perhaps did more:

Then the older one bends over the younger and kisses him on the lips, hastily and shyly. And suddenly they embrace, both at the same time, quickly and impetuously. (27)

This friendship is described in *Der Freiheitsucher* in somewhat more reserved terms and is surely based on a true experience. Skaller had



Mackay at 16.

## Hubert Kennedy

not known then that this friendship was love, but he soon absorbed society's view of his 'vice' and ran away from the third boy—who he now knows would have welcomed him.

In the fourth picture, Skaller discovers Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia sexualis* and realizes that there are other men like himself, but it was an experience with a boy in Paris that finally opened his eyes to the possibility that his love might be returned. Skaller met a newspaper boy there, who gave him his photo. The boy later saw Skaller secretly kiss it, and asked: "You are kissing my little picture, monsieur? Wouldn't you rather kiss me instead?" (42).

Skaller then accepted his love, but in the fifth picture it is the boy's family who keep them apart. Now desperate for someone to love, he takes a sick boy in from the streets of Berlin, and later realized "that he had been foolish enough to believe that in that way he could rescue them both" (58). Long after the boy has regained his health he continues to sponge on Skaller, who has exhausted himself trying to help. He finally walks out when Skaller insists he find a job. This, too, must have been a true experience: it may be shown that the title figure in Mackay's earlier love epic *Helene* (1888) was patterned after this boy (Kennedy, "No Good Deed").

Only with the next boy does Skaller have a satisfying sexual experience, lovingly described in the seventh picture. Here, too, as in the other "pictures," Mackay comments on current sexual attitudes. He mentions sadomasochism in passing—it is foreign to him—and we learn his preferred method of sexual gratification in the description of Skaller:

Never had he sought any other kind of gratification in his love than breast to breast, lips on lips with his beloved, and that other seemed to him unthinkable; and never had he drawn another breast to his than that which gladly and willingly nestled on it. (74)

The final three boys appear to be included in the book for the sake of variety. The eighth is a street boy, who brings Skaller hours of infinite happiness—and weeks of bitter waiting. The ninth is an

## ANARCHIST OF LOVE

upper-class boy, worldly-wise and seeking only thrills; Skaller rejects him. He prefers the working-class boy he meets at the same time, who is withdrawn by day, but wild with passion at night. But one day this tenth boy, too, disappears without an explanation. With the exception of the first of the ten, no boy was under fourteen; Mackay's own preferred age group was fourteen to seventeen.

In discussing *Fenny Skaller*, Dobe also notes the autobiographical aspect:

Mackay repeatedly said to me that those difficult, almost suicidal struggles, which let him see himself first as sick and then as a criminal, had been fought through in bloody earnest, that they were as hard and dismal as he described them there. To be sure, he came out the winner, for he always added: "Through them I had to do without much love in my youth—I'm catching up on all that now!" (65)

Dobe also notes that Mackay often helped his young friends financially. Indeed, as early as 1899 a spy of the Prussian Political Police included in his report on Mackay's anarchist activities that he was on friendly terms with a widow "whose son, Willy Groth, . . . he sent to drawing school at his own expense" (Politische Polizei).

Of the early war years, Dobe wrote:

Mackay was deeply shaken by the outbreak of war. . . . Those were difficult, critical weeks for Mackay, but in them ripened the plan of his second book of freedom, *Der Freiheitsucher*, whose writing carried him over the coming years, which became ever more terrible.

But it was not yet to that point. He still said to me that he had known little love in his young years since he had filled the time with difficult struggles over his orientation almost without rest. Now, when he was clear about himself, he wanted to catch up on all that. And he did catch up. The type he describes in *Fenny Skaller* (Third Book of the Nameless Love), his confessions of life and love—small, fifteen to

**FENNY SKALLER****JOHN HENRY MACKAY**Author of *The Hustler*Cover of the 1988 English edition of *Fenny Skaller*  
from Southernwood Press

sixteen, with blue cap, hardly noticed by others—he found again and again, now for a day, now for a longer time, and in one single case even for life. He found him in the streets, in amusement parks, in swimming pools. And the boys went with him cheerfully and freely, for he had an engaging way of associating with them. (59–60)

Dobe mentions one boy in particular, whom Mackay met in the spring of 1916: “At that time he fell fervently in love with a pupil of the Franckesche Stiftungen in Halle,<sup>10</sup> who was on a visit in his hometown Berlin” (70). Mackay talked of his feelings for the boy, who was called “Atti,” with Dr. Hartwig, often in notes that he left in Hartwig’s mailbox. When Hartwig emigrated to South America in 1933, shortly after Mackay’s death, he gave the collection of notes to Dobe, who quotes several of them. In late March 1916, Mackay wrote: “So, please find out *by Thursday* at which school (Gymnasium or Realschule) *light brown* (light brown to brown) velvet caps are worn” (70). And shortly after he wrote:

I found it—the light brown cap! It is charming, this brown cap, but much more charming are the brown eyes under it, and the whole boy from which they look out.

If I had not become so terribly mistrustful of every happiness, I would again hope to have *something* once more; but I no longer *dare* to rejoice! Still, I did want to write you, for you will rejoice a bit with me all the same. This really is something special! (71)

On 4 April he wrote:

And today, when I was together again with this bit of happy and cheerful life, I almost believed that there can be something like happiness. (72)

Alas, Atti did not live up to Mackay’s expectations. On 12 June 1916 he wrote to Hartwig:

The last days have left me no more doubt that, even if he stays and does not leave me tomorrow, it has not been and will not be what I hoped for; he, too, is after all a Berlin boy, and they beat us in love. Perhaps, if I *always* had him with me—but that would also be more than I could still manage now.



## Hubert Kennedy

He has been almost my last hope. I will not let it go, but  
it also no longer supports me.

I believe I shall not live much longer. I feel it this evening  
more than ever. (75)

With regard to the boys' ages, it is interesting to note that in the second *Sagitta* book of 1906 the loved boy is "around eighteen." But in the complete edition of 1913 this was changed to "around seventeen." After that no "beloved boy" in the *Sagitta* writings is older than seventeen. Mostly, their ages are not specified. In *Fenny Skaller* three boys are fifteen, one is fourteen. The youngest age is in a love poem addressed to a thirteen-year-old.

Mackay's attitude toward sex with boys is reflected in the words of *Fenny Skaller*: "When it had come to acts between them—well, no words were ever lost over them, so self-evident did it seem that their love and inclination also found that expression" (*Fenny Skaller* 75).

*Fenny Skaller* is the longest of the six "Books of the Nameless Love." It is followed by a brief one-act play, *Ueber die Stufen von Marmor* (*Over the Marble Steps*), set in Venice, in which a young German sculptor and a sixteen-year-old visitor discover that they are in love. The curtains are then drawn to signal an interlude of an hour, during which they presumably make tender, but passionate love, for when the curtains open again the older man has the "look of a conqueror of new territory" in his eyes ("in those of the younger a new twinkle"), and his first words are: "You must be tired, Walther" (*Sagitta* 1: 379).<sup>11</sup> Will Ogrinc (whose article also includes an excellent discussion of *Fenny Skaller*) finds *Ueber die Stufen von Marmor* the "most successful" of the Books of the Nameless Love (74).

The poems of *Am Rande des Lebens* (*On the Margin of Life*), the second longest book of *Sagitta*, offer a wide variety of situations and feelings, including the expected poems of unrequited love, as well as poems addressed to judges or boys seen only once. They range from the sentimental to quickie sex, as the following two brief examples show:

## ANARCHIST OF LOVE

### Give Your Hand Here . . .

Give your hand here, lay it special  
As a pledge into my hand.  
Let my cheek and forehead nestle  
On your own hand, small and tanned.

Hands still warm from childish play,  
Thoughtless now of what will be,  
Glow with lust for life; this day  
Guide a human destiny. (*Sagitta* 1: 406)

### Then Into the Streets He Wandered . . .

Then into the streets he wandered  
Where life hummed all around.  
He heard in his ear—like a singing  
Sweet beyond measure! its sound.

And as all around him the light shone  
There fled from his heart all fear;  
And as he saw a smile beckon  
He followed, his happiness near . . .

For there on the next street corner  
It waited—he saw it lean.  
And in a place safe and hidden  
He tasted it—all unseen. (*Sagitta* 1: 418)

The variety of literary forms used in the *Sagitta* books reflects, in miniature, Mackay's larger output under his real name. It was as a poet, however, that he first came to the attention of the public—and of the censors, for his poem *Arma parata fero!* (I carry weapons ready!) was banned in Germany, under the anti-socialist law of 1878, after its publication in Switzerland in 1887—and he continued to be

known primarily as a poet.

Many of Mackay's lyrics are love poems in which the gender of the loved one is left indefinite. Contemporary critics, of course, assumed that the love object was a woman.<sup>12</sup> One suspects they would not have been as generous in their praise if they had known it was a boy! Four of Mackay's poems were set to music by Richard Strauss; others who have composed musical settings include: Eugen d'Albert, Gustav Brecher, Hugo Kaun, Leo Michielsen, Max Reger, Arnold Schönberg, and Arnold Spoel.

It was probably not Mackay's lyric poetry that first attracted Strauss, but rather his anarchist philosophy and his connection with Stirner. Willi Schuh noted that Strauss wrote his father, the horn virtuoso Franz Strauss, on 7 April 1892: "In Berlin I made an engaging new acquaintance, the Scottish poet John Henry Mackay, a great anarchist and the biographer of the Berlin philosopher Max Stirner" (Schuh 258). And Schuh added:

The impression that *Die Anarchisten* made on Strauss can be judged from a story told by Arthur Siedl in his book *Straussiana*: three hours before the curtain was due to go up on the first performance of *Guntram* in Weimar [10 May 1894] he and Strauss were having a passionate discussion about the book. (259)

Less than two weeks after that discussion, Strauss set to music two love lyrics of Mackay, "Morgen" (Tomorrow) and "Heimliche Aufforderung" (Secret Invitation), which, with two other songs, made up his Opus 27, a wedding gift to his wife. They continue to be among his most popular Lieder.

The composition of these songs must have helped to bring Strauss



Richard Strauss

and Mackay closer. Max Halbe recalled:

In Mackay's quarters, at one of his small, festive eating and drinking parties, I became acquainted with a young musician who had just come from Munich and had set some of Mackay's songs to music. They were sung that evening.<sup>13</sup>

Indeed, their contact lasted for several years. A. A. Rudolph recalled:

Richard Strauss, called to Berlin as Court Conductor, had set Mackay's poems to music, including some of the most inflammatory. The Volksbühne gave (on 28 November 1899) a "Mackay evening." Frau Strauss—de Ahna sang the Mackay songs accompanied at the piano by Richard Strauss. Rudolf Steiner, in an introductory speech, gave an appreciation of the works of John Henry Mackay. The poet himself kept shyly back, although the presentation, with 2000 in attendance, was an enthusiastic manifestation for the poet, the musician, and the speaker.<sup>14</sup>

Rudolf Steiner (1861–1925), later known as an anthroposophist, was at that time editor of the literary journal *Das Magazin für die Literatur des In- und Auslandes* and a particularly good friend of Mackay.

It may be debated how "inflammatory" these songs are. But they may be presented here as among the most popular of love songs whose lyrics were undoubtedly inspired by boys:<sup>15</sup>

Tomorrow

Tomorrow again will shine the sun  
And on my sunlit path of earth.  
Unite us again, as it has done,  
And give our bliss another birth.

The spacious beach under wave-blue skies

Hubert Kennedy

We'll reach by descending soft and slow,  
And mutely gaze in each other's eyes,  
As over us rapture's great hush will flow. (*Ausgewählte  
Gedichte* 56)

Secret Invitation

Lift up, lift up the shining cup  
Up to your lips,  
With pleasure do we dine and sup,  
And toast, no sips!

And when you drink give me a wink  
So secretly—  
Then I will smile and also drink  
To you and me . . .

And like me calmly look again  
About the crowd  
Of drunken chatter, do not disdain  
Them all out loud:

No, lift the gleaming cup once more  
That's filled with wine,  
And let them happily drink and roar  
And noisily dine.

Yet when you have enjoyed your meal  
And stilled your thirst,  
Then leave your loud companions' peal  
And as the first

Go out into the garden lot  
The rose bush find  
Where I am waiting at the spot  
That customs bind.

ANARCHIST OF LOVE

And I will sink upon your breast  
Before it's shown,  
And then I'll drink your kisses best  
As oft you've known,

Entwine the splendor in your hair  
Of roses bright.

Oh come, you wonderful and fair  
And longed-for night!

(*Ausgewählte Gedichte*

64-65)

Perhaps the most widely read verses of Mackay are those of the volume *Sturm* (Storm, 1888), which was also banned in Germany. They are anarchist in content, and Mackay insisted they should not be judged as artistic productions—although this was the volume of which he was most proud. Similarly, he later complained that his anarchist prose works, *Die Anarchisten* (The Anarchists, 1891) and *Der Freiheitsucher* (The Freedomseeker, 1920), were criticized as novels, although he had explicitly stated (in their subtitles) that they were not.

Mackay's anarchist views are given in detail in these two works, his "Books of Freedom," as he called them, which he dedicated to his American friend Benjamin R. Tucker. Mackay's solution to the "social question" was his philosophy of individualist anarchism, which he found confirmed in the writings of Max Stirner, and which was close to the views of Tucker and his American colleagues. He opposed this view to that of communist anarchism, which, he maintained, held that the good of society was more important than the good of the individual. For Mackay, the individual was supreme. Believing that non-violent resistance is the strongest weapon against the tyranny of government, he denounced terrorism. And against those who said that chaos would follow the downfall of government, Mackay argued that people would then enter into voluntary associations, which would be more efficient than those imposed by brute force. His slogan was "Equal freedom of all," that is, the touchstone

of whether an action is not allowed is if it diminishes another's freedom to less than one's own.

Some of Mackay's sharpest criticism was reserved for Christianity, which, by teaching submission to the state, resignation in suffering, and the hope of reward in a future life, prevented any real attempt at self-improvement. And he saw this thinking being continued by the socialists. Auban, the spokesman for Mackay in *The Anarchists*, says, "On our lives rests the curse of an entirely unnatural idea: the Christian idea" (209). Another character in the book, after listening to a communist anarchist, exclaims:

One must hear such things in order to believe them!  
Two thousand years after Christ, after two thousand years of  
the saddest experience in the following out of a creed which  
has caused all the misery, still the same nonsense, in the  
same unchanged form! (136)

In *The Freedomseeker*, the central character, the spokesman for Mackay, describes the freedom he is seeking: "True Freedom, he concluded, meant equal Freedom for all, in a society without rulers" (109). Regarding love, this meant for the free man that he should "be allowed to unite in love with any other being to whom he is drawn, if he finds mutual love there; and be allowed to separate from this being at any time, when the attraction no longer exists" (154). From this followed Mackay's objection to marriage—not, indeed, to the union of a man and a woman, but to the legal bonds of marriage.<sup>16</sup>

If Mackay nonetheless was witness to the civil marriage of Rudolf Steiner on 31 October 1899 at the registry in Berlin-Friedenau, this may be explained not only by Mackay's friendship for Steiner, but also by Steiner's view that his friendship for the widow Anna Eunike was merely "transformed" into a civil marriage (*Hemleben* 73). Certainly in his novella *Die Menschen der Ehe* (*The Marriage People*, 1892) there is no hint of marriage for his protagonist, whom Mackay has matched with a strong, liberated woman, whose portrait was probably inspired by his friend Gabriele Reuter (1859–1941)—who

returned the compliment three years later by including a character based on Mackay in her novel *Aus guter Familie* (*From a Good Family*, 1895—the title was suggested to her by Mackay).

This illustrates, too, the fact that, although Mackay's views were closer to those of Adolf Brand and the *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen* (Community of Self-Owners), founded by Brand in 1903, than to those of Magnus Hirschfeld and the SHC, he not only did not share their exaltation of man-boy love above other forms of love, but rejected as well their apparent anti-feminist, indeed misogynist views. For Mackay, all forms of love, if truly love, were equally valid, and his anarchist principle of "equal freedom of all" certainly applied to women as well as men.

Mackay's goal was "equal freedom of all"; he did not believe that all people are equal. In *The Freedomseeker* there is an interesting passage that illustrates this:

In how many ways did physical love, for example, manifest itself! The monogamous man found protection from all the dangers of love in the haven of marriage and, instead of being grateful for his fortunate conformity, made a great fuss about the immorality of others; the man who ventured out onto the open sea captured what there was to capture and found the only real permanence in variety; a third, who loved not the opposite sex but his own sex, was persecuted and despised because he loved as *his own nature* dictated. (173)

From this passage we can see that the topic of homosexuality was not entirely absent from Mackay's non-Sagitta publications. Of his short stories, the brief, but poignant "Zwei Dichter" (*Two Poets*) is a powerful statement for the acceptance of this love. "Hans, mein Freund" (*Hans, My Friend*) may also be mentioned: it is a tragic tale of a boy who is beaten to death by his pious and uncaring grandmother, after the narrator briefly brings a bit of love into his life. Dobe also singles out these two among Mackay's short stories:

The most characteristic for the man Mackay are: "Hans,

# Der Schwimmer

Die Geschichte einer Leidenschaft

Roman von  
John H. Mackay



FOERSTER

1982 reprint of *The Swimmer* with Illustration by Ferdinand Hodler.

My Friend," a story that shows him in concerned and loving contact with a boy, without its being a matter of real love or the erotic. But the way that the narrator interests himself in the little Hans is the way the poet used to associate with the boys he loved. In the same circle belongs the story "Two Poets." (25)

Mackay's novel *Der Schwimmer* (The Swimmer, 1901) is one of the earliest sports novels and perhaps his most artistic work (see Mornin, "Taking Games Seriously"). In it, the central character is decidedly heterosexual—and young and strong and handsome—but a fellow swim club member is devoted to him. It is clear to a gay reader that this is the well-known, hopeless, teenage crush of a gay man for a straight man (which in this case lasted for several years).

In 1926, his artistic power undiminished, Mackay returned once more as Sagitta to give us the novel *Der Puppenjunge* (The Hustler). (The term "Puppenjunge"—always so spelled in the text of the novel—was a slang word at that time for a male prostitute; hence my translation, "The Hustler.")<sup>17</sup> Of undeniable literary merit, it is *the* classic of man-boy love. Walter Hauer wrote on the occasion of the first edition of the book: "This story . . . is, in its masterfully composed, so to speak strictly symphonic presentation the only high-style novel that the homosexual literature has to exhibit" (Hohmann 297–98). And in a review in the journal *Der Eigene* in 1931 the pseudonymous Kyrill (Christian von Kleist, b. 1893) wrote:

This work, as an epic-objective presentation of a milieu, as a construction of personality and character, is perhaps the most mature of the author. . . .

*Der Puppenjunge* belongs to the few books on "our subject" that may raise a claim to art. (61)

More recently it has been described as Mackay's "most valiant and most artistically successful effort in his struggle" as Sagitta (Jones 464).

*The Hustler* describes a year in the life of Gunther, a fifteen-

year-old runaway from a country village, who is initiated into the life of a boy-prostitute shortly after his arrival in Berlin. The story is told through the eyes of Hermann Graff, a young man who has come to Berlin to work, who falls in love with Gunther, and through the ensuing difficulties—the boy sees him only as a customer—gradually becomes clearer about his own sexual orientation. Graff's psychological development, while somewhat melodramatically overdrawn, is realistic and fascinating, as are the descriptions of various homosexual 'scenes' of Berlin in the 1920s. Mackay knew his Berlin; and he knew the personal agony of unrequited love. Indeed, every boy-lover who reads the novel seems to identify immediately with the situations presented.

Christopher Isherwood said of it:

I have always loved this book dearly—despite and even because of its occasional sentimental absurdities. It gives a picture of the Berlin sexual underworld early in this century which I know, from my own experience, to be authentic. (Mackay, *The Hustler*, cover blurb)

Mackay's realistic descriptions were no accident, for he carefully prepared to write them. Dobe recalled his method:

This book, in construction, entanglements in the plot, and their unraveling, is perhaps the most mature work of Mackay and is at the same time one of the truest books ever written: I accompanied the poet, at times along with Dr. Hartwig, in his research trips through Berlin. I saw what he saw and described and I observed him doing it. In the course of the year 1924 we systematically visited what the local Berliners call "schwule Kneipen" [queer bars] by following the relevant advertisements in the journal *Die Freundschaft*, and indeed with such thoroughness that we omitted none, however difficult they often were to find. . . .

The Adonisdiele, which plays the principal role in this book, really existed under another name exactly as Mackay

## THE HUSTLER



**JOHN HENRY MACKAY**  
**TRANSLATED BY HUBERT KENNEDY**

1988 edition of *The Hustler* from Alyson Publications.

describes it. To be sure, there was also an actual "Adonisdiele"—in Berlin South, if I am not mistaken. The bar described by Mackay, however, was actually called "Marienkasino" and was located in Marienstrasse not far from its easterly end, on the north side, not too far from the Friedrichstrasse train station. . . .

In the summer and fall of 1924 the poet made no ap-

pointments: "You can see me as often as you wish, always from six o'clock in the evening on, in the Marienkasino!" And I tried to follow this word as often as I could, as did Dr. Hartwig. There sat Mackay in the back room at the head of a long, narrow table with his back against the wall and with two, three, four, and even more boys around him. He ordered sandwiches, cigarettes, and beer for them and let them talk and talk and talk. . . . He never took notes; he always just sat there, cheerfully laughing with them, at times also comforting and helping them. This flock of "lost ones" naturally had no idea why he came, but they accepted him as a welcome change and as someone who treated them to many a pleasant gift. Dr. Hartwig, differently organized than Mackay, let himself get closer to individual boys he liked and could therefore report privately to the poet many additions to what he had heard at the open table. (78-80)

Indeed, the personalities of the story come alive for us in the sure sketches of Mackay. The brief chapter describing the gathering of a dozen boys around the "Pupentisch" (hustler table) in one of the bars is a masterpiece of characterization. But Mackay takes an un-sentimental view of the boys' lives, which he sees as empty, meaningless, and devoted to distractions, such as cocaine and liquor, which are mainly destructive. He places the blame for this situation on society, however, which values only appearances, enforced by a hypocritical police system that selectively enforces the antihomosexual laws for its own gain.

Already in *Fenny Skaller*, but without much sympathy, Mackay had described Berlin's "queens." Here an interesting touch is introduced in the scene in which Graff is to be taken to prison. One of his fellow office workers, whom Graff had avoided because of his effeminacy (which Mackay disliked), offers to keep his things for him while he is in prison, saying that they must stick together. Although Graff thinks they have nothing in common, this is the only person who shows any sympathy for him.

Mackay's individualist anarchism does not intrude into the story,

but it is there in the background: in the final, tragic crushing of Gunther's spirit by the force of a hypocritical state machinery and in the resolve of Graff, on release from prison, to go his own way. Graff has now seen through the emptiness of morality. He could agree with the individualist hero of Mackay's *Die Menschen der Ehe*, who had explained to a woman acquaintance what he understood by the relationship between man and woman in freedom:

"But for God's sake, that is highly immoral, what you are saying!" she cried. "It is really indecent!"

He only laughed, loudly and ruthlessly.

Like all blockheads, she called on morality for help where her reason no longer reached. (53)

Halfway through the novel Graff has already made progress in this direction. In his reasoning we may see Mackay's thoughts coming through:

He knew his orientation. He knew how it stood with him. He still read a lot, but did not trouble himself for an explanation, where there was nothing to explain. What was self-evident, natural, and not in the least a sickness had no need to be excused by an explanation. Many of the current theories he held to be false and dangerous.

It was a love like any other love. Whoever could not or would not accept it as love, was mistaken. (158)

Despite this apparently liberated attitude, Graff was still afraid of himself and tried not to give in to his feelings. He thought he had them under control—until he met Gunther and

had at first been so frightened over the impression that strange boy had made on him. When he saw the boy again, Hermann felt how passion threatened to seize him once more and become master over him. (159)

## Hubert Kennedy

Needless to say, Graff eventually gives in to his passion, only to suffer horribly for it when Gunther disappears. Not the least of his torments is not being able to share his loss, something most gay



The Passage in Frierichstrasse in Berlin, where hustlers met their clients.

people can readily empathize with. Seeing only his distress, his fellow workers advised seeing a doctor:

One must have trust in a doctor, must be able to trust oneself to him. He had no one whom he could trust.

Sure, if it had been a woman he was suffering over—how they all would have understood him! Then his passion would have been great and sacred, and his despair noble. ("Unrequited love"—in innumerable books, celebrated, described, justified, and understood.) But since it was only a boy, this was madness, if not a crime—the only cure to be locked up in a cold-water treatment institution for the insane. He had no one to whom he could talk. (203)

## ANARCHIST OF LOVE

Because of its subject matter—and the dead silence over Mackay altogether—*The Hustler* has been ignored by the literary critics. As Graff said in the novel, describing his unrequited love: "If it had been a woman . . . But since it was only a boy. . . ." It is, in fact, a beautifully crafted story of the eternal joys and sufferings of love. For anyone who is willing to see this love as *love*, Mackay's masterful treatment of it is universally compelling. At the same time, the action of the story takes place in a determined time and location that are described with historical exactness, making it a valuable document of a Berlin that will never be again.

*The Hustler* was followed, under Mackay's real name, by further poems, novellas, a novel, and, one year before his death, a volume of memoirs. In his memoirs (*Abrechnung*, 1932) Mackay still only hinted at the homosexual side of his life, but in his fiction he was more willing to include the subject. This may also be the reason he was unable to find a publisher for his long novella *Der Unschuldige: Die Geschichte einer Wandlung* (The Innocent: The Story of a Transformation), although another novella with similar psychological suspense, *Staatsanwalt Sierlin: Die Geschichte einer Rache* (States Attorney Sierlin: The Story of a Revenge) had been published serially in a Berlin newspaper in 1926. *Der Unschuldige* was finally published in 1931 by his newly founded Mackay-Gesellschaft. In it, homosexuality plays a not insignificant role. Since this has been ignored by all of Mackay's biographers and critics, we may examine it more closely.

The plot of *Der Unschuldige* has been neatly summarized by Edward Mornin:

Heinz von Solden, the principal figure of this story is a good-looking young student, who is distinguished by moral and artistic advantages and whose goal in life is to become a great art historian. By chance he becomes the witness of a murder, but since he will not have anything to do with the police (he holds that to be coarse), he flees from the scene of the crime. His landlady, who takes him to be the murderer, then forces him through extortion into an unworthy love relationship with her, which he is able to escape only after



the capture of the real culprit. Through this experience von Solden recognizes the limits of his distinction and his character, and he decides to live within those limits. He never marries the girl loved by him, lives alone and withdrawn, and also never writes the epoch-making book on art history, which he had planned. (*Kunst und Anarchismus* 51)

In the story Solden is indeed unwilling to have anything to do with the police. But then he finally persuades himself that this is necessary and determines to go to the police anyway. On the way, however, he learns that the murdered man was homosexual and was known to frequent "certain circles" of young men (and it is, in fact, there that the real culprit is found). At this point Solden reverses his decision and refuses to go to the police, for he *will* not be questioned on the subject—which he claims to know nothing about.

The structure of the novella is a frame within a frame. Narrator 1 (Mackay) tells the story of Solden as related to him by Narrator 2 (the Great Poet) in a cemetery following the burial of Solden. The revelation that Solden was deterred from going to the police by fear of being questioned about homosexuality is the occasion for the Great Poet to interrupt his narrative:

It was no longer the poet, but the teacher and educator of his people to freer and more just views—for as poet he believed he had to be both—who now admonished: "Let us keep in mind that at that time one still thought about and judged that question quite differently from today—more correctly said, that one then did not judge at all, but rather flatly condemned.

"What one expresses openly today, one hardly dared whisper to himself in those days. What one calls by name today (and begins to grasp, even if not to understand), one left to a fantasy disturbed by no knowledge, and what conclusions, what unmentionable conclusions were drawn there may be imagined." (73–74)

To put this remark in context, we may note that Narrator 1 tells his story in 1931, ten years after the death of Solden, and the murder occurred thirty years before that, i.e., in 1891. Thus the murder occurred before the founding of the first homosexual emancipation organization in Germany (the Scientific Humanitarian Committee, 1897) and before the widely publicized homosexual scandals at the beginning of the century. By 1921, the Great Poet could indeed say that homosexuality is something "one calls by name today" (though he does not name it here). He then adds details about the murderer:

Namely, that he was in fact a still quite young man and came from those "certain circles" in which Garding [the murdered man] led a second life; that this young man must have had a relationship with his victim, which, as they used to say then, "had to avoid the light of publicity"; that the deed itself, however, had probably rather come from an attack of rage over a rejected and failed blackmail attempt, than from a well-thought-out plan of robbery; and that, if it did not afterwards indeed come to a robbery, this was only due to the circumstance that the murderer directly after his deed had been frightened by a loud ringing (precisely the ringing of Solden) and then only thought of bringing himself into safety.

At any rate the judges did not assume murder with robbery and recognized only manslaughter, and the culprit got off with an even more trifling sentence by succeeding in playing the role of seduced innocent. (81)

Of passing interest is the relationship between Solden and the Great Poet. Mackay concludes his novella with the puzzle, "What was it that bound those two men to such a late and then still so close friendship," and he speculates that they were attracted by the "complete oppositeness, not only of their characters, but also of their destinies" (97). Nothing is said here of the nature of their friendship, but this was suggested already at the beginning of the novella, where the Great Poet says of Solden, in an unfinished sentence: "Whose only friend I was, and whom I loved, I cannot say how . . ." (14).

The above is intended to illustrate Mackay's inclusion of homosexuality in his writings and his view of its acceptance. This is not meant as a complete analysis of this many-layered novella, which may be called Mackay's own version of *Die Götterdämmerung* for both Solden and the Great Poet are in various ways described as godlike at the beginning and each is then brought low (see Kennedy, "Twilight of the Gods"). The contrast between them, the "complete oppositeness, not only of their characters, but also of their destinies," was that Solden accepted his limits, lived within them, and was not "unhappy," whereas the Great Poet could not accept the loss of his adoring public and, as a consequence, his last years were "embittered."

As Mornin has pointed out:

The answer of the second narrator to the question of the first, whether von Solden had been happy or not, could perhaps be viewed as Mackay's estimation of his own happiness in life: "Unhappy? No, he was not. But what does it matter! Happy or not happy—he had considered the limits of his nature and lived within them." (52)

Mackay's literary estate contained a short novel and three novellas, which were published together in 1989 (*Die gedachte Welt*). The novel, *Die gedachte Welt* (The World As Imagined), and one of the novellas, *Die Adoption* (The Adoption), are of particular interest because of what we know of Mackay as Sagitta. The latter is a "happy ending" version of the earlier short story "Hans, mein Freund." In the novel, we are astonished to see the older protagonist interested in a younger girl—until we realize that the girl is surely patterned after a boy Mackay must have known.

Not only those of use who share his individualist anarchist views, but all of us in the gay movement—and boy-lovers especially—can rejoice in the tradition of John Henry Mackay: his struggle for equal freedom of all, for the recognition of our love as the equal of any other—the struggle of the individual for freedom from all oppression of whatever kind.

1. Mackay himself gave conflicting reports of his age when his father died, but the Registration Office for Births, Deaths, and Marriages, Greenoch, Scotland, confirms that his father died there on 11 September 1865.

2. "Are the Own [Eignen] or Unique perchance a party? How could they be *own* if they were such as *belonged* to a party?" (Stirner 237).

3. For a goodly selection of articles from *Der Eigene*, see Oosterhuis.

4. Mackay's interest in Wilde continued: As late as 1923 he wrote to George Schumm, American translator of *The Anarchists*, asking him to send a recently published brochure about Oscar Wilde. Mackay to Schumm, 16 April 1923, Labadie Collection, University Library, The University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

5. The reviewer, Alfred Kind, also published a more favorable review in the *Blätter für Bibliophilen*, March 1908.

6. Wilhelm Jansen (1866–1943), a leader of the Wandervogel movement, was named executor of Friedländer's will, but he did not fulfill Friedländer's wish that 55,000 marks of his estate be used in the cause of homosexuality, including the publication of Sagitta's poems (see Dobe 56). For information on Jansen, see Mills.

7. Mackay had earlier written to Tucker: "If Zack is sentenced for prison then I will say that I am Sagitta. Till then it is absolutely useless" (*Dear Tucker* 19).

8. For information on J. H. François, who also wrote homosexual novels under the name Charley van Heezen, see Weel and Snijders.

9. This has been suggested, for example, by Steakley (46) and Weber (46). The question has also been considered by Wucherpfennig, whose arguments, however, depend on a Freudian interpretation of Mackay's sexuality: "Mackay's fixation on his narcissistic identification with boys" (250); "his homosexuality, as usual, is connected with an unresolved mother-bonding" (252).

10. August Hermann Francke (1663–1727) founded the famous Franckesche Stiftungen in 1691. In Mackay's time it included eight schools of various grades, attended in all by over 3000 pupils.

11. The scene is "set in a Venetian palazzo that strongly corresponds with the building in which the collection of Peggy Guggeheim is now housed" (Snijders 171).

12. This is also true of the early short story "Ein Abschied. Ein später Brief" ("A Farewell. A Late Letter," 1898), in which the gender of the letter writer is nowhere revealed. Even the usually careful Edward Mornin assumed that the author of the letter was a woman (*Kunst und Anarchismus* 83). I have argued that the story should be

read as the farewell of an aging boy-lover to his former boyfriend ("Hiding in the Open").

13. Max Halbe, *Jahrhundertwende. Geschichte meines Lebens 1893–1914* (Danzig, 1935); quoted in Zube (96).

14. Johanna Mücke and Alwin Alfred Rudolph, *Erinnerungen an Rudolf Steiner und seine Wirksamkeit an der (Karl-Liebknecht-) Arbeiterbildungsschule in Berlin 1899–1904* (Basil: Zbinden Verlag, 1979); quoted in Schellenberg (16).

15. Around 1990, "Morgen" [Tomorrow] gained renewed popularity through the recitals of Richard Strauss songs by soprano Jessye Norman.

16. Mackay's continued rejection of the bond of marriage is also in the brief scene *Ehe* [Marriage, 1930], which Edward Mornin has classified as "social progaganda in the form of drama" (*Kunst und Anarchismus* 20).

17. The euphemistic spelling on the title page, *Puppenjunge*, suggests a derivation from *Puppe* (doll) and *Junge* (boy); but the true derivation is from *pupen* (to fart). See Borneman 1: Entry "Pupenbock, Puppenjunge."

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