

dence likewise indicates for England, France, and Tuscany.

Antonio Beccadelli (1394–1471), a humanist of the early Renaissance, was born in Palermo. In 1434 he was called to Naples, where he served king Alfonso as ambassador, secretary, and historian. He is best known, however, for his learnedly scurrilous *Hermaphroditus*, which contains a number of homosexual epigrams modeled on Martial and other Latin poets.

*Modern Times.* By the fifteenth century Sicily had become a colonial economy owned by a few aristocrats supplying—with the backbreaking labor of landless proletarians and slaves who made up the bulk of the population—grain, sugar, cotton, and other commodities to Genoa, Barcelona, and other Mediterranean ports. Aragonese Inquisitors relentlessly suppressed dissent and non-conformity, but tried in vain during the second half of the sixteenth century to obtain a papal bull so that they could “relax” pederasts, a veritable “social plague,” as they stated, to secular courts. Sicilian sodomites were therefore tried and punished in the local secular courts rather than by the Inquisition as in Aragon. The Greek language and Arabic pederastic traditions persisted among the lower classes, where males greatly outnumbered females.

The Spanish Bourbons ceded the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (1759–1860) to their cadet Neapolitan branch, which misgoverned the island as badly as had its Habsburg predecessors, so that the Mafia and a general disrespect of all authority, including clerical, flourished. One of the chief opponents of Bourbon misrule was the bisexual patriot Luigi Settembrini (1813–1877), who was fascinated by ancient Greek pederasty.

After Garibaldi liberated Sicily and southern Italy in 1860, but turned it over to the House of Savoy, northern industrialists began a new form of exploitation of the mezzogiorno (south of Italy) and Sicily. Millions escaped poverty by emigrating to the Americas as well as to

northern Italy. Americans tended to stereotype Italians as oversexed and morally loose. Sicilians and Neapolitans brought Mediterranean homosexuality to the United States, but adjusted their sexual mores rapidly to the new transatlantic climate conditioned by Protestantism. A significant contribution of the Italian underworld to the American gay subculture was its ownership of gay bars and speakeasies during Prohibition at a time when no respectable businessman would touch such an ill-famed enterprise. A Sicilian-American, the fine gay novelist Robert Ferro, died of AIDS together with his lover in 1988.

Like Capri in the bay of Naples, favorite resort of homosexual exiles and émigrés, Taormina in Sicily became in the nineteenth century and remains today a resort for gay tourists, along with the seedier violence-prone large cities of Palermo and Naples, abounding as they are even now with dashingly attractive *scugnizzi* (street urchins), often available at a price. Baron Wilhelm von Gloeden just after 1900 published provocative pictures of nude Sicilian boys from the region of Taormina, and continued to reside there until his death in 1931. Since World War II even ordinary gay tourists have frequented these once exclusive enclaves, driving those seeking greener pastures to Mykonos, Ibiza, and increasingly, as those have also become overrun, to Muslim sites in North Africa.

William A. Percy

## SISSY

A diminutive of “sister,” the term “sissy” originated in mid-nineteenth-century America as an epithet for a weak, cowardly, or effeminate boy or man. Popular works, such as the novel, *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886) by Frances H. Burnett, and H. T. Webster’s cartoon strip, “The Timid Soul,” featuring Caspar Milquetoast, helped to solidify the stereotype. The sissy, it was held, was not born but made, through pampering or mollicoddling in childhood

by well-meaning, but overprotective female guardians. Such mistakes of training could in many cases be corrected (it was believed) by strict discipline and exercise in such manly pursuits as **athletics**, hunting, and military life. The great exemplar of the redeemed sissy was Theodore Roosevelt (1858–1919), the delicate youth who turned into the roughrider and flourisher of the symbolic big stick.

Twentieth-century America continued to be preoccupied by the contrast between the rugged frontiersman, the stalwart embodiment of the country's abiding strength of character, as against the effete, overcultivated, sissified European. In literature, such expatriates as Henry James and T. S. Eliot, with their recondite allusiveness, were contrasted with such standardbearers of the forthright native tradition as Jack London, William Carlos Williams, and Jack Kerouac. Ernest Hemingway, both an expatriate and a he-man, was an exception—though perhaps he protested too much.

While the word sissy may be relatively recent, the sissy concept takes up the older tradition of attacks on luxury as a solvent of manly virtue. Like the dandy before him, the sissy was not necessarily homosexual, but this status was often implied—particularly in the first half of the twentieth century when the word was a favorite stand-in or euphemism for the harsher "queer" or "fairy." In their heyday, Hollywood films made considerable use of the ambivalent image of the sissy, as personified by such players as Franklin Pangborn and Clifton Webb.

Significantly, the term "tomboy," the female counterpart, never bore a comparable negative charge, inasmuch as imitation of the male in the young female was considered essentially harmless and transitional.

In the 1970s the popularity of ideals of **androgyny** did something to soften the negativity of the sissy stereotype. Through writings and face-to-face discussions promoting ideas of the women's

movement, men learned that it was acceptable to show emotions and sensitivity, and even to cry. The he-man role, though conferring status in a patriarchal society, now seemed a barrier to personal expressiveness and creativity. Many accepted, in principle at least, the idea that there was a range of types between the male and female poles, rather than a stark opposition. Although these arguments made some impact on many men, particularly those who entered sensitivity-training groups influenced by feminist ideas, the concept of sissiness has shown a remarkable capacity to survive; it largely retains its negative aura. In the yuppie eighties the appropriate symbol of this survival was the updated version of the milksop, the trendy quiche eater; *Real Men Don't Eat Quiche* (1982) was the title of a goof book by Bruce Feirstein.

Recently the word "wimp" has become popular as a derisive epithet, conveying a sense of insufficient maleness, but it lacks connotations of overt effeminacy or homosexuality despite its origins as a slang term for a female.

See also **Macho**.

Wayne R. Dynes

## SITUATIONAL HOMOSEXUALITY

This term refers sociologically to widespread same-sex behavior in total institutions where no partner of the opposite sex is available. In some cases, as in **prisons, jails and reformatories**, the inmates are there involuntarily; in others, as ships at sea, monasteries and nunneries, and mines in southern Africa, participation has been freely chosen. The term is also applied to cultures where adolescents are gender-segregated. The assumption behind the notion of psychological situational homosexuality is that the individual's behavior is dependent on the heterosexually deprived situation, and that those performing homosexual acts *faute de mieux* under these circumstances will