

Psychoanalysis and Its Aftermath. The psychoanalytic school originated by Sigmund Freud has largely perpetuated the belief in homosexuality as a mental illness, if only because its adherents rejected the theory of an innate and unmodifiable condition in favor of a search for its origins in the psychodynamics of the human personality. Some of the case histories published sporadically in the psychoanalytic press are accompanied by quite fanciful theories, while others show genuine insight into certain causal factors. But on the whole the patient universe into which the psychotherapist has delved has been atypical of the homosexual population in general, and consisted mainly of subjects with acute moral and legal, if not psychological, problems. Only recent studies by academic psychologists have been able to break out of this vicious circle and produce the experimental or statistical evidence such as Kinsey's that homosexual subjects were, on standard tests and by a multitude of criteria, indistinguishable from heterosexual ones. However, during the more than a century in which the subject has been debated, one clear line of demarcation has emerged: those who believed in the innate and constitutional origins of homosexuality have with rare exceptions been friends of the movement, while conversely those who held to a psychogenic explanation have been its often vociferous enemies—Alfred Adler, Edmund Bergler, Abram Kardiner, and Charles Socarides. And the proponents of the latter view usually reinforced the Christian dogma that the homosexual character was replete with moral failings, or else maintained that the spread of homosexuality was contingent upon some malaise within society itself—an assertion that played into the hands of dogmatic Marxists who, echoing such fin-de-siècle authors as Max Nordau and Cesare Lombroso, would dub homosexuality a symptom of the “decadence” of bourgeois society.

In 1980 the American Psychiatric Association was finally persuaded to remove homosexuality per se from its nomenclature of mental illnesses, and in 1986 even the compromise “ego-dystonic homosexuality” was stricken from the list, though the World Health Organization continues the classification. But the issue lingers within the psychiatric profession independent of any politically motivated decision, and decades of controversy echoed in the mass media have left the general public with the ill-defined belief that “homosexuality is a disease.”

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Warren Johansson

MEDIEVAL LATIN POETRY

The classical tradition of pederastic poetry may never have completely died out despite Christian homophobia, though no examples in Latin survive from the fifth through the eighth century. But then little was written in the so-called Dark Ages (476–1000), and less survives. If the last surviving pagan homoerotic poems in Latin by Nemesianus in his fourth Bucolic were made in the reign of Numerian (283–284), Christian Latin pederastic verses appeared some two centuries later, best exemplified by Ausonius (d. ca. 395). Ausonius' library contained homosexual literature that scandalized Romans and he translated from Greek into Latin Strato's riddle about three men simultaneously enjoying four sexual postures. Saint Paulinus of Nola expressed his love for Ausonius: “As long as I am held in this confining, limping body . . . , I will hold you, intermingled in my very sinews.” (Stehling, p. 5). Production of pederastic poetry, as indeed of most other Latin literature, declined and almost ceased after 476. Whatever forms of sexuality the Merovingian kings (420–751) practiced—

especially the degenerate, drunken later ones, the *Rois Fainéants*, with their long golden locks—shocked observers.

Elements of Continuity. A tradition of tolerance for sodomy can be traced from Ausonius through Sidonius Apollinarius to the monks of the central Middle Ages with their taste for “particular friendships.” A North Italian among poets of the ninth century who rescued classical traditions wrote: “Hard marrow from mother’s bones/ Created men from thrown stones;/ Of which one is this young boy,/ Who can ignore tearful sobs./ When I am heartbroken, my mind will rejoice./ I shall weep as the doe whose fawn has fled.” (“O admirabile Veneris ydolum.”) So much of the classical tradition had survived that poems of love or intimate friendship for other men could be written by bishops and men of learning without incurring scorn or censure as would have happened in nineteenth-century Europe. The masters of Latin literature, having written in their own spoken tongue, were revered as models by authors composing in a learned, artificial speech, not their own vernacular, and celebrated in their writing their affection for other men, and especially the passion which as adult males they felt for boys. The whole homoerotic tradition of Mediterranean culture, made this inevitable. And the contrasts and antagonisms—the boy who scorns his lovers, the lover who is interested only in a boy’s looks and not his mind and character—are commonplaces in the Latin literature of pederasty.

From the Carolingians to the Later Middle Ages. In the revival of learning during the Carolingian era (late eighth and ninth centuries), a distinctly erotic element can be perceived in the circle of clerics over which Alcuin, the “friend of Charlemagne,” presided. The direction of the passion, however, was largely from Alcuin to his pupils; he went so far as to bestow upon a favorite student a “pet name” from one of Vergil’s Eclogues. The affection of Walafrid Strabo for his friend Liutger took on more specifically Chris-

tian terms, anticipating Elizabethan love sonnets. His friend Gottschalk while in exile wrote a tender poem to a young monk, probably at Reichenau.

After the restoration of order imposed by counts and kings during the central Middle Ages (1000–1300) literature once again flourished in Western Europe, gushing forth in the vernaculars, as well as in Latin during the “Renaissance of the twelfth century,” and pederastic poems were part of this new wave. Marbod of Rennes (ca. 1035–1123), master of the school of Chartres, who wrote mainly on religious themes, became involved in a frustrating triangle with a boy whom he loved, but who loved a very beautiful girl herself in love with Marbod. Baudri of Bourgueil (1046–1130), his disciple, exemplifies the transition to the more baldly erotic poetry of the new era. Some of his poems address the moral qualities of the addressee, others extol merely his physical charms. Hildebert of Lavardin (ca. 1055–1133) repeats standard moralizing objections to the “plague of Sodom,” suggesting that the hated practices were common enough in his time. Another poem of his boldly asserts that calling male love a sin is an error and that “heaven’s council” was at fault in so doing.

Medieval allegorical poetry was less favorable to love for one’s own sex. Alan of Lille composed a didactic poem entitled *De Planctu Naturae* (On the Complaint of Nature; ca. 1170), in which mankind is indicted for having invented monstrous forms of love and perverted her laws. In his continuation of the *Roman de la Rose* (ca. 1270), Jean de Meun has nature’s genius liken those engaging in nonprocreative sex to plowmen who till stony ground, and other metaphors convey the message that if such practices are not halted, the human race will die out in two more generations.

A German manuscript of the twelfth or thirteenth century contains two anonymous lesbian love letters. Anonymous likewise is the *Dispute of Ganymede*

and *Helen* in rhyming Latin verse, which is a contest over the merits of love for boys against love for women, in which a not exactly unprejudiced jury opts for heterosexuality.

When homophobic repression by clerical and secular authorities mounted during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, pederastic verse disappeared until the Italian Renaissance, when interest in classical antiquity gave it a rebirth.

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William A. Percy

MEDITERRANEAN HOMOSEXUALITY

This term serves to designate a paradigm of homosexual behavior found in the Latin countries of Europe and the Americas, in the Islamic countries of the Mediterranean, as well as in the Balkans. The diffusion of the paradigm is not uniform, but for the most part coincides with areas in which industrialization is recent or has not yet begun. In countries such as Italy and Spain it is not found in industrial areas and is starting to recede in those that are industrializing.

The Mediterranean paradigm may be defined as an attempt to interpret and harmonize exclusive homosexual conduct employing the same conceptual framework as that in use for heterosexuality. Its most salient characteristic is the sharp dichotomy between the one who is considered the "homosexual" in the strict sense, that is the one who plays the insertee role, as against the one who plays the insertor role (the "active").

To designate the insertee there are various terms in various countries: in Italy, *arruso* and *ricchione*—which indi-

cate that the passive homosexual so named does not cross-dress—and *femmenella* for the transvestite; in Spain and Spanish-speaking Latin America, *loca* and *maricón*; in Brazil, *bicha* and *veado*; in Haiti, *masisi*; in North Africa, *zamel*. By contrast the insertor is not differentiated, either by concept or by a separate name, from the *maschio/macho*, "(male) heterosexual." (For clarity henceforth the southern Italian *ricchione* stands as a generic name for the passive type.)

The consequences of this system of interpreting homosexual behavior are striking. In the first place, only the *ricchione*, that is, the passive homosexual (who is often recognizable by external signs of stereotypical feminine behavior, which in the *femmenella* becomes unmistakable because of cross-dressing), feels the need to build a subculture, to create an argot, and to form peer networks. In areas where the Mediterranean paradigm is still dominant, the homosexual subculture is in reality the subculture of the *ricchioni* alone.

In the second place, the members of the subculture generally regard it as inconceivable to have sexual relations with one another. The idea of copulation between two *ricchioni* is satirized by referring to it as "lesbianism," meaning that actually it is nothing but intercourse between "women," since no "real male" is present. This subculture only valorizes sexual relations between a *ricchione* and a "man." Relations between two "men" or two *ricchioni* are senseless, being scarcely imaginable.

Social Advantages of the Paradigm. This system of conceiving homosexuality offers several advantages. The first is that by accommodating homosexual acts to the dichotomies male/female and active/passive their apparent illogicality is elided—that is, the anomaly that comes from the presence of a male (by definition "active") who lends himself to the passive role (by definition "feminine") disappears. By affirming that whoever has an active role in a homosexual act is in