An Appreciation
by Timothy d'Arch Smith

If, as Holy Writ observes, "Of making many books there is no end," then equally true it is to say "Of making anthologies of pederastic verse there is no beginning." It is not going too far to suggest that Men and Boys is the only twentieth-century attempt at such a compilation and that to find an equivalent we have to go back to the times of the Emperor Hadrian whence originated the Greek Anthology.

Some indication of the paucity of such material is the need that has been felt in recent times for translations of that part of the Greek Anthology which is mainly pederastic. The French probably popularized it as much as any and in the early part of this century a version of it appeared in the excellent "Bibliothèque des curieux" series edited by Guillaume Apollinaire, in a volume entitled Le Livre d'amour des anciens. It is from this translation, I suspect, and not from the original text, that the late Sir Shane Leslie, under the pseudonym of "Ion Ionicos," put out his English version under the aegis of the Fortune Press, London, embellished with some rather sketchy but quite appealing etchings by Jean de Bosschère, whom the publisher had just then (1932) signed to illustrate an ambitious series of limited editions, not all of which appeared. French translations, in typescript, had been circulating in England for some time. So had another, printed, version, a verse translation by Sydney Frederick McIlree Lomer (1880-1926), a selection from which appears in Men and Boys. Under the pseudonym of Sydney Oswald he issued it privately in 1914. An Army officer, he was a friend of Edmund John, some of whose work also appears in the present anthology.
The "Mousa Paidike" had not escaped the attention of Frederick William Rolfe, "Baron Corvo." In search of the "divine friend much desired" he had, with his usual lack of perspicacity, lighted on a young man, Sholto Douglas, who proved, to Rolfe's chagrin, a far better classical scholar. Rolfe's literary genius extended only to descriptions of his own paranoia, and the gaudy parcel of his and Douglas's well-nigh unrecognizable translations from the Greek Anthology failed to find a publisher until A. J. A. Symons produced it in 1937.

What is very often forgotten is that it is not only the twelfth book of the Greek Anthology which is concerned with pederasty. Out of its fifteen books no fewer than eleven contain such verses and, to confound confusion, the famous twelfth book includes a dozen or so epigrams which seem to be either love-songs to girls included because editors mistook female names for male (e.g., Timarion in XII, 109, and Phanion, XII, 53) or are drinking songs or verses misplaced by one editor whose work others blindly followed. To a clergyman, Samuel Elsworth Cottam, fell the task of translating all the pederastic epigrams from the whole Anthology, but his typescript of some 250 pages never found publication, as we shall see below.

In 1973 the French writer Roger Peyrefitte published a French translation of the twelfth book, and this seems to be the latest modern rendering.

There have, however, been many anthologies of erotic verse which have included pederastic material. We may mention The Passionate Pilgrim (1599) with contributions by Richard Barnfield; Mercier de Saint-Léger's Quinque Illustrium Poetarum... Lusus (1791) with verses by Pacificco Massimi, and several little anthologies of French "facéties" and "gaillardises" put out by the Belgian publisher Jules Gay in the nineteenth century, down to the collection of limericks by Gershon Legman.

But where in the English language to look for the first pederastic, even the first homosexual, anthology? Perhaps it is lost. In a booklist of 1749 appears the title Ancient and Modern Pederasty Investigated and Exemplified. Compiled, apparently, by the son of a dean and grandson of a bishop, it has quite vanished. But perhaps it was an anthology.
In 1902, Edward Carpenter, social reformer and author of the long Whitmanesque prose–poem *Towards Democracy*, published *Ioläus: An Anthology of Friendship*. Here we are nearer the mark, although *Ioläus* has as much prose as verse and contains Greek, Latin, French and German material as well as English extracts. It became very popular and several editions were called for. It also gained a certain reputation and was known in the book-trade as "The Buggers' Bible." In 1961 was announced for publication *Eros: An Anthology of Friendship* compiled by Alistair Sutherland. Shortly before publication was due, the dis-traught publisher was forced to put an advertisement in *The Times* in an attempt to find the itinerant anthologist whose material, it seems, was hopelessly jumbled together in a large trunk. At last, in despair, a less unreliable editor was found in the person of Patrick Anderson and the book at last came out. It lacks an index but is otherwise a thoroughly excellent work, updating and adding to Carpenter's work.

Another anthology, included in a bookseller's catalogue of pederastic literature clandestinely circulated in 1924, is *Love in Idleness* (1883). It was the work of only three men, John William Mackail, John Bowyer Nichols and Henry Charles Beechling. The last is responsible for the well-known "Prayer" printed in the poets' companion volume, *Love's Looking Glass*:

God who created me
Nimble and light of limb,
In the elements free,
To run: to ride: to swim: . . .

Take the thanks of a boy.

The man who circulated the catalogue was a publisher of pederastic poetry, Francis Edwin Murray. He earned a sharp word from the editor of *Men and Boys*, who wrote to a prospective purchaser, the Rev. A.R.T. Winckley, that production costs had exceeded three hundred dollars. "It is printed on imported 100% rag paper, with generous margins. It is hand sewn and bound with a cloth back. --not the flimsy glued affairs that Murray gets out."
The original edition of *Men and Boys*, of which this is a reimpression, contained no limitation notice, but we are authoritatively told that only one hundred copies were printed. The information comes from the late Charles Reginald Dawes, whose superb collection of erotica was bequeathed, with a few exceptions, to the British Library. Dawes wrote lives of the Marquis de Sade and of Restif de la Bretonne, but his history of English erotica, which contains the information about this limitation, has not been published. The manuscript is also in the British Library. Little is known of Dawes, who, by all accounts, was the most charming of men. He would gladly show his amazing library of erotica to friends, but only the foreign books were on open shelves for he feared his charwoman might be shocked by some of the English titles. Montague Summers, in his autobiography, *The Galanty Show* (shortly to be published by Cecil Woolf, London), recalls dinner parties at Dawes’s flat in Southwest London and waxes lyrical about the library. "Most of us have to be content with our workaday volumes, our hand-craft tools," says Summers. "Mr Dawes has the gallants of literature."

We must now return to S. E. Cottam. Of his life I have treated in my book on pederastic poetry, *Love in Earnest* (1970), and I will say nothing of that here. He was an assiduous collector of such books and had leanings towards creative writing himself, issuing a volume of verse, *Cameos of Boyhood*, in 1930 and leaving his executor instructions to issue another collection after his death. About the time he published *Cameos*, and inspired perhaps by the publication of *Men and Boys*, he submitted to a small publishing firm, the Fortune Press, his *Greek Anthology* translation and his own anthology of modern verse which he called *Golden Flame*. While he correctly chose a firm interesting itself in pederastic writings—*we* have mentioned the edition of Strato—Cottam had not reckoned with the personality of the director. Son of wealthy, doting grocers, Reginald Ashley Caton (1897–1971) from an early age had grown withdrawn and introspective. In admiration of the limited editions being put out in the twenties by the Nonesuch Press, he left his job on his father's magazine, an organ for the tobacco trade, and founded the Fortune Press. His early books were far too imitative of the
Nonesuch books, so much so that the Nonesuch proprietors had to take out an injunction against one production, The Symposium, but he settled into a good house style and produced some handsome volumes. As a person, alas, he was to all appearances an out-and-out miser, a recluse and, to his long-suffering authors, Dylan Thomas, Philip Larkin and Kingsley Amis included, an abominable businessman.

The truth of the matter is that Caton, a tall, gaunt figure often to be seen in the streets of Victoria wearing terribly torn and stained trousers (I once observed him wearing two such pairs at once) and an old R. A. F. mackintosh, needed constant bullying and badgering into printing and publishing the manuscripts submitted to him, and most of his authors were incapable of so doing and gave up in despair. Towards the end of his life I helped Caton while he was recovering from a stroke. In one of his three depositories in Southwest London were the two parcels from Cottam still in the paper and string (red tape, to be exact) in which Cottam had secured them for dispatch to the Press. They lay mouldering in a corner of Caton's basement storeroom at 58 Jermyn Street, a dusty, ill-lit room with several bays containing books, dust-jackets, manuscripts and more esoteric materials such as prewar tins of anchovy paste and a modest collection of threepenny bits. The floor was carpeted with pages torn from an illustrated catalogue of a manufacturer of children’s undergarments. There the type-scribes had lain for some forty years.

Whether or not Cottam's anthology is a better one than Men and Boys matters not. What is important is that it includes five poems by its editor both from the present anthology and from the author's own book of poems, Lads o'the Sun, and that it gives his real name.

In Love in Earnest I suggested the editor of Men and Boys might be the same man who published verse translations of the German homosexual poet August von Platen. He was an American named Reginald Bancroft Cooke and it seemed to me that such an enterprising author—no one has ever yet attempted to render much of Platen's work into English—might well have compiled Men and Boys and was quite talented enough to have written Lads o'the Sun. What is ironic is that the real name was in Cottam's typescript,
only the wrappings of which I had seen, and that it was noted also in Cottam's own copy of his *Cameos of Boyhood* which I owned, where he quotes from several letters the American anthologist had sent him. I will now leave my colleague, who, through my misattribution, has been along many a blind alley, to take up the narrative.

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