

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**.

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## 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

revert to heterosexual behavior once they regain access to the opposite sex, while the "true" homosexual prefers his own sex even when the other is freely accessible.

The situation of deprivation does not affect all people equally. Even late nineteenth-century authors realized that some individuals never engage in homosexual activity no matter how long or how intense the deprivation from heterosexual contact they endure. Similarly, many homosexuals fail to take up heterosexual activity even though homosexuality may be so severely repressed as to be practically unavailable. Nevertheless, cross-cultural evidence abundantly documents higher incidences of homosexual activity in situations of heterosexual deprivation, and markedly so for males in their sexual prime.

### SIWA OASIS

A town in the Libyan desert of western Egypt, Siwa is the site of an ancient civilization which retained a form of institutionalized homosexuality into the modern era. The oasis was the location of an oracle consulted by **Alexander the Great** and modern observers have stressed how the Berber population conserved its own language, religious rites, and sexual customs despite the later overlay of Islam and Egyptian administration.

Sexual relations among men fell into the ancient pattern of pairing between usually married adult men and adolescent bachelors. In the nineteenth century, families lived within the walls of a town constructed rather like a single large adobe "beehive" while all unmarried men lived together on the edges of town where they made up a warrior class (*zaggalah*) protecting the oasis from desert marauders. In the twentieth century, as the military function declined and the townspeople have moved out of the walled center, the *zaggalah* have become agricultural laborers retaining their customs and clubhouses. The anthropologist Walter Cline, writing in 1936, found "All normal Siwan men and

boys practice sodomy. . . . Among themselves the natives are not ashamed of this; they talk about it as openly as they talk about love of women, and many if not most of their fights arise from homosexual competition."

Among the *zaggalah*, man-boy relationships were formally recognized when the man offered the boy's father a gift (or brideprice) as in heterosexual marriage. Abd Allah notes that "Siwan customs allow a man but one boy [vs. four wives] to whom he is bound by a stringent code of obligations." In the *zaggalah* clubhouse "laborers come together on any occasion for communal rejoicing and assemble on moonlight nights for drinking, singing, and dancing to the merry rhythm of flute and drum" (Cline). This festive and erotic tradition culminates in a three-day bacchanal dedicated to the medieval sheik, Sidi Soliman, following the Islamic fast of Ramadan. The various accounts of Siwa agree on the openness and fluidity of sexuality, in that divorce is casual and serial polygamy common, men having as many as a dozen wives over time. Male and female prostitution was noted and Cline remarked that the role in homosexual relations was variable and voluntary.

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### SIXTEENTH-CENTURY LEGISLATION

This era brought to completion the trend toward criminalization of homosexuality throughout Christendom. The Jewish and Christian antihomosexual tradition that goes back to the fifth century