

the Neapolitan, they became masterpieces, some being adapted over seventy times.

After 1723, always encouraged by La Romanina, Metastasio produced libretti rapidly, beginning with *Didone abbandonata*, which was loosely derived from Vergil. In 1729 he was appointed poet to the court at Vienna, then beginning its rise to become the world center of music, where Haydn arrived fifteen years later. He moved in with a Spanish Neapolitan, Nicolò Martinez, with whom he remained until his death and composed there his finest plays, including *Olimpiade*, *La Clemenza di Tito* (later set by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart), *Achille in Sciro*, and *Attilio Regolo*, his own favorite. He became so close to the Countess of Althann, Marianna Pignatelli, that many believed that they had secretly married. Perhaps out of jealousy and seeking an engagement at the court theatre, La Romanina set out for Vienna, but died en route, leaving her fortune to Metastasio, who declined it.

Metastasio's later cantatas and the canzonetti he sent his friend the castrato Farinelli were produced before the Countess of Althann died in 1755. As his fame increased, the collection of his works in his own library stretched to over forty editions and were translated into all major languages, even modern Greek. With the musical changes introduced by Christoph Willibald Gluck and Mozart, the innovator who created the "modern" opera, his works came to seem old fashioned and increasingly difficult to adapt, and after 1820 were neglected. Farinelli, whom he called his "twin brother," best expounded his poetry. The decline of castrati combined with the popularity of *opéra bouffe* to end his domination of the operatic stage, which had lasted almost a century. Maria Theresa prohibited the huge sums expended by her predecessor Charles VI on operas.

Opera, the chief cultural export of eighteenth-century Italy to northern Europe, was often regarded with suspicion there—especially in England, where it was

even blamed for the spread of homosexuality. Inasmuch as Italy was then in the throes of Counter-Reformation repression and papal obscurantism, this claim seems ironic until one remembers that the balconies of Sicilian opera houses and the standing room of the old Metropolitan in New York (to give two far-flung examples) provided not only quarry but even sexual action for homosexuals, a disproportionate number of whom are *aficionados* of this artificial but consummate art form. Yet Metastasio sailed serenely—more or less—through troubled waters. With today's revival of *opera seria*, works set to his libretti are once again being performed, including his *Olimpiade* during the 1988 Olympic Games.

William A. Percy

## MEXICO

The modern Mexican republic displays a fascinating duality of indigenous (Amerindian) and European-derived themes. The process of integrating the two streams is still continuing.

*Pre-Columbian Societies.* At the point of European contact, the area we now call Mexico (along with parts of Guatemala and Honduras) was inhabited by numerous diverse societies. But in spite of prominent regionalism exhibited by Mayas, Zapotecs, Mexicas (Aztecs), and others, it was a single culture area. When the Spaniards arrived early in the sixteenth century, some parts of Mesoamerica were in a state of urban decline—particularly the Mayan areas. Yet the central highlands of Mexico were experiencing a cultural florescence. In the Valley of Mexico, the Nahuatl or "Aztecs" of the central valley of Mexico lived in urban centers such as Texcoco, Tlatelolco, and Mexico/Tenochtitlán (all now part of the federal district). These people claimed a direct heritage of urban living on a massive scale which dated back to the founding of Teotihuacán, about 300 B.C. In comparison with European cities of the time, the largest Aztec

City, Mexico/Tenochtlán, is said to have been surpassed only by Paris. From the Valley of Mexico, the Aztecs politically dominated most of Mesoamerica and extracted a heavy tribute of raw materials, finished products, slaves, and sacrificial victims. However, they usually allowed a fair degree of home rule and the continuance of local traditions within the various cultures of their empire.

The Aztecs exhibited a profound duality in their approach to sexual behavior. On one hand, they held public rituals which were at times very erotic, but on the other, they were extremely prudish in everyday life. In their pantheon, the Mexicans worshipped a deity, Xochiquetzal (feathered flower of the maguey), who was the goddess of non-procreative sexuality and love. Originally the consort of Tonacatecutli, a creator god, Xochiquetzal dwelled in the heaven of Tamaoanchan, where she gave birth to all humankind. However, subsequently she was abducted by Tezcatlipoca, a war god, and raped. This event mystically redefined her character from the goddess of procreative love to the goddess of non-reproductive activities. Aztec deities often had such multiple dualistic aspects such as male and female and good and evil. Xochiquetzal was both male and female at the same time and in her male aspect (called Xochipilli), s/he was worshipped as the deity of male homosexuality and male prostitution. In Xochiquetzal's positive aspect, s/he was the deity of loving relationships and the god/dess of artistic creativity; it was said that non-reproductive love was like a piece of art—beautiful and one-of-a-kind. But in her dualistic opposite, as the deity of sexual destruction, s/he incited lust and rape, and inflicted people with venereal disease and piles.

In a partly mythical, partly historical account of their past, the Aztecs asserted that there had been four worlds before their own and that the world immediately preceding the present was one of much homosexuality. This "world" may

refer to the Toltec empire (conquered by the Aztecs around 1000 A.D.). In this "Age of the Flowers, of Xochiquetzal," the people supposedly gave up the "manly virtues of warfare, administration and wisdom," and pursued the "easy, soft life of sodomy, perversion, the Dance of the Flowers, and the worship of Xochiquetzal." It has been suggested that the "Fourth World" refers to the empire of the Toltecs because there are similar statements referring to Toltec invaders in historical records of the Maya in Yucatan, e.g., the Chilam Balam of Chumayel state. The Yucatan Maya held large private sexual parties which included homosexuality. However, according to J. Eric Thompson, they were aghast at the public sexual rites of their Toltec conquerors.

As noted, the Aztecs allowed the people they conquered to maintain their own customs. Thus, although the Aztecs were publically sexually exuberant and privately prudish, their subjects varied greatly in their sexual customs—as the Maya example illustrates; and in some Mesoamerican cultures it appears that homosexuality was quite prominent. The area that is now the state of Vera Cruz was very well known for this activity. When Bernal Díaz del Castillo reached Vera Cruz with Cortes, he wrote of the native priests: "the sons of chiefs, they did not take women, but followed the bad practices of sodomy" (Idell, p. 87). When the conquistadors reached Cempoala, near the present city of Vera Cruz, Cortes felt compelled to make a speech in which he stated, "Give up your sodomy and all your other evil practices, for so commands Our Lord God . . ." (Díaz del Castillo in Idell, p. 8). Also, Cortes wrote his king, the Emperor Charles V: "We know and have been informed without room for doubt that all [Veracruzanos] practice the abominable sin of sodomy." Most of them were sodomites and especially those who lived along the coast and in the hot lands were dressed as women; "boys went about to make money by this diabolical and abominable vice"

(Idell, p. 87). It would be folly to accept all the statements about homosexuals at face value. Spaniards of the time also claimed that homosexuality had been introduced into Spain by the Moors and attributed sodomy to new enemies as well. Nonetheless, there is an interesting legend in Mexico that says the Spaniards were more easily able to capture the Aztec emperor Montezuma because they sent a blond page to seduce the ruler, and when the emperor had fallen thoroughly in love, threatened to separate the two if the emperor did not place himself in the hands of the Spaniards. While the Spaniards' allies, the Tlaxcalans, asserted the story was true, the Spaniards denied it. However, the tale may help us to understand why the Aztecs, who were so blatant in public but puritanical in private shouted "Cuilone, Cuilone" ("queer, queer") from their canoes at the Spaniards during the "Noche Triste" when Cortes was forced to retreat from Mexico City losing many soldiers (Novo, p. 43). The warriors' epithets, of course, may only have been another example of labeling one's enemies homosexual.

To summarize the material we have at the time of the conquest, homosexuality played an important part in much of the religious life in Mexico, and was commonly accepted in private life in many Mesoamerican cultures as well; but the prevailing sentiment of the ruling Aztecs outside of ritual was one of sexual rigidity, prudishness, and heavy repression.

*Colonial Mexico.* In the opening years of the sixteenth century, the Spaniards discovered Mesoamerica and conquered it. One of the most dramatic social changes which occurred was the evolution of Mestizo or *Iadino* culture. Miscegenation, acculturation, and the melding of beliefs created a social milieu which was neither Spanish nor Indian, but which has come to form the core features of modern Mexico. The Spaniards held a moral viewpoint toward homosexuality which [aside from ritual] paralleled that of the Aztecs.

In Mexico, after the conquest, all pagan rituals were banned and their rationale discredited. Mestizo culture came to exhibit a melding of Aztec attitudes toward private homosexuality with those of the Spaniards. Indeed, the former Aztec ritual tradition which celebrated homosexuality as communion with the gods was all but lost. In early Colonial times, when Bishop Zumarraga was the Apostolic Inquisitor of Mexico, sodomy was a prime concern for the **Inquisition**. The usual penalties for homosexuality were stiff fines, spiritual penances, public humiliation, and floggings. However, homosexuality was tried by the civil courts as well, whence people were sentenced to the galleys or put to death.

*Homosexual Social Life.* At present, the only records which give us a glimpse of homosexual social life during the Colonial period are the records of court proceedings when homosexual scandals occurred. Of such events, a purge which took place in Mexico City between 1656 and 1663 is the best known. Whereas heretics and Jews were burned in the Alameda, now a park near the center of Mexico City, homosexual sodomites were burned in a special burning ground in another part of the city, San Lázaro, because sodomy was not a form of heresy and thus fell into an ambiguous category of offenses. Thus, the group was marched to San Lázaro where the officials first garroted them, starting with one Cotita de la Encarnación. They "were done with strangling all of them at eight o'clock that night; . . . then they set them afire." Novo states that several hundred people came from the city to watch the event. It should be noted that strangling the victims before burning them was considered an act of mercy; for burning was such terrible agony that it was feared that the prisoners would forsake their faith in God and thus lose their immortal souls. The purge seems to have ended when the superiors in Spain wrote back to Mexico that they did not have papal authority to grant the jurisdiction

the Mexican Holy Office requested, and that the Inquisitors were "not to become involved in these matters or to enter into any litigation concerning them."

*Independent Mexico.* Mexican independence from Spain in 1821 brought an end to the Inquisition and the kind of homosexual oppression described above. The intellectual influence of the French revolution and the brief French occupation of Mexico (1862–67) resulted in the adoption of the Napoleonic Code. This meant that sexual conduct in private between adults, whatever their gender, ceased to be a criminal matter. In matters concerning homosexuality, the Mexican government held that law should not invade the terrain of the individual moral conscience, in order to protect the precious concerns of sexual freedom and security, and that the law should limit itself "to the minimum ethics indispensable to maintaining society." In limiting itself thus, the Mexican law would seem to be obeying a certain Latin tradition of overt indifference.

This change of legal attitude was obviously a tremendous improvement for homosexuals over previous Aztec and Spanish ways of dealing with homosexuality, and was considerably more liberal than legislation in much of the United States. Yet it did not grant people the right to be overtly homosexual; for included in the "minimum ethics indispensable to maintaining society" are laws against solicitation and any public behavior which is considered socially deviant or contrary to the folkways and customs of the time. Accordingly, one is again confronted with the basic cultural structure—homosexual expression between individuals if known is considered a form of deviation which can bring serious consequences.

"*The Dance of the Forty-One Maricones.*" On the night of November 20, 1901, Mexico City police raided an affluent drag ball, arresting 42 cross-dressed men and dragging them off to Belén Prison. One was released. The official account

was that she was a "real woman," but persistent rumors circulated that she was a very close relative of President Porfirio Díaz, and even today "número cuarenta-y-dos" (number 42, the one who got away) is used to refer to someone covertly *pasivo*. Those arrested were subjected to many humiliations in jail. Some were forced to sweep the streets in their dresses. Eventually, all 41 were inducted into the 24th Battalion of the Mexican Army and sent to the Yucatan to dig ditches and clean latrines. The ball and its aftermath were much publicized, among other places in broadsides by Guadalupe Posada (who provided the cross-dressed men with moustaches and notably upper-class dress). Although the raid on the dance of the 41 *maricones* was followed by a less-publicized raid of a lesbian bar on December 4, 1901, in Santa María, the regime was soon preoccupied by more serious threats.

The Mexican Revolution is generally dated 1901–10, but if one includes the attempted counter-revolutions of the Cristeros, armed conflict continued through the end of the 1920s. The capital city with a population of half a million before the revolution became a major metropolis with seven million residents by 1959, eighteen million or more by 1988.

Despite the international depression of the 1930s and along with the social revolution overseen by President Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–40), the growth of Mexico City was accompanied by the opening of homosexual bars and baths supplementing the traditional cruising locales of the Alameda, the Zócalo, Paseo de Reforma, and Calle Madero (formerly Plateros). Those involved in homosexual activity continued to live with their families, and there were no homophile publications. In the absence of a separate residential concentration, the lower classes tended to accept the stereotypes of the dominant society and enact them. While some of the cosmopolitan upper classes rejected the stereotypical effeminacy expected of *maricones*, they tended to emulate European

dandies of the late nineteenth century—"clever, non-political, elegant, charming men trying to outdo everybody else in the Salon . . . the Mexican homosexuals aspired to be French decadents like **Montesquiou**" in the characterization of one interviewee. Wildean influence and the emulation of Hollywood screen goddesses followed. During World War II, ten to fifteen gay bars operated in Mexico City, with dancing permitted in at least two, El África and El Triunfo. Relative freedom from official harassment continued until 1959 when Mayor Uruchurtu closed every gay bar following a grisly triple murder. Motivated by moralistic pressure to "clean up vice," or at least to keep it invisible from the top, and by the lucrateness of bribes from patrons threatened with arrests and from establishments seeking to operate in comparative safety, Mexico City's policemen have a reputation for zeal in persecution of homosexuals.

Some observers claim that gay life is more developed in the second-largest city, Guadalajara. In both cities there have been short-lived gay liberation groups since the early 1970s, e.g., La Frente Liberación Homosexual formed in 1971 around protesting Sears stores' firing of gay employees in 1971 in Mexico City, and La Frente Homosexual de Acción Revolucionaria which protested the 1983 round-ups in Guadalajara. There are now annual gay pride marches, gay publications (e.g., *Macho Tips* which includes a nude centerfold), and gay and lesbian organizations in contact with organizations in other countries. Although there have been challenges to the dominant conception of homosexuality as necessarily related to gender-crossing, the simplistic *activo-pasivo* logic continues to channel thought and behavior in Mexico, as elsewhere in Latin America.

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Stephen O. Murray and  
Clark L. Taylor

### MICHELANGELO BUONARROTI (1475-1564)

Italian sculptor, painter, architect, and poet. Michelangelo, who was to become the greatest artist of the Renaissance, was born the son of a magistrate in Caprese near Florence. Raised in Florence, he was apprenticed for three years to the artist Domenico Ghirlandaio. His studies of the antique sculptures in the Boboli gardens brought him into contact with the neo-Platonist thinker Ficino. Although there has been some dispute as to the direct effect of neo-Platonic ideas on his early work, they certainly surfaced later, shaping his self-concept as an artist and a psychosexual being.

In 1496 Michelangelo went to Rome, where he carved his first great masterpiece, the Vatican *Pietà*. This work, which solved the problem that had vexed earlier sculptors of convincingly showing a grown man reclining in the lap of his mother, made him famous, and Michelangelo triumphantly returned to Florence in 1501. Here he carved the heroic nude *David*, a traditional symbol of the city's underdog status that he endowed with a new power. He then returned to Rome to work on a vast project for the tomb of pope Julius II. This daunting task was never completed, in part because the pope diverted Michelangelo's efforts to the fresco painting of the Sistine ceiling, a work of encyclopedic scope and ubiquitous urgency. In the 1980s the cleaning of the ceiling, which had become much obscured with grime and restorations over the cen-