

CATAMITE

The Latin common noun, *catamitus*, designating a minion or kept boy, is usually derived from the Greek proper name **Ganymede(s)**, the favorite of Zeus. Another possible source is **Kadmilos**, the companion of the Theban god **Kabeiros**. The word entered English in the sixteenth century as part of the Renaissance revival of classical literature, and has always retained a learned, quasiexotic aura. The term could also be used as a verbal adjective, as "a catamited boy."

In modern English the termination *-ite* tends to be perceived as pejorative, as in **Trotskyite** (vs. **Trotskyist**) and **sodomite**. Hobo slang records a turn-of-the-century expression *gey cat*, for a neophyte or young greenhorn, of which the second element may be a truncated form of **catamite**, though this is uncertain. In keeping with the **Active-Passive Con-**

trast, the catamite is commonly perceived as the passive partner of the sodomite or pederast.

See also **Ingle; Minions and Favorites.**