

to mysticism, and the majority of them were sex-negative and disapproving of homosexuality.

The crude giant from Thrace, Maximus (235–238), who assassinated the whimpering Alexander Severus in his tent along with his mother and faithful friends, was the first Emperor never to visit Rome. Descended from the Gracchi, Gordian I managed only 36 days, but his grandson Gordian II (238–244) lasted under the control of his mother's eunuchs and then his father-in-law until assassinated by followers of Philip the Arab (244–249), reputed to be black and even Christian. Celebrating the thousandth anniversary of the founding of Rome in 247, he also attempted unsuccessfully to suppress male prostitution and to enforce the *Lex Scatinia*. Decius (245–251) began the great persecution of the Christians, but Gallienus (253–268) refused his father Valerian's (253–257) policy of persecution and replaced it with toleration, hoping to win over the Christians with his neo-Platonic arguments.

The grave disorders may have destroyed one-third of the population, devastated the cities, which had been the focus of classical pederasty, and destroyed the old upper classes. Provincial and even villa autarky (self-sufficiency) replaced the capitalistic trading network that had sustained the old cities. They also had to be walled to protect against marauders and invaders. Pederastic writing, like all other non-religious literature, declined sharply under the Thirty Tyrants. Physicians and philosophers increasingly recommended sexual restraint.

Christian Emperors. Even with the accession of Christian Emperors, who soon imposed the death penalty for sodomy, classical pederasty did not die out at once. Constantine's sons Constantius and Constans (the latter's bodyguards chosen for their beauty rather than their competence), following the lead of Church councils and ascetic theologians, first decreed death for even consenting, adult sodomites

in 342. In 390 Theodosius the Great (379–395) with his sons Arcadius and Honorius and coemperor Valentinian II prescribed burning at the stake for those found guilty of anal intercourse with another male. In two novellae appended to his summation of previous Roman laws condemning pederasty in the *Corpus Juris Civilis*, Justinian the Great (527–565), who married the former showgirl Theodora, decreed death at the stake for unrepentant sodomites because the Biblical account of the conflagration of Sodom proved that they had brought ruin upon society, causing famines, earthquakes, and pestilences. Justinian, who closed the pagan schools of philosophy, also ended the classical pederasty institutionalized by the Greeks in Crete and Sparta toward the end of the seventh century B.C., 1300 years earlier. He set the tone for the persecution codified by Patristic writers, penitentials, canon law, and scholastic philosophy, as well as laws (feudal and royal) and laws (municipal) that still endures in Christian society, only relieved of the death penalty beginning with reforms of the French Revolution and of Joseph II of Austria inspired by the Enlightenment ideas of Beccaria.

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William A. Percy

ROME, ANCIENT

The erotic life of ancient Rome—the Republic and the Empire—has long fascinated philologists and historians, novelists and moralists. Whether on account of its long dominance of Western civilization, its role as the primary antagonist of early Christianity, or its apparently contradictory images of robust, virile military power and orgiastic, "polymor-

phously perverse" decadence, Roman sexuality has provided fodder for unceasing polemics, ranging from the moralism of the church fathers to the lauding of antiquity by homophile antiquarians. Some assert with seeming assurance that law and custom forbade male homosexuality as incompatible with civic virtue, while others are confident that the Romans casually accepted homosexuality or at least bisexuality as a natural, common part of their society.

These discordant images stem from the contradictory attitudes of Romans whose works have survived into modern times, from the scanty documentation for actual practices, especially among the bulk of the Roman population, and, most important, from the anachronistic application of a modern concept of homosexuality to a period which, not recognizing it as a unitary phenomenon, separated it into discrete practices based on class and role.

Historical Background. According to tradition, the city was founded in 753 B.C., but archeologists have unearthed remains of settlements from as early as the middle of the second millennium, when the several hamlets on the site were beginning to coalesce. Etruscans dominated the nascent city-state for at least a century setting examples of sexual promiscuity, but in time Romans supplanted their tutors, exiling Tarquin, the proud last Etruscan king. They then overcame the Carthaginians, from whom they learned to crucify rebel slaves and pirates and to cultivate latifundia worked by slaves, and between 202, the defeat of Hannibal, and 30 B.C., the death of Cleopatra, imposed their rule on the entire Mediterranean. Preeminent among the older cultures on whom the Romans imposed their rule were the Greeks. To paraphrase the poet Horace, politically prostrate Greece triumphed culturally over the barbarous victor, and Rome became the first exemplar of a post-Hellenic civilization in the wake of ancient Greece. Roman borrowings were accom-

panied by a hounding sense of inferiority to Greek culture. In reaction, some Romans withdrew into a kind of anti-intellectualism that abandoned such fripperies as literature and the arts to the decadent Greeklings. In the sixth book of the *Aeneid*, Vergil portrays Anchises recommending that the Romans specialize in governing, and freely acknowledging that the peoples of the eastern Mediterranean with their far older civilizations would always surpass his own in the arts and sciences. Another defensive response to perceived inferiority stressed Rome's primordial simplicity and purity before alien luxury corrupted its people. According to the patriotic fables of historians like Livy, the early Romans were paragons of guileless virtue. Toiling in the fields kept them too busy to plot intrigues against their neighbors, and yielded too few worldly goods to incite envy. This idealized picture of the early Republic served as a foil for castigating ubiquitous luxury, corruption, and coveting of goods and sex objects in the later times. Wide acceptance of such myths of a vanished golden age of virtue legitimized attacking contemporaries for "un-Roman" behavior, especially sexual indulgence. The invidious contrast between present corruption and past simplicity increased in popularity during the last century of the Republic (146–27 B.C.), a period marked by brilliant military success abroad and political disaster at home. Rome's modest institutions were not designed to cope with the sudden influx of booty—luxury goods, art objects, and, especially, slaves—from foreign conquests. The rise of many, some not even citizens, from straitened circumstances to great wealth stimulated a vulgar opportunistic tone which grated on those loyal to the old ways, whose relative status was declining. Despite the earnest striving of Augustus to reform imperial Roman society, the ostentatious nouveau riche style persisted for several generations, into the second century of the present era.

The Role of Slavery. A massive influx of slaves accompanied Roman rise to domination in the Mediterranean. Although, like almost all ancient peoples, Romans had probably always countenanced slavery, the early peasant community had few. However, success in the Samnite, Punic, and eastern Mediterranean wars yielded enormous infusions, as many as 25,000 captives in a single day. By the end of the Republic, slaves comprised 30 to 35 percent of the population of Italy, a proportion comparable to that of the antebellum American South. Their cheapness and abundance clearly invited arbitrariness and maltreatment. Slaves were routinely beaten for "sport" and to relieve masters' frustrations. Until the time of Hadrian, Roman law permitted owners to execute slaves summarily. Slaves were objects for lust as well as sadism. As Seneca remarked, "Unchastity (*impudicitia*) is a crime in the freeborn, a service (*officium*) for the freedman, and an obligation for the slave" (*Controversies* IV, 10). This common situation made the role of slavery in same-sex relationships far more salient than in Greece, where of course it was not absent, but was on a much reduced scale and counterbalanced by the concept of pederasty as an instrument of education and state-building. The comedies of Plautus (who died ca. 184 B.C.) already make the master's lust for his slave boys the chief same-sex theme. Attractive slaves in the great houses of the rich were expected not only to cater to their master's lust, but also to be sexually available for guests (see Horace's *Satires*, 1.2.116–119). For all its importance, tantalizingly little is known about the sexual aspects of the Roman trade in slaves. The paucity of information reflects not only the prudery of modern scholars, but also the very banality of the activity in ancient times. Slaves were part of the taken-for-granted background of life, omnipresent but little noticed. It is certain that many slaves were sold by free but indigent parents. Others were foundlings.

Captives taken in military campaigns supplied the bulk of young flesh for the slave markets and thence the numerous brothels. Slaves would beset upon a slowly rotating platform, while the auctioneer lifted the garments so as to display not only the musculature and general physical condition of the specimen, but also the sexual endowments. Often deprived of access to women, sometimes even shackled slaves enjoyed one another sexually.

Roman Roles. Although Roman women had somewhat more power and influence than those of ancient Athens and were not secluded, Roman society was overwhelmingly male-dominated, with a consequent dearth of surviving references to lesbianism except for epigrams scattered throughout Martial's collected poems. Roman custom accepted a paradigm of sexuality which observed a stark dichotomy between the penetrator, who was seen as engaging in normal aggressive and dominating masculine behavior regardless of the gender of his object, and the penetrated (pathic), who was considered to be weak, submissive, and powerless. Under this system, any Roman male citizen could be a penetrator without fear of aspersions or disgrace, though some criticized any homosexual activity. On the other hand, the penetrated role was considered appropriate only for those who were submissive because of their exclusion from the power structure: women, slaves, and provincial or foreign boys, but not free boys destined to become citizens. A male adult Roman citizen who became a sexual receiver was seen as yielding his birthright of power and hence compromising the power position of all other male adult citizens. As so much of the homosexuality took place between penetrating masters and receptive slaves, the conception of master-slave relationships became entangled in the agent-pathic one. The salience of the former, implying that the man who "takes it" enslaves himself to his penetrator, is characteristically Roman. Moreover, as Eva

Cantarella has pointed out, this asymmetry was reinforced by the Roman imperative to rule over subject peoples, so that the position of the sexually penetrated was analogous to that of a conquered province. This concatenation of degradations lent itself to particularly vicious exploitation in Roman political campaigning, as in Cicero's attacks on Mark Antony, whom he accused of being not only a woman but a slave for being pathic. This notion of self-abasement through accepting the role of pathic, even though Antony was a boy when with Curio, seems to have struck a particularly sensitive nerve. Perhaps it was being so outnumbered in their empire that confirmed Roman citizens in their sense that an instance of one member of their collective yielding himself to sexual "degradation" was a lessening of the strength of the community. In the army, sex with a male citizen was punishable by death, but in times of war, according to Cicero, soldiers were permitted to **rape** (enemy) freeborn youths and virgins. Male **prostitution** was extremely widespread—the boys even having their own annual festival day (Robigalia, April 25)—and was not only looked upon with general favor but was taxed by the state. While most of the prostitutes were slaves, a few of them were freedmen, and most were boys. Pederasty did not, as in Greece, play a compensating role in the training and toughening of young men for duty to the State. Relatedly, the Romans before the introduction of **gymnasia** on the Greek model permitted nudity only in the **bathhouses**, a milieu of selfish and hedonistic indulgence, in contrast to the Greek consolidation of the link between pederasty and male character formation through public nude athletics. Very little is known about the sexual life of the Roman proletariat, the lower class of citizenry—after 200 B.C. often of Oriental or Greek origin—that owned no slaves. According to some graffiti at Pompeii, there were, however, prostitutes for the poor available for the equivalent of an unskilled laborer's hourly wage or even

less. A large number of the graffiti discovered in the ruins of Pompeii are bisexual or homosexual in content. Moreover, they do not seem to include any real "homophobia," and even romantic sentiments appear occasionally. Frequently signed, these homoerotic graffiti indicate no fear of social repercussions. The graffitists appear to be penetrative males, usually directing their attentions to boys.

Roman Law. The earliest and most problematic landmark is the shadowy Lex Scantinia (or Scatinia), purportedly dating from the third century B.C. The text has not survived, and the question of its meaning still defies adequate interpretation. To interpret this moot testimony as indicating the Romans were antihomosexual because "they had a law against it" goes beyond the evidence. As is so often the case, part of the problem stems from applying the modern comprehensive notion of homosexuality to an earlier era which had no such overall concept. The Latin *stuprum* covered a whole range of prohibited sexual behavior. The same act might or might not be *stuprum* according to the circumstances. To copulate with a freeborn teenage girl was *stuprum*; but not with a teenage girl who was a slave or freedwoman, but officially registered as a prostitute. It was the status of the actors rather than the act itself that determined whether or not it was licit. It seems likely that the boundaries of *stuprum* varied over time, but the late imperial codifications, extending from Ulpian to Tribonian, failed to preserve earlier legislation. If there were restrictions on same-sex behavior in the Lex Scantinia, they do not seem to have been enlarged, or even reaffirmed at any later stage of lawmaking. In fact, there were complaints from some moralists that the statute had fallen into disuse like modern blasphemy statutes. The few cases under the republic typically refer to a superior pressuring an inferior in the army to submit to him sexually. Interestingly, pronatalist legislative initiatives of the early Imperial period, most famously the

Lex Julia de adulteriis of Augustus, were entirely devoted to curbing men's activities with prohibited women, completely disregarding any dalliances with boys.

Literary Evidence. Valuable evidence from Roman writers begins with Cicero, who Latinized many Greek technical concepts, accusing opponents—as Attic orators routinely did—of pathic behavior. How much irritation at his tiresome moralizing provoked the triumvirs' secret decision to proscribe him can only be a speculation, but such scurrilous accusations became a common feature of Roman political life. If Cicero was hostile, the Epicurean Lucretius was merely indifferent, nowhere condemning same-sex relations. Nonetheless, by elevating generation through the pivotal principle *nihil ex nihilo fit* ("nothing can come from nothing"), he unwittingly laid a foundation for later prescriptivists' obsession with procreation. Allegedly at least the later Stoics opposed same-sex pleasure, and indeed all sex outside marriage, and bequeathed this view to Christian rigorism. On the whole, evidence fails to support so austere a view, although Stoics, like most Epicureans, their main philosophical rivals, did stress the advantages of moderation and indifference to passion. One could, however, be a moderate pederast, instead of a frenzied one. Only Musonius Rufus, seemingly following the track of Plato in *The Laws* in rejecting same-sex copulation as "against nature," specifically sought to discourage homosexuality (a citation of Seneca offered by St. Jerome being of dubious import shorn of its original, now lost context). In the sphere of sexual morality, the early church fathers' debt to the Stoics was slight. Patristic thinkers used Stoic and Platonic phrases mainly as window-dressing for a sex-negative, other-worldly, at times dualistic, oriental, anti-intellectual dogma. In sum, a few Romans denounced or discouraged some aspects of homosexuality, but most did not comment on the matter—and in the general setting of Mediterranean social life, it can

reasonably be concluded that their silence implied consent.

Evidence from poetry and belles lettres is more abundant. Catullus wrote some of his most piercingly eloquent lyrics on the joys and sorrows of being in love with a boy. Recent research has shown how extensively Catullus relied on Hellenistic prototypes, exemplifying the Roman duality between immediate experience and hallowed Greek models. Catullus' pederastic love poetry is echoed in more muted fashion by his contemporary Tibullus. Vergil's Second Eclogue, with his immortal homosexual swain Corydon, an object case of the Greek-Roman duality, imitates a heterosexual idyll of Theocritus—who wrote his own share of homosexual verse. Crossovers of this kind, anomalous only in light of a rigid heterosexual-homosexual dichotomy, occurred as a matter of course in antiquity. Even Ovid, exiled under the Lex Julia for being one of many lovers of Augustus' daughter Julia, and apparently the most heterosexual of the Latin poets, wrote nonchalantly of pederasty and magical changes of sex.

Satire is the only distinctly Roman literary form. Although claiming to act from the high motive of purging the body politic of hypocrisy and corruption, often the satirist was actuated by personal spite and love of gossip. Juvenal's criticism of Roman same-sex customs in the first century of the present era revolves around the familiar contrast between the artless simplicity of the revered past and the luxury of the depraved present. For him a symptom of this degeneration was the violation of class barriers in the obsessions of Roman aristocrats for low-born favorites, usually of foreign descent. His *Second Satire* had scions of patrician families offering themselves in marriage, replete with Oriental rites, to their darlings. As in analogous cases from Martial (e.g., XII.42) and Suetonius (*Life of Nero*), they sought to dignify their male-male unions by assimilating them to religious rites wherein the

initiate “weds” the god. Stripping away Juvenal’s veneer of moral indignation, one can see that these weddings in fact reflected an innovatory striving to regularize a type of relationship that, however well-worn in practice, was nonetheless marginal to the official structure of Roman ideology and institutions. Some may have been merely travesties. Very different is **Petronius’** ambitious picaresque novel, the *Satyricon*, of which only about a tenth has survived. These fragments recount the bawdy adventures of two friends, rivals for the favors of Giton, a fickle pretty boy. Holding very definite opinions about literature and art, Petronius was as nonjudgmental about sexual behavior as anyone could be. **Martial**, too, has been considered unedifying, often even accused of sensationalism and of purveying scurrilous gossip for mere titillation. Yet he operated within certain cultural restraints, e.g., believing it better to fuck than to be fucked, better to have the means to invite others to dine with one than to cadge invitations, and, best of all, to be open about one’s tastes rather than hypocritical. His writings are a cornucopia of information on Roman customs relating to sex, such as the cutting of the hair of slave boys to signal the end of their availability as sexual utensils. Martial throws some light also on the vexed question of the *cinaedus*, a kind of gigolo, often trained as a dancer or entertainer, who would perform as the agent for adult pathics. Martial alleged that cinaedi often serviced wives as well. His favorable comments on *pueri delicati*, handsome boys who seem to have appealed to his own taste, leave the impression that in his time there was a definite bifurcation between the ephebe (in his teens) and the cinaedus (in his twenties) as sexual objects, the former being pathic, the latter not.

The mass of Roman literature—all of which could be printed in about 500 modern volumes—is not large, and much of it does not provide any information on sexual customs and attitudes. Even so,

from the historians, notably **Suetonius** and **Tacitus**, the reader quickly learns that the emperors were—to say the least—polymorphous perverse, and that their omnisexuality served more to titillate than nauseate the Roman populace.

Debates over the Fall of Rome. Modern historians have assembled a bewildering variety of contradictory explanations for the fall of the Roman Empire: external pressures vs. internal decay, failure of leadership at the top vs. festering anger welling up from below; a shortage of manpower vs. maldistribution of resources; physical causes such as plagues vs. collective psychic exhaustion signified by the fading of Rome’s ancient religion and civic spirit before cults from the East, such as **Manichaeism** and **Christianity**. Drawing in part on the harsh judgments of their satirists and historians, the modern stereotype was mainly shaped by nineteenth-century French writers and painters, who were uncomfortably aware of parallels between the decline of their own cultural hegemony and that of their Latin forebears. Popular culture (including the film *Caligula* and the television series “I, Claudius”) has picked up their lurid images. This moralistic sleaze is completely irrelevant to the fall of Rome, for most of it is firmly set in the first century of our era, before the Empire reached its zenith with the Five Good Emperors and even before the starting point of the narrative of Edward Gibbon’s *Decline and Fall*.

In order to relate this varied material causally to Rome’s fall one would have to assume a “latency period” of six to eight generations. Indeed, as early as 180 B.C. Cato the censor condemned Scipio, conqueror of Hannibal and of Antiochus III, for importing luxury and Greek profligacy to corrupt the *mos maiorum*, the strict ancestral morality of the early Romans such as Cincinnatus. This plaint continued with Sallust, who had Jugurtha, king of Numidia say upon leaving Rome that there was nothing in the city that was not for sale. Cicero too argued that moral

and social decadence epitomized by Catiline and Antony caused Rome's disgrace. But these laments ceased in the second century, and it was only long after those halcyon days of sexual abandon that the fall ensued. To conflate Caligula (much less Catiline or Antony) and the fall of Rome is like finding in Sir Walter Raleigh's behavior the cause of the decline of the British Empire. Caligula had no more to do with the fall than Raleigh with the Boer War.

What were the views of the Romans themselves? Many castigated the falling away from the sturdy virtues of the Republic, and saw such conduct as individually and collectively shameful without threatening the foundations of the Empire. For Rome had been given *imperium sine fine*, dominion without limit. Even during the dark days of the third century, orators celebrating the thousandth anniversary of the founding of the city regularly summoned up the image of *Roma aeterna*. Only after the fact was the idea expressed that indulgence, sexual or otherwise, caused Rome's collapse. The first instance of what was later to become a commonplace reproach is in *De gubernatione Dei*, a moralistic diatribe composed by Salvian, a Christian presbyter of Marseilles, about A.D. 450. In discussing Carthage (by then a Roman city, not the old Semitic realm) Salvian contrasted the former degenerate effeminacy of the city, its ostentatious queens on parade, with the severe, highly moral regime instituted by the Germans after their successful siege. Thus, in Salvian's overoptimistic view of the horrible Vandals, the most destructive of all the Germanic tribes that overran the western provinces, the material and intellectual losses caused by the barbarian incursions were compensated for by a moral advance. The contrast between the older pluralistic civilization and obsessive early Christian moralizing could scarcely be clearer, and in longer historical perspective, Salvian's arbitrary linking of sexual

freedom, particularly same-sex activity, with political weakness and instability was to become a pernicious legacy, one of the cornerstones of the later **decadence** myth. Besides this, the eastern provinces of the Empire, just as corrupt and sexually permissive as the west, in fact more given to pederasty, survived for another thousand years until conquered by the Ottoman Turks in 1453, though Justinian in the early sixth century voiced the **Judeo-Christian** belief that sodomites caused earthquakes, plagues, and famines.

Conclusion. Rome shared with Greece (and other Mediterranean cultures) the fundamental agent/pathic distinction in sexual transactions. Apart from a common Indo-European heritage, its origins lost in the proverbial mists of prehistory, Rome was subject to a massive and continuing influx of Greek culture with Greek models adapted to and merging with Latin and Etruscan tendencies, Oriental ones appearing later with the conquest of Syria and Palestine by Pompey in 66 B.C. and of Egypt by Julius Caesar. Nevertheless, significant differences make the conventional compound term Greco-Roman civilization questionable. (1) Rome generally lacked the Hellenic concept of pederasty as contributing to the collective (civic) good quite beyond the pleasure afforded the agent. (2) There was an absence of public nudity—except in the baths, where men and women were often nude together—in the socially sanctioned pedagogical setting of the gymnasium. (3) With hordes of slaves, imperial Rome differed from the Greek city-states, and the master-slave relationship was the paradigmatic locale of sexual pleasure in Rome, but not earlier in Greece. (4) In the nouveau-riche atmosphere of the late Republic and early Empire, the role of cinaedus with respect to his patron paralleled the more respectable asymmetrical relationship of parasite and client, less extreme but still akin to the slave-master disparity. (5) Greek idealism about sexual pas-

sion as a motive for improving the mind of the sexually receptive contrasts sharply with the thoroughly materialistic Roman use of property for sexual gratification. (6) Rome's exploitation of a vast empire created an inequity between rulers and ruled that influenced paradigms of sexual conduct.

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RÖMER, L. S. A. M. VON (1873-1965)

Dutch physician, historian, and student of homosexuality. Lucien Sophie Albert Marie von Römer was born in Kampen as the scion of a noble family that had lived in the Netherlands since the eighteenth century. He studied medicine at Leiden and Amsterdam, passing the licensing examination in 1903. Thereafter he studied and worked in Berlin with Albert Moll and Magnus Hirschfeld, and met two well-known transvestites, Willibald von Sadler-Grün and Freiherr Hermann von Teschenberg, who made no secret of their predilection and let themselves be photographed for Hirschfeld's *Jahrbuch*. Von Römer had an idealistic philosophy of life and a great reserve of personal dynamism; he was an admirer of Erasmus,

Spinoza, and Nietzsche, whose *Thus Spake Zarathustra* he translated into Dutch. A trip to Greece in 1912 interrupted his term of service as health official in the Royal Navy. After 1913 he settled in the Dutch East Indies, where he occupied various functions in the health service until 1932. In the course of his career his campaign against injustice earned him the hostility of many of his colleagues, and his energetic measures against unhygienic conditions won him the title of "the medical Napoleon." After his retirement he practiced neurology and psychiatry in Malang, where he lived until his death at the age of 92.

Von Römer's articles on various aspects of homosexuality were for their time major, path-breaking studies that assembled a vast amount of material that was little-known or had been deliberately ignored by official scholarship. His first article was a biography of "Henri the Third, King of France and Poland," which appeared in the fourth volume of the *Jahrbuch* in 1902; in the same volume he commented on the abusive reception of Arnold Aletrino's paper at the Congress of Criminal Anthropology in Amsterdam the previous year. In the fifth volume (1903) he issued a study of more than two hundred pages on "The Androgynous Idea of Life," a survey of myths and beliefs concerning androgyny and hermaphroditism from remote antiquity to the present. In 1904 he published in Dutch a book entitled *Unknown People: The Physiological Development of the Sexes in Connection with Homosexuality*, and in the following year *The Uranian Family: A Scientific Investigation and Conclusions on Homosexuality*. This latter work examined disparities from the normal sex-ratio in the siblings of homosexuals in the aim of demonstrating that they were biologically disguised members of the opposite sex. A German version was published in 1906, together with an article in the *Jahrbuch* on "Uranism in the Netherlands before the Nineteenth Century, with Especial Refer-