

for them. It should be remembered that many painters, sculptors, and photographers whose personal orientation is homosexual are as reluctant to be styled "gay artists" as they are to be called neo-expressionist, neo-mannerist, or some other label.

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Wayne R. Dynes

ARTEMIDORUS (LATE SECOND CENTURY OF OUR ERA)

Greek writer. Although Artemidorus resided in Ephesus he is sometimes termed "of Daldis" because the latter was his mother's native city. He traveled widely in the Mediterranean world to collect material for his extant major work *The Interpretation of Dreams*. This book, which incorporates much ancient folklore, influenced Byzantine and Islamic dream books, not to mention the magnum opus of Sigmund Freud, *Traumdeutung* (On the Interpretation of Dreams, 1900).

Artemidorus takes a favorable view of homosexuality, which he says is "natural, legal, and customary." Consequently, whenever the dream symbol involves same-sex relations Artemidorus' interpretation presages good events. The only exceptions are symbols pertaining to incestuous relations between father and son and those in which a slave takes an aggressive role in relation to his master. The interest in sexual dreams probably derives from Egyptian dynastic dream books, which freely note such incidents.

In his accepting attitude toward homosexual behavior, Artemidorus is fully in accord with popular Greek ethics. Significantly, however, when the body of his teaching passed to Byzantine authors of dream books, they subjected the homosexual material to a Christian filtration process so that it is either omitted altogether, or (in two rare instances where it survives) treated negatively.

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ASCETICISM

Sexual asceticism may take the form of total abstinence—lifelong virginity—or it may imply infrequency of sexual congress and abstinence during specified periods. In some individuals sexual asceticism is reinforced by chastisement and mortification of the body through flagellation, fasting, and denial of sleep.

Comparative studies reveal a number of motives for these restrictions. The priestesses in sanctuaries of ancient Greece were required to avoid sexual contact with any human being in order faithfully to serve the god whose consort they were. Widespread throughout the Mediterranean world—and elsewhere—was the idea that sexual contact makes one unclean and therefore unworthy of setting foot on holy ground without purification and a specified period of abstinence. Finally, chastity was believed to bring strength to the one who practiced it, and sometimes to others as well. In ancient Rome the purity of the Vestal Virgins was thought to safeguard the city from harm.

In later Greek times and under the Roman empire this cluster of beliefs underwent a sharpening, whose effects left a permanent impress on Western civilization. In some Stoic thinkers the shift was relatively conservative: a modification of the traditional Greek commendation of temperance in eating, drinking, and sex in

the direction of a more active self-denial, which should not be pressed to extremes. Still this change is significant: the older concept had enshrined an even-handed balance between appetite and renunciation—enlightened self-management—while the newer trend tilted toward renunciation. Along these lines, the physician Musonius Rufus discouraged homosexual intercourse because of its “violence,” which led to fatigue.

Set apart at first from the Greco-Roman mainstream, a number of religious and philosophical sects arose that regarded the human body as one’s enemy, to be mortified and humiliated. The Galli, priests of the Eastern goddess Cybele, could be witnessed ritually castrating themselves. In the Jewish world, the Qumran sect known to us from the Dead Sea Scrolls seems to have insisted on “spiritual eunuchism”—total continence—for the inner core of believers. At the heart of Christianity lay a Holy Family that was cordoned off from sex. From the fourth century onwards, Mary was regarded as not simply a virgin at the time of Jesus’s birth, but perpetually a virgin. Jesus, though fully capable of sexual relations, never—in the view of the Early Christian Fathers—chose to exercise the option. As for Joseph, if he had once been capable of sexual activity, he was safely beyond it by the time of his marriage. It is not surprising that these exemplary figures were imitated in various ways. Virgins had great prestige in the Early Christian communities, as did married couples who had ceased to have sexual relations. The sect of the Encratites held that semen must be conserved in the body at all costs. (Even such a respected medical authority as Soranos of Ephesus taught that every emission of the male seed was injurious to health.) And the monks of the Egyptian and Syrian deserts not only practiced chastity, but subjected the body to an unremitting regime of mortification. It is against this background that the Early Christian prohibition of homosexuality must be seen. Marriage itself was a lesser

option, justifiable only to provide offspring. Some historians have concluded that the depopulation of the later Roman empire was a direct consequence of countless numbers of individuals declining to participate in the procreation cycle.

Needless to say, in those times and in ensuing centuries the flesh made demands that were not to be denied. But their exercise was henceforth to be accompanied by a gnawing guilt. The eleventh-century papal imposition of celibacy on the priesthood meant that the whole of the clergy, held up as the fullest embodiment of the Christian ideal, was condemned to lifelong abstinence. In every walk of life transgressors of the narrow sexual ethic were exposed to ridicule and punishment. The notion that sexual uncleanness could bring divine retribution on a nation frequently recurs in sermons against homosexuality in the early modern period. At the end of the fifteenth century the appearance of syphilis in Western Europe seemed to set a terrible seal on this complex of fears. The way in which such feelings of guilt could be manipulated is evident in the great **masturbation scare**, which began in the early eighteenth century and reached its zenith in the Victorian period. In fact the horror of self-pollution was but a new avatar of the Early Christian Encratite fear of loss of semen. The commercial mind of the Victorians also linked emission of seed with monetary expenditure; hence sexual mismanagement led to sexual bankruptcy. In Britain and North America the late nineteenth century saw the rise of the Sexual Purity Movement, which effectively propagandized for continence.

In recent decades the importation of elements of Indic religions—Hinduism and Buddhism—into Western industrial countries does not seem to have led to any sustained emulation of the ascetic traditions cherished by those faiths in their homelands. A more powerful persuader in the direction of sexual continence has been the AIDS crisis, a factor that has served to enhance (and probably exaggerate) an in-

cient reaction to the emancipated sixties and seventies.

See also Celibacy.

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Wayne R. Dynes

ASIAN-AMERICANS, GAY AND LESBIAN

Asian Americans who are gay or lesbian live within the same social constraints as their heterosexual counterparts, facing many of the prejudices and cultural exclusions of modern North America. Among identifiable ethnic peoples, Asians, even those of the third, fourth, or fifth generation, are most likely to be considered foreign, illegal aliens, unable to speak English and so forth. This perpetual state of being foreign—not being part of the American cultural milieu—stems from multiple historical roots.

An initial wave of immigration from China and Japan in the late nineteenth century to meet labor demands in the railroad industry was followed by the Chinese Exclusion Acts which explicitly aimed at stopping immigration from Asian countries. These obstacles to Asian immigration were not eased until the 1960s, when a new wave of immigrants from Asian countries, mostly middle-class and professional people, was allowed into the United States. Continuity and growth of viable Asian ethnic communities were also hampered during World War II by the mass internment of Japanese Americans (and Japanese Canadians), resulting in massive dislocation and dispersion of Japanese American families and communities who had settled in the Western states.

Gay Men and Lesbians. In the gay community, Asian gay men and lesbians experience the same alienation, being perceived as "The Other": the foreign, the exotic, the non-American. The preoccupation of modern gay male culture with the sexual images and physical types of the fifties and sixties—the short-haired blue-eyed all-American boy who symbolized the United States in its empire-building, expansionist phase—has also resulted in the exclusion of Asian men from the sexual and romantic interchange of modern gay male life in the United States. Among both gay men and lesbians, popular stereotypes of Asians as being subservient, passive, and eager to please inform many of their relationships with their non-Asian counterparts.

Within their ethnic communities many Asian gay men and lesbians keep their homosexuality hidden from families and friends. While Asian traditionalists may tolerate instances of homosexuality if discreet and surreptitious, an open avowal of gayness is often condemned as a Western corruption. Asian gay people with more traditional families also have to contend with intense social and cultural pressures to marry, to reproduce the family line, not to disgrace the family name and so on. For those who have immigrated more recently there are other pressures: immigration laws that exclude homosexuals and that threaten HIV testing and dependence for cultural support on ethnic communities which are largely homophobic.

Organizing. To provide support and to air and resolve many of their common problems, Asian gay men and lesbians have organized in many of the largest cities of the United States. Through their activism, many of the groups also challenge the exclusive identification of American gay culture and gay communities with Caucasian men.

A major impetus to organizing began with the first National Third World Lesbian and Gay Conference (October 12–15, 1979) held in conjunction with the