

In fact the author seems to have forgotten this hoax of his youth; he decided to prepare an edition only after a series of unauthorized, and often enlarged, published collections had made the material popular.

The anthology amounts in the main to an anti-Petrarchan pamphlet, poking fun at well-worn conventions of love poetry, while at the same time it is a satire on the excessive preoccupation with classical antiquity into which the humanists had fallen, both from a linguistic standpoint and in view of their exaltation of the so-called Socratic love.

In fact not only is the fictitious author of the *Cantici* "Socratically" in love with his pupil "in the ancient manner," but he composes love poetry in a language in which immoderate love for the Latin language produces a thoroughgoing bastardization of the Italian, which has to bear an endless assault of Latinisms. The effect is comically pompous.

Scroffa's literary astuteness emerges in his having created a very human character, one who is pathetically caught up in the toils of an "impossible" love, set apart from the lives of normal people, and incapable of seeing anything wrong in the overwhelming sentiment he feels for "his" Camillo. The poems are tender and very candid, to the point that, the satire notwithstanding, the reader feels great sympathy for the hapless Fidenzio.

What came to be known as Fidentian poetry—which is technically the opposite of macaronic poetry, which mixes vernacular elements into Latin, instead of vice versa—was cultivated even before the first authorized edition of the *Cantici* in 1562, and lasted until the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Scroffa's first imitators kept close to his homoerotic inspiration. The finest among them are probably the anonymous author of "Jano Argyroglotto" (who also translated an anacreontic poem) and Giambattista Liviera (1565—early seventeenth century).

With the spread of Counterreformation ideas, the tone of the compositions was prudently and prudishly changed from homoerotic to heterosexual. Incapable of maintaining the subtle balance between irony and transgression, which Scroffa had exemplified, later Fidentian poetry became a sterile and repetitive poetic exercise, the equivalent of the mannered poetry which was in fact the original target of the *Cantici di Fidenzio*.

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FIEDLER THESIS

In a 1948 essay widely circulated in the 1950s ("Come Back on the Raft Ag'in Honey"), the innovative literary critic Leslie Fiedler argued that interracial male homoerotic relationships (not necessarily genitally expressed) have occupied a central place in the American psyche. Citing works by Fenimore Cooper, Richard Henry Dana, Herman Melville, and Mark Twain, he even spoke of the "sacred marriage of males."

Whatever the ultimate verdict on this thesis may be, it is probably true that male homosexuals—and lesbians—have for a long time been more open to interracial contact than the population at large. It has been suggested that racial complementation serves as a surrogate for the absent complementation of gender. Those who hold this view find a similar pattern in relationships that cross class lines. In the case of racial dyads, as seen typically in the "salt-and-pepper couple," the greater frequency may also be facilitated by the fact that no children will be born from the union, a question that heterosexual couples—in view of the lingering racism of our society—cannot ignore. That interracial gay relationships have been accompanied by some self-consciousness (and hostility on the part of bigoted individuals)

transpires from such slang epithets as *dingle/chocolate queen*, *snow queen*, *rice queen*, and *taco queen*.

In the late 1970s the organization Black and White Men Together appeared in a number of American cities, attracting a good deal of support. In addition to offering social opportunities, the group has sought to explore the subtler aspects of the dynamics of such relationships, as well as to oppose racism. In some cities it is called Men of All Colors Together (MACT).

See also **Black Gay Americans; Working Class, Eroticization of.**

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FILM

Movie making is both an art and an industry. It has drawn for inspiration on theatre, fiction, biography, history, current affairs, religion, folklore, and the visual and musical arts. Active in stimulating the fantasy lives of viewers, motion pictures also reflect, though in a highly selective and often distorted way, the texture of daily life.

History of Motion Pictures. Although the first crude efforts with a proto-movie camera were made in the 1880s, films did not begin to be shown in specially designed cinemas until the beginning of the present century. Widely regarded at the time as disreputable and not suitable for middle-class audiences, the silents were subject to pressure to make them more respectable.

By 1913 Hollywood had emerged as the center of America's film industry, and by the end of the decade it was the world's leader. This commercial success drew additional attention from the "guardians of morality" in the pulpits and the press. In 1922 Hollywood set up an office

of self-censorship, the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (popularly known as the Hays Office), to head off efforts to install government censorship. However, the Motion Picture Production Code was not promulgated until 1930; four years later, at the behest of religious groups, it was strengthened. In 1927 sound dialogue was introduced (the "talkies"), making possible, inter alia, the inclusion of suggestive dialogue of the Mae West type, though a constant running battle with the guardians of the code was required to retain even the subtlest double entendres.

In its heyday (1930–60) the motion picture industry was dominated by a small number of powerful Hollywood studios cranking out seemingly endless cycles of films based on a few successful exemplars. The focus on the stars, which had begun in the silent era, was continued, some of them now becoming (for reasons that are not always clear) gay icons: Bette Davis, Judy Garland, and James Dean. Anything that did not conform to the code had to be shown in a few "art theatres" in the large cities or in semi-private film clubs such as Cinema 16 in New York; it could find no mass audience.

By the mid-sixties television had begun to call the tune, and some studio lots were given over to producing standard fare for the small screen. Yet motion pictures survived and the sixties saw the rise of independent producers, who broke the stranglehold of the big studios. The demographics of the motion picture audience also changed, becoming more segmented, younger and more sophisticated. In this new climate some offbeat themes became realizable, often in films for "special audiences" such as counterculture youth and blacks. Even the rise (in the eighties) of videos rented in stores and played on home VCRs did not kill the movie houses. Moreover, the videos proved a boon to film scholars, who were able to reexamine older statements and theories through minute study of the films themselves.