

lieve the chronicler Jean Froissart, following her successful coup in 1326, Isabella ordered that Despenser's genitals be cut off and burned before his eyes prior to his hanging.

As for Edward himself, the red-hot poker which is said to have ended his life has virtually become a symbol of his unfortunate reign. However, regardless of the exact nature of his death, it is incorrect, as has sometimes been suggested, to claim that Edward was deposed and murdered *because* of his homosexuality. His sexual behavior was used as a means of justification for events after his death, as part of what can only be called a propaganda campaign on behalf of Isabella and her paramour Roger Mortimer. Nevertheless, Edward II's example was subsequently held up as a pointed warning to later kings—homosexual and/or ineffective—and their favorites, not only in England, but in France as well.

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EFFEMINACY

Effeminacy is any of various forms of feminine or female-like behavior in a man. It tends to be disliked if not condemned in virtually every society—though, like other anxiety-arousing behavior, it can be the focus of wit and humor. In a few tribal societies where it is associated with shamanism it has been respected or feared.

By a kind of "opposites attract" reasoning, the effeminate man is generally assumed to want male partners in sex, and thus to be homosexual—a double error since effeminate men are sometimes notably heterosexual while, as the Kinsey re-

search found, most homosexuality is not marked by effeminacy; in fact, a very considerable amount of same-sex behavior "is found among ranchmen, cattlemen, prospectors, lumbermen, . . . groups that are virile, physically active." (Kinsey et al., p. 457).

Similar and worse confusions have arisen in various descriptions of what effeminate behavior actually is. The psychoanalysts, noting certain exaggerations in effeminacy, have interpreted its gestures as take-offs or as caricatures of women or of femininity (Bieber). Less abusive interpretations have simply noted the similarities between effeminacy and femininity, usually concluding that female-like mannerisms in a man must originate from "identity" problems, such as a profound uncertainty about his maleness, or an overt identification with women, or with his "overclose" mother. The appeal of such insufficiency theories is remarkable. They are in line with popular notions of a homosexual's "impairment" and "inadequacy" but fly in the face of important contradictions—not only from Kinsey but from a few perceptive clinicians: almost forty years ago Karen Machover demonstrated that, far from being "sexually confused," effeminate males frequently have a sharper-than-average awareness of male/female differences, even when they identify more with women than with men.

But if effeminacy is not impaired maleness, if it does not spell male insufficiency, and is not necessarily homosexual, if it is not a fixation on one's mother, nor a caricature of women, then what *is* it and where *does* it come from? Exactly where it comes from is too hard a question. (Like trying to say precisely why one person is more aggressive, or fussy, or good-natured than another, the answer is invariably multifaceted—too scattered among a maze of social, genetic and physiologic biases to permit confident answers.) But accurate and useful descriptions can be given.

No matter which effeminacy is involved—nelly, swish, blasé, or camp—it is a set of mannerisms quite like equivalent movements and gestures seen in women. Nelly and blasé movements are similar enough to be virtually identical in femininity and effeminacy. But the gestures of swish and camp are clearly more forceful in effeminacy, probably due to the higher muscularity of males, thus inviting interpretations of their being “caricatures” of femininity. Similar gestures and high-animation movements seen in both women and effeminate men have been shown to come about in the same way, that is, they reflect particular attitudes toward just how, and how directly, to engage the environment. Just as a relatively aggressive, straight-line mode of affronting and engaging the environment is a hallmark of male movement, the rounded, relatively curvaceous movements of femininity pull away from so directly or aggressively engaging the environment.

For instance, when a man walks with a quick step but slightly pulls back from fully extending each stride, the result is a mincing gait—a set of movements that is decidedly softer, faster, and less brusque than is typical of men. Or, in various arm movements seen in swish and camp, a fast-moving outgoing gesture may at the last moment suddenly be pulled back or stopped from completing its path by the twist of a bent wrist, thus producing one of the high-speed, high-animation curves of swish, or one of the exaggerated stack-ups of emphasis seen in camp. The roundness of such moves is typical of femininity, while their energy and sharpness is decidedly male—the very combination that most characterizes the difference between femininity and effeminacy.

Thus it is not that effeminate movements copy or caricature feminine ones, but that both styles arrive at their curves and their relatively high animation from the same source: that is, the mental set of both femininity and effeminacy share the kinds of attitudes and the particular

kinds of aggressive-readiness that cause them to select very similar styles of engaging the environment.

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EFFEMINACY, HISTORICAL SEMANTICS OF

Containing as its core the Latin word *femina* (“woman”), the adjective *effeminate* has been used to mean womanish, unmanly—and by extension enervated, self-indulgent, narcissistic, voluptuous, delicate, and over-refined. Applied to sexual orientation it has had two opposed senses: (1) seeking the company of women and participating in their lifeways (heterosexual) and (2) adopting the woman’s role (homosexual). In reading older texts it is important to bear these differences in mind, for the term effeminate can be used slightly of a womanizer as well as of a “womanish” man.

Classical Antiquity. The ancient Greeks and Romans sharply differentiated the active male homosexual, the *paiderastes* (in the New Testament *arsenokoites*, literally “man-layer”), from the passive partner, the *cinaedus* or *pathicus* (New Testament Greek *malakos*; Hebrew, *rakha*). The Greeks also sometimes used the term *androgynos*, “man-woman,” to stigmatize the passive homosexual. Beginning with the Old Attic comedies of Aristophanes, the passive is a stock figure of derision and contempt, the active partner far less so. Because of the military ideals on which ancient societies were founded, passivity and softness in the male were equated with cowardice and want of viril-