

pull of greater acceptance by the larger society and the attractions of increased power (political and financial) for the members of the subculture acting together were already evident. We may expect that a continuation of that trend, once the AIDS crisis has ebbed, will tend to undermine the cohesion of the gay subculture further, while conversely strengthening the internal unity of such emerging sub-cultural-type groupings as **sadomasochists** and **pederasts**.

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SUETONIUS (BORN CA. 69)

Roman biographer. Suetonius led a largely uneventful life as a bureaucrat, but his access to the records of the imperial palace lends his writings authenticity. Of the books that he wrote the only one to survive in full is the *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, presenting biographies of **Roman emperors** from Julius Caesar through Domitian.

Suetonius' *Lives* have been criticized for their lack of chronological organization, making it hard for later historians to date the anecdotes he presents. In comparison with his contemporary **Tacitus**, whose powerful moral vision caused him to edit and shape the material to make points, Suetonius presents facts without any particular tendency.

Of the rulers he profiles, only one, **Claudius**, seems to have been purely heterosexual. Often criticized by earlier generations for the profusion of racy details, his sexual material is used to illustrate the character of his subjects. In the

case of **Julius Caesar**, his affair with **Nicomedes** of Bithynia shows his charm and resourcefulness. But in the **Life of Nero**, the "marriages" with **Sporus** and **Doryphorus** reveal the wilful profligacy of that emperor's later years. In a period in which imperial power was absolute, it is not surprising that the emperors should have been tempted to have their way with the attractive bodies that surrounded them at every turn. The mores presented are those of the highest society rather than of the people, whose lives must have remained more prosaic and conventional. Refraining from making such contrasts, in his attitudes Suetonius is a naturalist rather than a moralist.

Much read through the centuries, Suetonius' portraits have—probably contrary to his intention—contributed to the image of the **decadence** of Rome. In fact he treats the rising age of Roman rule, with its very height—the second century—still to come. The material he provides therefore represents sidelights on an era of exuberant prosperity and imperial ostentation, rather than object lessons of the decline that was to come two centuries later.

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SUFISM

Sufism, Islamic mysticism, is that aspect of Islamic belief and practice in which believers seek to find the truth of divine love and knowledge through direct personal experience of God. A difficult term to define, it consists of a great variety of mystical paths that give rise to different kinds of personal feelings and experiences. All paths are aimed at culmination in the ultimate union of lover and beloved, signifying the abandonment of the personality (or self) of the mystic in the Absolute Reality. The western term "Sufism"