

More extended is the treatment in the love poetry that Poliziano wrote in Latin and Greek (significantly, this sensitive theme does not occur in his Italian verse). In these poems he talks of a certain Chrysocomus ("golden locks") and a Corydon, extolling his love in the manner of prestigious Greek and Latin models.

Finally, a lighter note appears in the *Deti piacevoli*, the attribution of which has been disputed for some time, though recently the scholar Gianfranco Folena has restored them to Poliziano. This collection consists of jokes involving various Florentine figures, including homosexual motifs involving the artists Botticelli and Donatello.

Today it is difficult to say to what extent Poliziano's interest in homoeroticism went beyond that of the imitation of the antique, which was a common feature of the period. According to a story spread by some contemporaries (including Paolo Giovio, 1483–1552), Poliziano died of strain after having played the lute one night underneath the window of a Greek youth named Argo. Isidoro Del Lungo has collected several versions of the tale.

In any event, even during his lifetime Poliziano was accused of harboring homosexual tastes, as shown by the poems of Andrea Dazzi (which belong, however, to a vein of invective cultivated by the Humanists, and cannot be simply taken at face value). Some attestations, like those reported by Gustavo Uzielli, make Poliziano's position suspect, but do not take us out of the realm of speculation. Further uncertainty is cast on the subject by positions such as that maintained by Giovanni Semerano, who condemns all the homosexual poetry as being somehow unworthy of "Poliziano's true nature."

BIBLIOGRAPHY. Isidoro Del Lungo, *Florentia*, Florence: Barbera, 1897; Gianfranco Folena, "Sulla tradizione dei 'detti piacevoli' attribuiti al Poliziano," *Studi di filologia italiana*, 11 (1953), 431–48; Giovanni Semerano, "La lirica greca e latina del Poliziano:

'Epigrammata,'" *Convivium* (1951), 234–48; Gustavo Uzielli, *La vita e i tempi di Paolo Dal Pozzo Toscanelli*, Rome: Forzani, 1894, pp. 232–33.

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## POLYMORPHOUS PERVERSE

This expression for a disposition toward multifarious sexual experience stems from psychoanalysis. In *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality* (1905) Sigmund Freud states: "[U]nder the influence of seduction children can become polymorphously perverse, and can be led into all possible kinds of sexual irregularities. This shows that an aptitude for them is innately present in their disposition." Children have not yet built up the mental dams that would guard them against such sexual excess. They also do not yet know to focus their sexuality on their genitals, but allow it to roam, as it were, over the entire body. Some adults, such as prostitutes, may deliberately revert to this infantilism for their own purposes. Thus, in Freud's view, the inclination to the polymorphous perverse is built into the plan of human development, and a more mature sexuality must be created out of it as a result of organic growth and the introjection of psychic inhibitions. In a like manner, psychoanalysis tends to assume that the adult homosexual orientation is a relic of an early bisexual disposition, and therefore amounts to an arrest of development. This notion implicitly reinforced the ascetic belief that sexuality had only a reproductive function and that mere pleasure-seeking fell short of the goal which "mature" individuals should attain.

In the 1960s, owing in part to Freudian revisionists such as Norman O. Brown and Herbert Marcuse, a more positive version of the idea came into circulation. The internalization of repressive mechanisms was no longer regarded as essential for the maintenance of civilization. Hence there was room for sexual experimentation, even for excursions into the polymorphous perverse. Yet orthodox

psychoanalysis continued to assert that polymorphous perverse adults were either psychotic or unable to form stable human relationships, and therefore driven from one sexual episode to the next. With the gradual decline of the influence of psychoanalysis the term no longer occurs in general writing with any frequency, being replaced by more neutral designations, such as "sexual pluralism."

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**POLYNESIA**

See Pacific Cultures.

**POPPERS**

See Drugs.

**PORNOGRAPHY**

Originally referring mainly to writings, today pornography includes a whole range of sexually explicit cultural artifacts intended to produce immediate sexual arousal. The term first appeared in eighteenth-century France, a coinage from Greek *pornographos*, "a painter of prostitutes." It is documented in English from the mid-nineteenth century.

*Definition.* Considerable thought has been devoted to the definition of pornography. Proposed definitions are of three types. The first is by content: the portrayal or discussion of genitalia or specific sexual acts is pornographic; this definition fails because sexual acts and genitalia may be portrayed for medical purposes, or in educational material, without the intent to arouse. A second approach is by the observer's use of the materials: those materials which produce sexual arousal are pornographic. This approach fails because images not intended for arousal, and not found arousing by most, can be used to produce sexual arousal; conversely, some are not stimulated by scenes which the majority finds intensely erotic. Finally, there is the intent of the producer: those materials which are intended to arouse the viewer, reader, or listener are pornographic. As a legal criterion this approach also fails, because intent can be disguised or denied,

and can never be established directly or with absolute certainty. However, it is sufficient for critical purposes and is the definition used in this article.

*Value of Pornography.* Pornography has often been considered a symptom of societal illness, and its demise predicted. That the gradual removal of restrictions on sexual activities has not produced a parallel decline in pornography, but rather the reverse, suggests that it satisfies a deep need. While animal sexual excitement is produced by odors, a consequence of the estrus cycle, human beings use their minds. The separation of sexuality from reproduction, the increased lifespan civilization has brought, and the anti-erotic trends in modern society mean that glandular impulses toward sexual activity are insufficient. Hence the production and consumption of pornography as a stimulant of sexual activity.

The production of pornography, then, is a naturally human activity, stemming from the same sorts of inner drive that lead to the production of music, art, and literature. It has been found among many tribal peoples. That sexual excitement, like laughter, is contagious lies at the root of pornography's power.

Pornography is, for many people, pleasurable, directly and indirectly producing orgasm, and that alone is a powerful argument for it. It relieves guilt over sexuality, encourages masturbation and fantasy, and is a substitute for risky sexual encounters; as such, it can be relationship-enhancing. Through pornography the creator and consumer can explore and accept aspects of their sexuality which cannot be acted upon. Although some pornography transmits misinformation, on the whole it provides education about sex and contributes to public acceptance of sexuality. Through pornography society does its thinking about sex and to some extent about relationships. Pornographers and the legal struggles they have fought have made it possible for non-pornographic sex education materials to circulate freely. Por-

